

Mark 8:22-26

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Date: 19 October 2025

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[0 : 0 0] I take your Bibles, go me to the Gospel according to Mark. Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 8. I will be where we're at this morning. Mark chapter 8.! We will start in verse 22 and we will make our way to verse 26.

Mark chapter 8 verses 22 through 26. I know it was already shared this morning, but I'll share it again so that we do not forget the deacons and elders meeting that was scheduled for this afternoon.

We'll be rescheduled. We're going to postpone that one. We have reasons behind that, so we'll reschedule that one. So I'll get with you gentlemen sometime in the near future where we can get that together.

Mark chapter 8 starting in verse 22 and going to verse 26. I almost connected this with the portion of Scripture which immediately follows it.

And you will see why hopefully by the time we get through this morning. And we'll see kind of its positioning and why it is where the Lord has saw fit to put it.

[1 : 0 2] We know when we study Scripture and one of the joys of looking at the Word of God the way we do, that is making our way through books and portions of Scripture, that we never want to separate a portion of Scripture from the context of where it is placed.

We believe in the inspiration that God so ordains the very Word of God, that the Spirit of God moved the man of God to write the Word of God, and that it is absolutely accurate beyond a shadow of a doubt.

We also believe that in that accuracy and in that inspiration, there are included within it the historical context, that is, who it is written to, the context of verses that surround it, that is, its positioning within the book, and also the author who wrote it.

There's a lot to take into account when we begin to study the Word of God, and we want to understand what it is that it says to us. That's just a good safeguard way of saying we're never going to pull a portion of Scripture out of context.

You know, there are any number of pieces of Scripture that we can make say any number of things. We can claim to stand on a scriptural foundation to say we should never shave the edges of our beards, or we should never do any number of things that you want to do.

[2 : 1 3] Some of you ladies are saying, well, I stand on a good foundation saying he should shave the edge of his beard, and there's other reasons behind that. But we want to make sure that we read them within their proper context.

Now, I say that because as when we looked at the portion of Scripture where it said that Jesus sighed two times, Mark tells us that there was what we refer to as the sigh of the Savior, and that is unique to Mark.

Mark is the only one who wrote that. One of those words, the second one found in the very first verses, or actually in verses 11 through 12 of chapter 8, that is the only time in all of Scripture that it's used.

The other one found in the seventh chapter is the only time in Scripture that it speaks of God himself sighing. Now, the portion of Scripture before us, again, the verses we're about to read, are unique to Mark.

Mark is the only one that shares them. Now, with that in mind, we need to say, wait a minute. Maybe we need to say, why Mark put it there? And you say, well, why is that so important, Pastor?

[3 : 18] Because, and I know I'm giving you a little bit of information before we get into it, but hopefully you can understand it. Mark is a portion of what we refer to as the Synoptic Gospels, as Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke share the overwhelming majority of their content with one another. Some 95% of what is found in Mark can also be found in Matthew and Luke.

So there are kind of schools of thought of who wrote first and who was copying who. And no one was really copying, but they surely used the same sources, if you will, and I believe they used the one main source, and that is the Holy Spirit leading them.

I believe that Mark was the first gospel written. I have my reasons. We're not going to get into that. He's the earliest writer of the gospel account from listening to the preaching of Peter.

The others have a different audience, and they write as well. So the question is, why did Mark share this portion of Scripture and no one else did? And I believe it is because of what immediately follows this portion of Scripture.

[4 : 24] So to rightly understand the portion of Scripture we have before us, we need to look at it in its context, because we know if you were to read a little bit further, you are going to see Peter's confession of Christ.

And so it would be really easy to combine the two, because I do believe they tell one grand story, and they tell it in a two-fold way, if you will.

But we're looking at the first one this morning, something that's unique and something that makes us at times go, why did he do it that way? And hopefully we'll understand. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God, found in Mark chapter 8, starting in verse 22, and just reading down to verse 26, and then we will pray.

And they came to Bethsaida, and they brought a blind man to Jesus, and implored him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, he brought him out of the village, and after spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, Do you see anything?

And he looked up and said, I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around. Then again, he laid his hands on his eyes, and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.

[5 : 39] And he sent him to his home, saying, Do not enter, or do not even enter the village. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the grand privilege opportunity we have of gathering together, of fellowshiping, lifting our voices up in song, of being able to rejoice in believers' baptism, to take of the Lord's Supper with one another.

But now, Father, we pray as we open up the Word of God, that it would be opened up before us. And we pray that through the presence of your Spirit, that you would give us an understanding heart, a comprehending mind, give us willing lives to live it for your glory and honor, and yours alone.

And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. I want you to see this morning a man of gradual sight. A man of gradual sight.

This is a unique, miraculous event recorded for us, only in Mark, but it's unique really in all of Scripture, because it is the only time in which Jesus does a miraculous event in the gradual process.

That is, it doesn't happen instantaneously. There are a number of blind men that are brought to Jesus. There are a number of healings that take place through Jesus for those who are blind.

[6 : 51] One of the testimonial signs recorded in the Old Testament was that when the Savior came, the blind would see, the deaf would hear, and the lame would walk, and the dead would rise.

And over and over again, we find that when blind people encounter Christ, they leave seeing. Some, he put mud on their eyes and told them to go to the pool of Salome and wash, and they came back seeing others.

He healed with the very words of his mouth. Some blind beggars, Bartimaeus by sight, were crying out, Lord, have mercy. And he says, what would you have? He said, I would have to regain my sight.

And he told him to see, and all of a sudden, he could see. Now this individual, Jesus, does a work, and asks him, do you see? He says, well, I partially see.

And he touches him a little further, and then he completely sees. It is a gradual, miraculous event. And it is not what in the man hindered Christ from doing the work, but rather the question is, why did Jesus do it this way?

[7 : 54] He was not hindered in power. He was not hindered in ability. At any moment, he could say, see, and all of a sudden, his eyes would be open. If he could cry out, Lazarus, come forth, and Lazarus comes out of the grave, a dead man walking, then surely he could say, man, have your eyes opened.

And his eyes would have been opened. But what we have before us is an instance when Christ decides, sovereignly, to do something different.

And I do not think it is coincidental that it is immediately proceeding when Christ leads his disciples away to Caesarea Philippi. In Caesarea Philippi, he asks the disciples, who do men say that I am?

And then he says, but who do you say that I am? And there are a series of questions that follows, and there is the great testimony of Peter, the profession of Peter, that you are Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of the living God.

There is the foundation of the church laid upon that profession. So then we have to ask ourselves, then why did Mark put this right before what we refer to as Peter's profession?

[9 : 03] Why in this context do we have this event happening in such an unlikely manner? And I would say it's because both of them tell a similar truth.

That is that sight is often gradual. Seeing clearly and having an understanding of who it is that is before us is a gradual process.

Some things happen instantaneously, but it is within the confines of the relationship with Christ that Peter came to understand and make his profession. We'll get to that profession later. Many could see him in part and knew that he was a great miracle worker.

Many could see that he did great miraculous deeds, but only those who spent a number of years with him knew the reality of who he was, that their eyes were really opened. And we see this in a really physical application in the account before us, this man of gradual sight.

We read it and we understand it with the thought of what's going to follow, but we don't want to overlook it and get to the meat of that. So I want you to see just a number of things about this man.

[10 : 11] Number one, I want you to see the condition that defined him. The condition that defined him. It tells us that they came to Bethsaida and they brought a blind man to Jesus.

It is something that we've looked at before, this reality, this testimony that we cannot overlook in scripture, that often those people that are brought to Christ, we know Bartimaeus' sight, but we don't know the names of very many others.

All that we know is the defining aspect of the individual. We do not know this man's name. We do not know his occupation. We do not know how he became blind, but we do know that he has a problem and his problem is that he is blind.

He has an overwhelming condition that everyone around him is very aware of, so much so that they led him to Jesus because he is an individual with a problem.

And he is defined in society by this condition. He is defined by this reality, this part of his life that cannot be overlooked. And it appears from the context of the passage that this was a condition that came upon him later on in life, not something that he was born with.

[11 : 25] It is not like the individual that was told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam and he came back seeing who was born blind because then we are told why was this man born this way? Was it his sin or the sin of his parents?

And Jesus says neither. It was that God may be glorified. He was born with this problem. This individual from the appearance of the context around it, it seems that at some point in his life he could see because, we have to ask ourselves, how else would he know that men look like trees if he had not seen trees?

How else would he know that men walking around look like these great tall things called trees if he did not know how to define them? He defined them and he did it again when it was just Jesus and himself there.

So from all appearances this condition had come upon him at least sometime in his life but it was the overwhelming reality of how he was seen by everyone around him.

it was a problem he had that could not be overcome by his own self-will or his own ability and it could not be overlooked no pun intended because everyone was aware of it.

[12 : 29] He was the blind man of that region. He was the man that desperately needed someone else to take him to Christ because he could not find him on his own.

He was a man with a problem that was so obvious and so overwhelming that he had no ability that he desperately needed someone to deliver him from.

Friend, listen to me. All those that Christ draws to himself are people who are defined by a condition. Each and every one of us have the condition that defines us whatever that may be.

Whatever that thing is that we are caught in that we cannot overcome that overwhelms us and we desperately need someone to deliver us from. We say, well I can see perfectly.

Well it was to the religious people who thought they could see that Jesus declared that they were blind. Maybe it is a condition of pride or maybe it's a condition of some other besetting sin or maybe it's a condition of lust or maybe it's a condition of apathy of just not wanting to do anything.

[13 : 35] Maybe it's a condition of sins of omission or sins of commission just choosing to deliberately disobey. Whatever it is we are defined by the reality that we have a problem we cannot overcome.

And though we may not be like this man that everyone knows us that way we if we're honest know ourselves that way. That condition defines us and it declares to us if to nobody else this is who they are.

And the wonderful news is those are the very ones that are brought to Christ and never turned away. You can rejoice in that. That these people that are defined by the problems they have are the very people that Christ welcomes into his presence.

Even stinky Lazarus After he's been dead for a number of days Jesus told him to come to himself. So we notice the condition that defined him.

The second thing that we notice that is really telling in this account is the culture that surrounded him. Now we have to do a little study to figure it out but it tells us they came to Bethsaida.

[14 : 50] Well that doesn't really mean a lot to us unless we read the rest of scripture and we know that Bethsaida is the region that is really close to where Jesus fed the 5,000 so the first feeding of the multitudes found in Mark chapter 6 is near the region of Bethsaida.

You would think that Bethsaida would be a place of great belief and a great place of faith a place where everyone knows about this savior who is Jesus Christ that fed some 10, 15,000 to 20,000 individuals on the hillside right outside of the city and oh you should have seen it and you should have been there.

Probably the majority of the city would have been there. But then when you open up the gospel according to Matthew and in Matthew chapter 11 and you read in Matthew chapter 11 Jesus begins to declare that there are certain cities that stand in judgment and he declares that one of these cities that stands to be judged is Bethsaida.

He says this city is cursed for their listen unbelief in Matthew 11, 21 He says woe unto you oh Bethsaida and he goes on and says if the miraculous deeds that had been done in you were done in Sodom and Gomorrah they would have repented and sat clothed in ashes.

So what does it tell us about that culture and that society is this was a region and this was an area in which no matter how much work Christ did even according to the words of Christ they did not believe and would not believe.

[16 : 27] They would not repent of their wicked ways they would not repent he declared a woe over such a region and said if Sodom and Gomorrah you remember those cities that were destroyed by brimstone and fire had seen the things that Bethsaida had seen then they would have repented but they would not and this is the very society that the blind man is living in.

Here's a man with a horrible condition but he's also living in really a difficult culture he's living in an area of unbelief according to the Savior one that will not respond in faith at least to the works of Christ and they will not respond accurately to who he is they may show up to be fed with the multitudes and they may bring a blind man to him but they are not repenting of their wicked ways and in their desperate deeds they're relishing in that in spite of all the miraculous deeds that Christ does they may look for him to be a miracle worker and to do wonderful things when it is convenient but they are not looking to follow him and to worship him really we would say it is a culture and society that is antagonistic against what we declare as the faith in the passage that follows it it will be defined as this who do men say that I am friend listen we live in a region where everybody has something to say about Christ the world has always had something to say all men of all places have something to say about Christ and too often the culture that surrounds us is not one that is really besetting and befitting to build us up rather it tells us you may cry out to him in your moment of need but once you're done once your belly is full go about your way it is one that Christ says stands in judgment even in light of Sodom and Gomorrah so do not overlook the culture that was around him but the important aspect of this is the third one look at the connection that changed him the connection that changed him one of my favorite series that I've ever preached and I preached it a long time ago before I really understood anything about expositional preaching many of you know this past Wednesday actually October 15th was my ordination day not this year but in 2006 so 19 years of ordination was celebrated this past

Wednesday I've been 20 years in the pastoral ministry so I was preaching a little bit before so this December will be my 20th year but there are some really rough sermons there early on that many of you thankfully have never heard and Lord bless those who did but anyway one of my favorite series and I've told you this before is called the untouchables that Christ would touch the untouchables and it had a time if you look in scripture and see those people that the rest of society would shy away from and yet he laid his hands upon them and notice in this passage before us we see one of those here's a man that is blind and according to Jewish thought that day the reason you are blind especially if blindness came upon you later in life is because of your own sins you did something and God is judging you and there's this judgment that falls upon you because of your sins and your uncleanness and all of your problems and you know that may have been the case sometimes it's attributed to demonic activity it's just a problem that this gentleman has and he's living in a region that Christ denounces and says that they have no faith but when they bring it look at what it says verse 23 take in the blind man by the hand don't miss that

Christ the Lord and Savior the Lord God Almighty who created all things by all things were created by him through him and for him who alone in all of creation is he that is declared to be holy holy holy holy love that hymn it is he that around his throne in glory the heavenly beings repeat that refrain and worthy is the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the earth was laid the one who had no sin no problem no condition took him by the hand oh that's comforting he took this man who lived in a society that rejected the reality of who Christ was he took this man who had such a major problem he could not overcome it and he took him by the hand and he brought him out of the city which by the way did you notice that

Jesus took him by the hand and led him out of the city friend listen to me sometimes when we are brought to Christ with our problems the very first thing he does is separate us from the culture that is hindering us people say well I can't hang out with the same people I used to hang out with and I can't do the things I used to do praise be to God he took you out of that for a moment don't put your hand on the plow and look back and go I wish I could rejoice in the reality that when he took you by the hand he took you out of that that was bringing you down he may give you the opportunity to go back to it and testify he may but he may not he may bring those out of it to you at some point he may but he may not but the very first thing he does is separate us from that which is hindering us and when he takes us by the hand he carried him out of the village he separated him from those people that were denounced for their unbelief and their lack of faith notice it says and he spit in his eyes and some of us go that's nasty hey this was pre covid okay you could do things by the way this was the savior he's the very one that puts the breath in your lungs so a little spit in the eyes is okay he spit in his eyes and notice what it does and he touched them and he touched them and he said do you see and he says I see men like trees walking about and what does it say and he touched him again why do we have this because the greatest revelations because it says and then he saw all things clearly the greatest revelations come to us through an ongoing connection with the savior for a moment our eyes may be opened and we may see better than we used to see but friend if all you want to see is a little bit better than you used to then you're not walking in obedience

[23 : 19] Christ says I'll cause your eyes to be opened gradually over time you'll know a little bit more about me each and every day the reason that we talk about this walk of faith and we say it's not just a one time decision it's because it's the connection to the savior who continues to lay his hand upon us that gradually we begin to see things a little clearer and a little clearer and a little clearer and gradually we begin to see more than we used to when you come to Christ you see men like trees walking around and you say oh I've never seen this and you're surprised because you can see something and you're amazed but don't stop being amazed just because you can see something and you stay with him a little bit longer and he touches you in a little bit more way and all of a sudden it begins to come a little bit more into focus a little bit more into focus and a little bit more into focus there's a reason Jesus didn't ask his disciples who do you say that I am when he first called them out of the fishing boat because they didn't know yet he was oh I wish I knew the scripture I wish I knew Bible I wish I knew more well let me tell you the secret to knowing more hang out with the

Savior and let him touch you over and over and over again spend time in communion with him let him pull you out of the village and let him touch you not once don't say okay that's enough no stay there with him say Lord I see in part but I want to see in whole 20 years into it I'm just now seeing portions of scripture that I'd never seen before listen I'm not an intelligent human being but I do know the one who wrote the book knows what it ought to say so I hang out with him there are a lot of good people who write about the book but I like to hang out with the one who wrote the book we can utilize the others later and it is a joy we see here it is a connection that is ongoing Christ is not afraid to touch you more than once and he's not afraid to continue to do the work in your life so that you can see clear he doesn't want to leave you half-sighted he wants you to be able to see intently and to be restored and to see everything it says clearly restoration takes a moment it takes time it is not a one-time event salvation happens in a moment the moment Christ took the man by the hand his life was completely changed what we call sanctification or restoration happens gradually over time don't be disappointed don't let the enemy whisper on your shoulder well you're not what you ought to be this isn't what you thought you would be yes I know because it's going to take time it took me a while

Satan to get myself into this mess it'll take the savior he can cleanse me in a moment but he has chosen to be gracious and merciful and do it progressively because if he was to do the work in an instant we would all fall under the weight of that transformation if there are things I've told you this before if I knew he was going to take some of the things away from me he's taken away from me if he'd have told me that when he called me as my savior I would say I know thank you I don't want that if at the age of 20 he'd have said these are the things I want you to be doing by the time you're 45 I'd have said I know I don't want to do that that's too much I wasn't ready for that I couldn't handle that but I said here you go Lord do with me what you will he says okay we'll start slowly and I'm thankful for that it took some time it took some time and it is the ongoing connection listen he has spit in my eyes more than once because I've needed it but then we get to this fourth and final thing look at what it says the charge that was given to him it's a man of gradual sight we'll see these same things we may not call him the same thing but we'll see these same things in the very next passage this man had a condition he lived in a culture that was not very helpful in his condition he made a connection with Christ and Christ touched him and changed him and then Christ gives him a charge it's in one verse there and he sent him to his home he sent him home now they're in a region where there there are no temples list to the Lord God

Almighty there may not have been a synagogue in that area but he sent him to his home why because those who know our problem best are those that we live with the most he sent him back home to those who would have really known that this was the man that was blind this was we knew him as our blind family member he sent him back home the greatest testimony is often those who have known us the longest and known us the best that is also the hardest place to testify but it is the most fruitful testimony but look that is not the only charge he didn't just tell him to go home look at what it says do not even enter the village why would he say that you remember that culture that society that one of eating the meal with the multitudes and forgetting who Christ is he says don't go back there right now you're not ready too often people come to Christ and Christ ministers to their heart and their mind and Christ touches them in the midst of their problem and they they want to run back to that very village friend sometimes we're not ready sometimes the charges stay separate from them for a while you know

Paul Paul wrote so much of the New Testament more books of the New Testament than anyone else not more verses John wrote more verses Paul wrote more books and we know a lot about Paul but there there's one part of Paul's life that we really don't know anything about Paul refers to it in just a few passages we call it his wilderness years we know about Paul on Damascus Road we know that he's he's kind of breathing out threats and murder and going to arrest people in Damascus and he encounters the Lord in Damascus and then we know that Ananias comes and lays his hand on Paul who was blind and the scales fall off his eyes and he could see we know that Paul is lowered out of the basket in Damascus and he goes to Jerusalem and then he meets Barnabas and Barnabas the son of encouragement introduces him to the apostles and the church is strengthened because he who persecuted them has now come to faith but then Paul disappears until Barnabas finds him later and takes him into Antioch now Antioch is a center of Roman civilization

[30 : 07] Paul is the right man to be in Antioch because Paul is a citizen by birth he is a good citizen by standing of the Roman Empire but he's also a Jew of the Jews he is trained in the school of Gamaliel he is the right man for that educational hub of Antioch but what had to happen before he went to the village was he had to spend three years in the wilderness there are three years of silence and all we know that Paul says that he was schooled by Christ that he learned from Christ in the wilderness Paul wanted to go back to Jerusalem and aid and help and assist the disciples and the apostles but he wasn't ready for that yet so if it took three years in the wilderness being outside of the village for God to prepare Paul for the ministry he had for him we are foolish to think that we can run back to the village and go back to where we used to be and just keep living among the same people we used to live among sometimes the charges do not even enter the village you're not ready yet which church listen to me that's where this body becomes important because I remember in my life when

Christ called me to himself and he redeemed me and saved me there was a village around me he said don't go back there but he connected me to another group of people and that was called the church the church body that walked beside me encouraged me supported me challenged me moved me and fit me so that when I was ready to go back to that village the testimony was different sometimes the charges don't just be what you've always been because I've done a great work in your life here's a man of gradual sight who was given a great charge to testify at home but to guard those who influenced him to guard those who came around him sight is a an amazing thing sometimes we think we see when really we don't know what we haven't seen yet yesterday was a very unique day for your pastor yesterday I had a day full of ministry greatly supported by my wife and deacons elders here that carried some responsibilities that need to be carried for me yesterday I got up got ready Braden's first sight of me when he got out of bed I was in a suit he said dad what are you doing I said doesn't every dad dress like this on Saturday mornings very early put my suit on got back home later that night and took my suit off tie and everything some of you know I don't have I don't like wearing ties I took the tie off before I got home but it was a day of unique ministry in that I had the privilege and I counted as a privilege and honor to preach the funeral services of a brother in Christ as his widow bride is sitting on the front row a celebration of life a celebration of love known of love experience and love felt among the family many of you were there and when I left there I drove immediately from the funeral home to a wedding venue and I performed a wedding ceremonies with two people standing in front of me who thought they knew what love was love is not known on the day when everybody's gathered around taking pictures and everybody's dressed in their best love is known after a life has been spent together through all the ups and downs and all the hardships and the connection has been formed over time friend listen to me if Christ is the bridegroom and we are the bride we only partly know how much he loves us on the day he calls us to wed him in redemption we know him when we love him and we serve him and we walk with him over and over through the years and that connection is consistent and gradually over time we say oh what a savior and we are moved not because we have the ooey gooey feelings of first love the butterflies as I like to say it we say it might not always feel good but he is my savior who loves me so and I know what love is each one of us who know Christ find ourselves somewhere between the wedding altar and the celebration of life service don't give up on the way because sight is gradual but the savior is consistent let's pray father thank you for this day I thank you for your word we

thank you for the truth that it contains and the challenge that it brings to us we pray oh father that you help us to draw closer to you more and more each day may we stay intimately connected with the savior we ask it all in Christ's name amen you you