

I. Introduction

A. Illustration: Meet Daniel Kish. https://youtu.be/Z_E3zxx2I9g

1. Eyes removed very young due to cancer; navigates the world without help (echolocation)
2. Brain scans: echolocation triggers visual part of brain (Thaler, Arnott, Goodale- NCBI).
3. Some would say that Daniel can't see. He would say that he just sees "differently"

B. Because most of us have physical eyes that work, we become accustomed only to the material world around us. But most of us are disabled when it comes to seeing past what is right in front of our faces. Seeing the realities that lie beyond what is material. Seeing with the eyes of faith.

C. Jesus is inviting us to see differently—to see past the material and perceive the spiritual; see past what is happening and perceive WHY it is happening; to see past the immediate and perceive the eternal. Jesus is inviting us to see differently: to see like a blind man.

1. In Scripture, blindness is often used as a metaphor for UNBELIEF.
2. In Matthew 23, Jesus calls the Pharisees "blind guides"—that in their unbelief and unwillingness to see Jesus for Who He is, they were blindly leading others into deep error.
3. Today in Mark 8, we're going to meet a series of blind men. One of them is obviously blind. The others are blind but not in the physical sense, in a much more serious sense.
4. Some of the blind men we'll see today **refuse** to see the world Jesus's way while others just **haven't learned how to yet**. And Jesus' invitation to every one of us today is to learn to SEE.

D. But sadly, not everyone who is blind **wants** to see.

II. Mark 8:11-13 ¹¹ *The Pharisees came and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from Heaven to test Him.* ¹² *And He sighed deeply in His spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation."* ¹³ *And He left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side.*

A. Why wouldn't Jesus just give them the sign they're looking for?

1. Isn't it reasonable to prove that what you're claiming to be is true? Yes ...
2. But the issue isn't that Jesus hasn't proven Himself. In the book of Mark up to this point, Jesus has been doing impossible miracles (signs from Heaven) all throughout this same region that the Pharisees approach Him in.
 - a. It wasn't that Jesus hadn't proved himself—the Pharisees wouldn't accept it.
 - b. They had all the proof they needed, and yet somehow it wasn't enough.
 - c. It's not that they couldn't see Jesus for Who He was, it's that they wouldn't. "Just one more sign! No wait, one more! Ok, now just one more!"

B. God does NOT ask us to have blind faith, believing without proof.

1. The question is, "How much proof is enough?"
2. These Pharisees had no intention of every allowing Jesus to prove Himself.
3. Their intentions, seen in verse 11, were to test Him and somehow disprove Him.

C. Jesus is more than willing to prove His validity as God and Messiah, but He will not be a Cosmic David Blaine, showing you magic trick after magic trick to convince you that He's legit.

1. There comes a point in all of our lives where God has proven Himself enough and now it's no longer about needing proof but needing to make a decision.
2. And so Jesus left these Pharisees in the very blindness that they were so committed to preserving. They refused to see and so Jesus honored their wishes.
3. And now Jesus steps into a boat with another group of blind men but these guys couldn't see not because they didn't want to. They just haven't learned how to yet:

III. Mark 8:14-15 (Verse 14 is kind of a parenthetical statement... some back-story for what we're going to see) ¹⁴Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. ¹⁵And He cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."

A. Pharisees and Herodians: In mentioning these two factions, Jesus is covering the spectrum of anti-God/ anti-Jesus movements in that day.

1. Pharisees: religious faction who hated the government, but also hated Jesus because He threatened their religious influence and authority.
2. Herodians: government faction who were loyal to King Herod and were at odds with religious authorities (like the Pharisees) because they thought that the government should have the power. They ALSO hated Jesus because they feared that He'd lead a political uprising to threaten their influence and authority.
3. Notice that Jesus is hated by both ends of the spectrum because He won't be used for their personal ambitions and gain.

B. Church, take note of this TODAY: there are religious people who will claim they speak for God, but are doing so to use you and your voice for their ambitions and gain.

1. And to no one's surprise, there are political people from every ideological tribe that will say things you want to hear, but whose intentions are to use you for their ambitions and gain.
2. Church, beware the yeast of the religiously powerful, who have big staves and even bigger mouths, but whose first agenda isn't Christ and His Kingdom. Rather they hijack Jesus to gain and keep power and influence.
3. Church, beware the yeast of those who claim to be politically right, left, or center who promise you peace, security, prosperity and freedom, but whose mouths are full of boasting and arrogant rejection of truth... calling good evil, and evil good.

C. Why does Jesus talk about the "leaven" of these people? Yeast is a leavening agent.

1. Anyone here make bread? If you want to make a simple loaf of French bread, how much flour do you use? 3-ish cups?
2. How much yeast do you use to make the whole loaf rise? ½ tablespoon maybe? It's like a 100 to 1 ratio.
3. Jesus' warning is this: concerning religious hypocrisy, political ambition and desire for power: a little goes a long way.
4. If you let these non-Jesus-saturated ambitions get into your heart, they have the power to corrupt the whole thing. Just like a small packet of yeast causes the whole

loaf to rise and become puffed up, so does a small amount of giving your heart and mind to a cause other than Jesus and His Kingdom.

IV. Mark 8:16-20 ¹⁶And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. ¹⁷And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." ²⁰"And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." ²¹And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

- A. "Guys, I'm trying to teach you spiritual truths! But because your stomachs are growling and you only have eyes to see what YOU think is your most immediate need, you change the subject back to the material and temporal when I'm trying to give you truth that is spiritual and eternal!"
- B. Quoting Jeremiah and Isaiah, Jesus basically says to His disciples: You have physical eyes and ears and yet you're still blind and deaf in the way that it counts!
- C. Are your hearts hard? Because I keep trying to show you things that will transform WHO you are BECOMING but you keep changing the subject back to WHAT you WANT.
 - 1. Do you remember what I did with a couple loaves when 5,000 people were hungry? And then again with 4,000? How can you worry about bread when you've seen me feed thousands from a lunch for five?
 - 2. You don't have a bread problem, you have a sight problem ... a believing problem ... a truth problem ... a FAITH problem.
- D. This reminds me SO MUCH of my response during this pandemic.
 - 1. God is allowing the people of His church to walk through this refining fire. And my brain automatically runs to "When will there be a vaccine, and when will schools reopen, and does the government have the right to make the decisions they're making and, for the love of all that is holy, where can I get some toilet paper, again!"
 - 2. All of those questions feel really important and, to a degree, they ARE important. But I feel like Jesus is looking at me and probably the American Church and saying, "Why are you changing the subject? I've given you a once-in-a-life-time opportunity to become more like Me through hardships that can refine you, strengthen you, teach you grace and teach you perseverance. And you're talking about government and toilet paper. Yes, those are important to you, but I'm trying to accomplish something that is VITAL to you. I have something much more pressing and eternal that I'm trying to accomplish in you.
 - 3. Don't exchange that which is **spiritual, transformational and eternal** for that which is **material, conventional and temporal**.
 - a. That is CHOOSING blindness.
 - b. Don't let your heart be hardened.
- E. In this story, should the disciples have been able to "get it" by now? Probably. Did they? Not quite.

1. But why doesn't Jesus leave them like He did the Pharisees? Because they weren't CHOOSING blindness, they were just STUCK IN IT.
2. And Jesus is miraculously patient with those who want to see, but just can't yet.
3. And so when the wheels fall off, He stops, puts the wheels back on and keeps leading us into truth.

*Now, this next story may SEEM unconnected to what we've read so far. It may SEEM like "just another healing." But it IS NOT. This story is VERY STRATEGICALLY placed here, not just to show Jesus' amazing power to heal. Mark placed it here as a commentary on what we've just seen with the disciples.

V. Mark 8:22-26 ²² And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to Him a blind man and begged Him to touch him. ²³ And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when He had spit on his eyes and laid His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." ²⁵ Then Jesus laid His hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

- A. Isn't it interesting that this healing is done in stages rather than immediately? We've already seen several healings in Mark that were immediate.
 1. Jesus begins the healing of this man's blindness, and though it works, it isn't yet complete. He can see people but they look like trees!
 2. Jesus continues to work and the man's sight is fully restored.
- B. Mark is using this healing as a commentary on the nature of being Jesus' disciple. Our spiritual blindness is dealt with progressively. Just like the disciples, it is NOT immediate.
 1. Our maturity, our holiness, our obedience, and our ability to see things the way God sees them is a process.
 2. This is Mark's point here. Our blindness and unbelief are healed in stages, not in an instant.
- C. Illustration: Have you ever pulled up behind someone in a turn lane with your blinker on and noticed that your blinker seems to be exactly in sync with theirs? But if you're there long enough, they'll eventually get off sync, to the point that they are now blinking exact opposite. But if it's a really long red light, eventually, they'll get back in relative sync again. That's sometimes how life feels with Jesus. Just when we're growing and feel like we're "getting it", it can feel like we then quickly get out of sync. But Jesus is patient and His mercy for us gives us time and truth to get back in sync with Him.
 1. Two steps forward, one step back
 2. Mark shows us this two-steps-forward moment in Peter so we don't lose hope:

VI. ²⁷ And Jesus went on with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way He asked His disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ And they told Him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ And He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered Him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ And He strictly charged them to tell no one about Him.

- A. Peter has this incredibly lucid moment where He is able to articulate the entire message of the book: “Jesus, YOU are the Christ.”
 - 1. And notice that it was JESUS who gave Peter the opportunity to do so.
 - 2. He just won’t give up on those who are stumbling toward Him.
- B. Peter knocks it out of the park. “You are the Christ.” He gets it. Finally.
- C. Then three verses later, Peter forbids the Messiah to die on a cross and Jesus calls Peter “Satan.”
 - 1. Two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward.
 - 2. **This is the way.**

VII. Wrap up

- A. This is the way of being a follower of Jesus. He reveals Himself to us but we have a progressive experience of clarity.
 - 1. Through Scripture, obedience, and community in the church, I can grow.
 - 2. I can never assume I’ve arrived. Following and even understanding Jesus is a life-long pursuit. DON’T EVER SETTLE. If you do, hardness of heart will settle in.
 - 3. THIS DEMANDS HUMILITY. The disciples didn’t quite get it yet, but their hearts were humble and they kept up with it. The goal isn’t to arrive. The goal is to stay humble and keep seeking to know Jesus clearly.
- B. This passage illuminates the grace and patience Jesus has for us.
 - 1. And so it should also should inspire great grace and patience in our hearts toward others.
 - 2. There are times we feel that people in our lives “just aren’t getting it.” Sometimes, this is true. We are having a lucid moment like Peter did and we have clarity in a situation where someone else is still working on that.
 - 3. But sometimes, when we think the people around us just don’t get it, it’s not because they are out to lunch. It’s because we’re having one of those “not getting it moments” like Peter has just a few verses later when he forbids Jesus to die.
- C. This takes great humility. How do I know if what I’m thinking right now comes from a place of clarity or comes from a place of error?
 - 1. We MUST be constantly saturating our minds with God’s Word but not in isolation. We need the clarity that comes from other Christians being in our lives and being honest with us. We must submit to the wisdom of the community around us.
 - 2. Because, even if you spend hours every day studying the Bible, you can interpret its meaning in error. No one of us is always right and no one of us is ever an island.

“Living Hope”