Seeing More Clearly

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast. A podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

And love to serve. He's given us so many people that are so gifted. And I can tell you across the board, from every ministry, those that you see on the platform, those that are behind the scenes, the people who serve here are people who do it because they have a heart to honor Christ.
Christ, the Lord in His kindness has given us this sanctuary where we can gather week after week.
We understand the church is the people.
The church is not a building. And yet, the place we gather is not unimportant. This is a place that, in God's providence, He has allowed our church to meet in Sunday after Sunday after Sunday for 17 years.
In this room, the praises of Christ are sung week after week. The Scripture is read. The Word is taught. Hearts are able to engage with the truth of the Gospel.
[1:42] The Lord has been so kind to us. And I think it's good for us to sense that. I think it's good for us to acknowledge that.

And of course, we understand there is no greater good or no greater gift than the gift of salvation, which demanded the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
For 40 of us, we went to Israel just over a month ago and had the chance to visit the place of the skull. We were able to see Calvary.
We spent an hour in worship in the Garden of Gethsemane. And we're able to be in the place, in the land, where not only did Jesus live, but in the very area where Christ suffered and died.
And to think that we gather here today and would sing a lyric like, when with the ransomed in glory, His face, we will see.
[2:57] It's an amazing, amazing truth. When with the ransomed in glory, His face at last I will see.

It will be my joy through the ages to sing of His love for me. That our spiritual eyes have been opened.
Our hearts as Christians have been opened. When we were spiritually dead, not weak, not wounded, dead, dead men can't heal themselves.
The only reason why your dead heart, spiritually speaking, is beating, the only reason why your blind eyes can see is because God, in His goodness, through the work of the Spirit, saved your soul.
And we should never tire of singing that, of preaching that, and of celebrating that.
[4:00] It is an amazing lyric to consider that we who are so sinful one day will see Him face to face.

And if you are not converted, if you are not a believer, if your sin has not been forgiven, the most frightening thing I could tell you is that you will stand before Him face to face.
And you will. But if your sin has been covered by the grace of Jesus Christ, the most amazing hope we have, the most amazing confidence we have, is that we will see Him.
All the sin of this world, all the pain of this world, all the shame of this world, that at times seems too much to bear, one day, when you see Him face to face, the Bible says, we will look back by comparison and describe the worst of our days on this earth as light and momentary.
not because what you go through is small, but because the beauty and glory of seeing Him is that great.
[5:22] In Christ, our blind eyes can see. Well, in the Gospel of Mark that we are studying together as a congregation week after week, we come to, here in Mark chapter 8, verses 22 to 26.

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It's one of two miracles that Mark records that no other Gospel writer does. The other, incidentally, is Mark 7, 31 to 37, where he tells us about a specific man who could not hear and who could not speak that Jesus healed.
And now, Mark alone will tell us about a specific man that cannot see that Jesus will heal. this miracle is unique not only because it's the, it's only found here in the Gospel of Mark, it's unique because out of all the miracles Jesus did, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, out of all the miracles that He performed, this is the only miracle we are aware of that the healing comes in two stages. Every other miracle besides this, Jesus did, it happened in an instant. Rise and walk, and they walked. Be healed, and they were healed.
Come back to life, and they came back to life. This miracle is unique as it happens and unfolds in two stages. Verse 22, they came to Bethsaida and some people brought to Him a blind man and begged him to touch him.
[7:13] In Bethsaida, it's a name, it's a location, and the word means the house of fishing. There on the northeastern shore of the sea, there east of the Jordan River, it's near this area where Jesus fed the 5,000 men plus women and children.

It's the hometown of Peter and Andrew and Philip. Philip, but it's a place that has rejected Christ. It's a place filled with sin and spiritual blindness.
Not because Christ hasn't spoken the truth to them, not because Christ hasn't revealed Himself to them, He has. but because they loved the darkness.
It is of this place that Matthew 11 records these haunting words, Woe to you, Chorazin, and woe to you, Bethsaida.
For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
[8:29] But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. I don't have time to take you into all the details of why that would be such a shocking condemnation, but just understand Tyre and Sidon, as we've looked at before, are locations synonymous with wickedness wickedness, idolatry, and utter sinfulness.

And the Lord says it will be better for them on the day of judgment than it will be for Bethsaida because Bethsaida has had all of the evidence in front of them.
It's almost always true that those who reject do not lack evidence. They don't, in their heart of hearts, they don't need more evidence. What they need is to believe and to repent.
But hardened hearts do not want to repent apart from the grace of the Lord. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him.
They're begging. Pericleo, they're begging over and over. These friends have brought this man, this blind man to Jesus and they are entreating the Lord to heal him of his blindness which of course he has done before.
[9:58] Not in the gospel of Mark but in his ministry. In verse 23 it says, 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? This is really a tender moment in the life of Jesus.
Here in this area filled with so much rejection, so much spiritual blindness, here are some friends who bring their friend to Jesus not unlike the friends who brought their friend on a mat to Jesus earlier that we looked at and cut a hole in the roof and lowered him down because that man would not be able to have presented himself to Jesus.
So in this case, how would a blind man find Jesus? How would a blind man know where he was? Even if you told him Jesus is in town and even if you told him Jesus can heal blindness should he choose to do so on his own, what would the blind man do?
He wouldn't know where Jesus is. He wouldn't be able to find him. He wouldn't be able to go up to him. He wouldn't be able to know the sound he was hearing, who it came from and so his friends bring him to Jesus.
[11:31] It is a physical reminder of our spiritual responsibility to bring people to Jesus. to bring those who are spiritually blind to Jesus.

Now, you don't have the power to heal their blindness and neither did the friends. But the friends understood that Jesus can do what no one else can do. We need to keep bringing the blind, spiritually speaking, to Jesus as we declare the gospel message.

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One of the things that I was so encouraged by, a number of things at Family Matters last Sunday was such a blessing, but one of which was hearing several different people in their testimonies talk about sharing the gospel, talk about trying to help people understand who Jesus is.
And it's a reminder for us, this is what we must do. Pray for those who are spiritually blind to believe. Pray for those who don't know Christ to be converted. Share the gospel with them.
Bring them to places like this where the gospel is presented. We should be about the business of bringing spiritually blind people to Jesus just as they do that physically and literally here in this account.
[12:51] And Jesus just very tenderly takes Him by the hand and led Him out of the village. This is I think showing us two things.

One, the tenderness and just the personal attention that Jesus gives to this blind man. He takes Him. The blind man can't walk without help.
If you've been to Israel, been on a couple of our Holy Land trips, you know that much of the terrain even today, much less 2,000 years ago, is very rocky. Very hilly and lots of impediments on the ground.
And if a blind man were to walk by himself, he would very quickly fall. So Jesus takes him by the hand and He led him out of the village.
You can just picture Jesus holding the man's hand, grabbing him by the arm and tenderly and compassionately leading him out of the village. That's the good part.
[13:57] The bad part is the reason why He's taking him outside the village is it's as if Jesus is saying to Bethsaida, you don't even get to see this. You've heard, you've seen, you've witnessed, you've rejected, you refuse the light, you refuse to see, and you're not going to get to watch this.

So many times when Jesus was doing miracles, there would be huge crowds that would gather. Some believed and many did not. Most were there just to see the phenomenon.
Most were there to be able to say they were there. Most were there to be able to tell their friends what they saw. Not unlike in our day, if there is a very significant event that takes place, people love to be able to tell their friends they were there.
Or if you go to a sporting event where something significant happens, you may hold on to that ticket stub to be able to show people I was there. And in a similar way, when Jesus is in town doing His miracles, there's all kinds of people who came and were there, not because they loved, not because they wanted to worship, not because they were necessarily even looking for truth.
They just wanted to be able to tell people we were there. And Jesus says to the town of Bethsaida, you don't get to see this. And so He leads him out.
[15:21] And it appears that what Jesus does is He uses His saliva and rubs it into the man's eyes to remove some of the crust and the disease-ridden circumstances that would have been around His eyes physically.

He uses that to brush that away, to kind of peel away that which had undoubtedly built up around His eyes. And then He asked the man, do you see anything?
It's a very interesting part of the miracle because this is not what Jesus normally would do. Jesus would normally say, rise and walk, and then say to the person, do your legs work.
He wouldn't say to Jairus' daughter, to lead the coom, that is to say, little lamb, I say to you, arise and ask her, is your heart beating?
He would just declare it to be. And yet here, after He removes some of the crusts and things that may have built up around His eyes, it's created this condition, He asked Him, do you see anything?
[16:36] Now, Jesus at times healed men who were born blind. This does not appear to be the situation with Him. The wording here suggests that this man almost assuredly was not born blind.

Something had happened early on in His life, most likely, or perhaps later on when, through an accident, through an explosion, through some kind of physical altercation, through some kind of disease.
We're not sure, but it appears He had seen and then He could not see and now Jesus takes Him beyond the city and touches Him and says, do you see anything?
Verse 24, and He looked up and said, I see people, but they look like trees walking.
Incidentally, this is how we know that He was not born blind. He knew what people looked like. He wasn't seeing things as clear as you might expect yet, but enough to know they were people and He already knew what trees were like.

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[17:45] He could see a tree in His earlier days and now He knows that what He's looking at looks like a tree, so this isn't somebody who has never seen. He has the ability to see light and images, but His vision is a bit blurry, it's still a bit dim.

Verse 25, Jesus laid His hands on His eyes again and He opened His eyes and His sight was restored and He saw everything clearly.
Now, Jesus knows exactly what He's doing. He didn't make a mistake. He wasn't low on power. He wasn't unsure of what to do.
He didn't do some formula wrong. It wasn't that He didn't pray enough for the miracle. There's something very specific He's doing here.
He is teaching His apostles a very important lesson. I think as Jesus leads the man out, the apostles trail behind Him and Jesus takes His man out, just the two of them, and walks through this miracle and when the man opens his eyes, I think it's the apostles He sees and He says, I know these are men, I can tell they're men, I know what men look like before I lost my sight, but they look more like trees.
[19:27] They look like some kind of figure. I can see things, but it's still a bit blurry. Jesus laid His hands on them again and it says His sight was restored and He saw everything clearly.

Verse 24, He opened His eyes and a blepo. Then in verse 25 says He opened His eyes, different word, diablepo, meaning that He could see through, that He could see entirely.
He saw clearly. In fact, if you just look at the wording, as Mark records this, He's just piling up words to express He can really see.
Verse 24, He looked up, I see people, they look like trees walking. Verse 25, Jesus laid His hands on His eyes again, He opened His eyes, His sight was restored, He saw, everything was clear.
Now, why is Jesus doing this, though, in two stages? Well, I think it's significant that Mark records this miracle and puts it right where He does because I think the context of this miracle tells us exactly why Jesus did it uniquely this way.
[20:51] If you remember from last Sunday morning in verses 1-10, Jesus feeds the large group that's there. The Pharisees come and they are demanding a sign Jesus will not give in to them because, again, they have heard the truth, they have seen His power, they have witnessed His authority, and they are just trying to test Him.

And so, in verse 12, Jesus sighed deeply in His spirit and said, why does this generation seek a sign? In verse 13, then He left them. And He goes into the boat with the apostles that are there in that boat.
Verse 14, they forgot bread. That's not the worst thing they forgot. The most important thing the apostles forgot is the power of Christ Himself. And He tells the apostles, what we looked at last Sunday morning, is that they need to be careful of the leaven, of the sin in other people's lives.
And He tells them that just like a little bit of leaven can cause the entire dough to rise, in the same way, a little bit of sin in your life, allowed, tolerated, played with, celebrated, permeates your whole being.
And Jesus tells His apostles that they need to ensure that they are living in holiness.
[22:27] Because if you drink water that's mostly pure, only slightly poisonous, it's deadly.

And if you live mostly for Christ, just a little bit indulging in the sin of the world, it's so dangerous.
And so Jesus says to His apostles, you know how the Pharisees, and Matthew adds, the Sadducees were with Him, you know how the Pharisees and Sadducees, how they came after Me, and they attacked Me, and they demanded a sign from Me, and in their sin, in their heart and hearts, I just left.
I just walked away from them because their time's over. And He says, just as it was true for them that their sinfulness has consumed their hearts, so I say to you, be careful, do not play around with sin.
And the apostles' response to this spiritual warning from Jesus is found in verse 16.
[23:49] And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. That's their response. it would be a little like, I use this example because this doesn't happen here and I'm so thankful.

It would be a little bit like if after a Sunday morning where the preacher has studied and prayed and worked and labored and come up and preached and given all he has to the congregation and then he walks off the platform and someone in the congregation comes up to him and says, preacher, do

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you know that you mispronounced a word a moment ago and you're just like, that's all you got? That's what you took from that? That's what Jesus is saying. I've been teaching you, I've been helping you understand the seriousness of sin, I've given you the examples of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, religious people who are still spiritually blind.
And their response is, how much bread do we have? And Jesus' response to that is verse 18. Having eyes, do you not see? He says to his apostles, you have sight, but do you not see? [25:27] your vision is 20-20, but can you not see? And right on the heels of Jesus asking that question, do you not see?

The very next thing Mark tells us is this healing of the blind man. salvation. And I think what Jesus is one of the apostles to understand here, and by extension for us as the church to see, is that conversion for us is in an instant, but our spiritual growth is a process.
That when we come to faith and trust in Christ, yes, we are justified, we are saved, we are secure, but there's a process of helping to get our doctrine right.
There's a process of spiritual maturity. We are justified in a moment, but we are sanctified throughout our life. That the Christian life is not just simply about believing, it's believing and obeying.
It's not that you're saved by your works, but the Christian life is absolutely to be someone who is saved by grace through faith, but once that happens, we are to demonstrate we belong to Him by our continual obedience to His Word.
[27:00] The New Testament just knows nothing of the example of somebody who prays a prayer one moment in time and then follows Jesus no more, but is given the assurance of eternal life.

The New Testament knows nothing of those who say, I just had this experience or I just went forward at this certain event or I got this kind of warm feeling all over me or I got chills when the preacher told that story when I was a teenager and then they don't love Christ, they don't pursue Christ, they don't honor Christ, they don't follow Christ, they don't love the church, they don't love Christ's people.
The New Testament does not see that person and refer to them as a believer. Why? Because for the one who has been given spiritual sight, there is always the follow-up where you begin to see even more clearly.
Just saved once. But after salvation we learn, we grow. When someone comes to faith in Christ, they don't know everything.
you don't have to know the difference between ecclesiology and eschatology to be saved.
Someone who's a sinner, who's aware of their sin, who believes in Christ and believes the gospel and believes he died for us and believes he rose again, they don't understand all the nuances of the old covenant and the new covenant, but there's the expectation that we keep learning that though we have been brought to spiritual life, the Lord keeps working in us.
[28:39] And I think what he's trying to help his apostles understand with this miracle is this idea of I see, but I need help to see more clearly.

Because right after this, as we'll look at this coming Sunday morning, Peter says, you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
And two verses later, when Jesus says, I'm going to die, Peter says, may it never be. Peter says, in verse 29, you are the Christ, and Matthew adds, the Son of the living God.
God, but just verse 33, we're just four verses later, Jesus responds to Peter, get behind me, Satan.
Because what the apostles need to understand is that we must continually rely on Christ, trust in Christ, look to Christ, and say, as the man says in the Gospels, I believe, but help my unbelief.
I can see, but I want to see even more clearly. I trust in you, but I want to trust more fully.
[30:20] will do God to God and so I think that Jesus does this miracle right on the heels of chapter 8 verse 18 to help the apostles understand, of course Jesus has the power to heal all at once.

Every other miracle he did is just in one stage, but I think he wants the apostles to understand that as you are given sight, you continue to learn, you continue to grow, and that your spiritual growth doesn't happen all at once.
Salvation, yes. But when you are a believer, there's that part of you that says, I trust and I believe, but there's so much I don't know.

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I trust, I believe, but there's so much I don't yet see, which is why you have 80 year olds in our church bringing their Bible every Sunday.
They believe, they know, but they're still saying, I want to see more. I want to learn more. That's why people in our church have been Christians for 50 years, but they still read their Bible every single day because they want to know more.
[31:39] They want to see more. And I think he's trying to help his apostles to see here, that if you're going to follow him, it's every day saying, help me see more clearly.

Verse 26, and he sent him to his home. saying, do not even enter the village.
He did not let the people of Bethsaida see the miracle. And now he tells the man who apparently lives in the area of Bethsaida but not inside the Bethsaida property.
He apparently lives right on the outskirts of it because he says, go to your home. Don't even enter into the actual village. Why? Because the people of Bethsaida didn't get to see the miracle and they don't even get to see the results of the miracle.
This is the reality of judgment. And so, by God's grace, Christians have been brought from death to life, from blindness to sight, but the truth is, even though we can see, in a sense, we still see dimly.
[33:07] It's not that we don't believe truly, it's just that we still see dimly. 1 Corinthians 13, 12, now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face, now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

So, we would say it in theology this way, that you can know God on this earth truly, but you'll never know Him fully. What you know of God from the Scripture can be true, and it can be real, and it can be life-changing.
You can know Him truly, but brothers and sisters, you will never on this earth know Him fully. In theology, we call that the doctrine of incomprehensibility, or inexhaustibility.
You can never exhaust the greatness of God. That's why there should never be a season in your life where you close the book. You're not done learning.
The Holy Spirit's not finished illuminating the Scripture to help you to understand it. But, a day is coming when all the clouds will be removed, and on that day we will see Him as He is.
[34:35] And church, this is why you will never get tired of praising God. Let's be honest. There are times when you think about heaven and you're tempted to think, you may not say it out loud, but you're tempted to think, won't that get a little boring?

I mean, we're going to sing, we're going to worship, we're going to work, we're going to eat, that's good, but when you think about worship, if you're honest, there are those moments where you think, okay, so we're going to sing and worship for an hour, six months, a hundred years, a billion years, but at some point, don't we get a little bored with that?
Let me tell you why you think that. You think that because you cannot today see Him exactly for who He is. You can know Him truly, but right now you do not know Him fully.
However holy you think He is, He's holier. However great you think He is, He's greater. However awful you think your sin is, it's infinitely darker.
However great you think the cross is, it was far more gracious than you've ever understood.
However awful you think hell is, you've been saved from something infinitely worse than you ever knew.
[36:05] And the only reason why on this earth we would tend to think that the praises of the King in glory might get old is because on this earth you just can't see fully enough who you are and who He is.

But on that day when you see Him as He is, then you will understand this is why in all eternity we'll never run out of a song.
He's that great. So, when with the ransomed in glory His face I at last shall see it will be my joy through the ages to sing of His love for me.
Because as believers we can see but our prayer is help me see more clearly. We believe but our prayer is help my unbelief.
We trust but our prayer is help me trust more fully. And because of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross one day no longer will we see through a mirror dimly.
[37:42] We will see Him as He is. And in that moment ten thousand years of praise will not be enough.

And praise God we'll have all eternity to see Him as He is. Amen.

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