

JESUS OPENS A BLIND MAN'S EYES

Mark 8:22-26

Key Verse: 8:25

Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Last week, we learned what it means to have a sense of God's history. Let me give you a quick recap. Jesus fed a crowd of 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. But his disciples did not understand the true meaning of the miracle. They were only happy to see that Jesus was getting popular among so many people. So Jesus again tried to teach them to have a compassionate heart towards the people who were like "sheep without a shepherd." When a crowd of 4,000 came to them, Jesus wanted his disciples to take an initiative to feed them. But they had no clue. They did not remember the wonderful work of Jesus when he fed the 5,000. Jesus was still patient with them. He warned them about the "yeast" of the Pharisees and that of Herod. As soon as Jesus mentioned the word yeast, however, the disciples assumed he was talking about their bread problem. The disciples really needed to have a sense of God's history.

The same thing can easily happen to us. In fact, this happens to us more frequently than we'd like to admit. God has done a great work in our lives. He sacrificed his one and only Son Jesus to save us from our sins and to give us the living hope of the kingdom of God. Yet, we often fail to understand the heart of Jesus because our focus is on our own daily grinds. We hear his words when we study the Bible, but the next moment we don't remember what he says to us. Jesus wants us to care for many wandering young students who are like sheep without a shepherd. But it's hard to have a broken heart towards them when we are preoccupied with many things. We need to have a sense of God's history.

In today's passage, some people bring a blind man to Jesus and beg him to touch him. We can learn their shepherd's heart. We also learn the shepherd's heart of Jesus our Lord. Let's think about how we can bring our friends to Jesus so that their eyes can be opened by Jesus. Let's pray that Jesus may open our spiritual eyes so that we can see our spiritual reality clearly and understand the compassionate heart of our Lord Jesus.

I. SOME PEOPLE BRING A BLIND MAN TO JESUS (22)

Look at verse 22. *"They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him."* Bethsaida was situated two miles north of the Sea of Galilee and east of the Jordan River. (It was later called Julias, named after Julia, the daughter of Caesar Augustus.) This was where Jesus fed the 5,000. The place should have reminded the disciples of their lack of a sense of God's history. They had seen with their own eyes how Jesus fed the 5,000 with only five loaves and two fish. The miracle should have opened their spiritual eyes. After all, Jesus helped them to personally participate in the great work of God by asking them to have the people sit down in groups, distribute the food and collect the leftovers. But they did not get the true meaning of the miracle. They did not understand the broken shepherd's heart of Jesus. That was the reason why Jesus

rebuked them severely, saying, “Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?” (Mk 8:18) Now they were about to learn a spiritual lesson from some people in Bethsaida.

Look at verse 22 again. *“They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him.”* As soon as they arrived there, some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. We don't know who these “some people” were. But we can certainly learn the caring heart of these people. They remind us of the friends of the paralytic in Mark 2 who overcame many obstacles to bring the invalid to Jesus. Jesus saw their faith and said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mk 2:5). The people in this passage also remind us of the caring people of the Decapolis in Mark 7:31-37. When they brought a deaf and mute man to Jesus and begged his mercy on him, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears and touched his tongue. Then Jesus said to the man, “Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”). At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

What can we learn from the people who brought the blind man to Jesus? They cared deeply for one helpless man and by faith they brought him to Jesus for healing. This sounds easy. But we know that caring for other people is not a natural thing for most of us. We are very selfish and self-centered. We are often indifferent to others' plight. We are bothered by our small hang nail much more so than someone else's serious illness. We are also busy. With all the advances in technology, we should have plenty of time to care for others. But is it true? Do we have more time and energy for other people than those who lived in the 19th century? The fact is that we are so busy that many of us don't even have time for breakfast in the morning. The point is that it takes an effort to care for a helpless person. And this is what some people in Bethsaida did.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer was like “some people” in Bethsaida. Born in Alsace, Germany (now in France) in 1875, he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior in his early years. He studied philosophy and theology earning doctoral degrees in both. He was also an accomplished musician. But what he really wanted to do was to go to Africa and serve the people there with the gospel of Jesus. So he entered medical school and became a doctor. He served many people of Africa for more than forty years. Some people thought that he was wasting his life in Africa. But he understood the sufferings of the people in the land. He wanted to share the love of Christ with them.

The people in Bethsaida understood the agony of the blind man. At that time, a blind man was thought to be cursed by God. God made man's eyes to see the beautiful world that he made. But this blind man could not see the majestic mountains, beautiful blue skies or wild flowers. He couldn't see the face of his mother. He really wanted to get a job to support himself. But no one would hire him because of his blindness. The only thing he could do was to sit in the corner of a busy street and stretch out his hand, begging, “Alms for the blind! Alms for the blind!” He had no hope for his future. He despaired. But some people heard his quiet sobbing at night. They noticed the tears rolling down on his cheek. They brought him to Jesus.

This blind man was helpless. He needed others' help. And some people brought him to Jesus. Likewise, there are many spiritually blind people around us. They may be too weak or helpless to come to Jesus on their own. They may be too proud to come to Jesus on their own. They need our help. We can be like "some people" of Bethsaida in this passage!

II. JESUS HEALS THE BLIND MAN (23-26)

Jesus was happy to see the shepherd's heart of the people in Bethsaida. How did he help the blind man? Look at verse 23. *He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"*

First, Jesus had a 1:1 fellowship with the man. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Jesus wanted to have a personal time with the man away from the village people. It was important for him to establish a personal relationship with Jesus. It is important for us to establish a personal relationship with Jesus. That's why Jesus often had a personal time with the sick person before healing him. For example, he took the deaf and mute man aside, away from the crowd before healing him, as we learned earlier in Chapter 7 (Mk 7:33). In fact, there are several similarities between his healing of this blind man and that of the deaf and mute man. Verse 23 says that Jesus spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, as he had done with the deaf and mute man. His spitting on the man's eyes and putting his hands on the man show that he deeply cared about the blind man. He had compassion on the man and wanted to restore his sight.

Second, healing the blindness in stages. There is also a difference between this healing and other healings of Jesus. The healing of this blind man is the only case where the effect was not instantaneous. When Jesus said to the deaf and mute man, "Be opened!" the man's ears were opened immediately and he began to speak plainly (7:34). When Jesus said to a paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and walk," immediately the man got up, took his mat and walked out (2:12). But his healing of the blind man in this passage was different. After spitting on the man's eyes and putting his hands on the man, Jesus asked him, "Do you see anything?" What was the man's answer? Look at verse 24. *He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."* Obviously the healing was incomplete. This man had a blurry vision.

Look at verse 25. *Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.* This man's vision became 20/20 with the second touch. So the question is: Why wasn't the healing instantaneous this time? Was his case of blindness so severe that Jesus could not heal him with one touch? No, that couldn't be true, because Jesus took care of a worse case of blindness with only one try. He opened the eyes of a man born blind with no problem (Jn 9:7). Jesus is the Son of God. There is nothing that is impossible with him. Then why did Jesus heal the man's



blindness in two stages? One plausible answer is that Jesus wanted to teach his disciples about their spiritual blindness. He did this on purpose in order to teach his disciples. How? His disciples loved him and followed him. They had witnessed many wonderful miracles that Jesus performed. They heard the wonderful word of truth as they followed him. But they still did not have a clear spiritual vision. They had seen how Jesus fed a large crowd of people with small loaves of bread. But they still did not know the heart of Jesus because their hearts were preoccupied with their own desires. They had eyes but failed to see (18). They needed a second or a third touch of Jesus so that they could see what Jesus was doing and accept what he wanted them to do.

Likewise, not all of us have a 20/20 spiritual vision at the moment we become Christians. Our spiritual maturity does not happen instantly. It takes place one step at a time as we struggle to live by faith. We need to grow in faith step by step by feeding on the word of God and walking with Christ in our fellowship with him. We must hear Jesus' voice, "Do you see anything?" Even if we don't see things clearly, we should not give up. We must pray that Jesus may touch our eyes again and again. This can be done when we come to the word of God with a humble learning mind. Our spiritual eyes can be opened when we learn to obey the word of God.

In John 3:3, Jesus declared to Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." Only when we are reborn in Jesus, we can see the kingdom of God. Only in Jesus, we can have a clear spiritual vision. We may have perfect eye sight. But if we remain in the darkness of sin, we still cannot see anything. We cannot but wander and grope in darkness without knowing what to do with our lives. Only when we come to Jesus, the Light of the world, we come to know the spiritual reality facing the sinful mankind and the wonderful redemptive history of God. When some people of Bethsaida brought the blind man, Jesus opened his eyes in stages and enabled him to see clearly.

Look at verse 26. *Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."* Once again Jesus did not want his miracle to be sensationalized among people. He did not want people to follow him only because of his miracles. Some people today love to appear on Good Morning America or the Larry King Show to talk about their achievements. But not Jesus. He told the formerly blind man to lay low so that his case would not attract many reporters and TV crews.

In today's passage, we learned how "some people" in Bethsaida had compassion toward a blind man and brought him to Jesus. They overcame their selfish nature and spent their time and effort to care for one helpless person. Jesus was happy to see their shepherd's heart and took care of the man with personal attention. He cured his blindness in stages until he could see things clearly. Jesus really wanted his disciples to have a clear spiritual vision and understand the heart of God towards the dying people of the world. May God help us to be like the people of Bethsaida! May God help us to overcome our selfish nature and bring one friend to Jesus through our Bible study! May the Lord touch our eyes and let us have a clear spiritual vision in God!