2-9-20

Mark 8:22-26

There are many accounts of Jesus performing miraculous healings; but this one is a little different. The healing takes place in two stages. Of course, since this is unusual, we want to know why. The answer is not immediately obvious in the account of the healing itself, so we must look further. The first place to look is the surroundings in the book of Mark. Scripture will interpret Scripture; sometimes in the immediate context, next we look within the same book, lastly, we look throughout the rest of the Bible.

Let’s look a little more closely at the story. This blind man is brought to Jesus by friends who implore Jesus to heal him. This kind of thing has happened before: Recall the men who dug a hole through a roof in order to let a paralytic down by ropes in front of Jesus. Mark also has another account of a man who was deaf and mute who was brought to Jesus by others. In each of these cases, Jesus responds quickly in providing the request of the people who brought the sick person.

Now for us, what we see here is the importance of intercession. Our Saviour is pleased to hear us pray for another person; to take our time in order to bring another to Him, strictly for the other person’s benefit. This is part of the living sacrifice that a Christian is called to. We give up our time on behalf of others; this giving up of time can include works, but there is nothing more important than prayer for another. In our own works, which are good, we can only do so much. But when we lift someone up to God, we lift them up to He who has no limits. Intercession is a sacrifice on our part, but it is a sacrifice God is pleased with.

Jesus takes the man by the hand and leads him out of the town of Bethsaida. Think for just a moment how trusting that man was of Jesus. He couldn’t see him and didn’t know Him. For all he knew, he might be led out of town and be robbed or just left there. But he was willing to follow wherever Jesus led him.

Another example for us: An unquestioning willingness to follow Jesus. Jesus told us that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. The Bible tells us what Jesus wants us to do; the primary being to love God and to love others. Another way of following Jesus is to accept whatever happens in our lives as being allowed by God. Now this doesn’t mean that we do nothing about our circumstances. If we are sick, we do what we must to get well. If we don’t have enough money, we must seek an honest means of earning more. If there is a bad situation between us and someone else, we do what we can to straighten it out.

In each of these things we pray. This is not “let go and let God”; this is actively praying for God’s help in our situation and asking Him to fix the circumstances we are in. The next part is the hard part of following Him; we must accept the answer He gives us. Perhaps our sickness leaves us with a permanent problem or perhaps we aren’t healed at all. Maybe we can’t find another job and are stuck in poverty. It could be that the relationship, even with someone we love, will never be healed. In all these cases, we continue to love and cling to Jesus. It would be very easy to become angry and bitter; but we are called to something higher: trusting Christ.

No matter how things turn out in this life, we praise God for who He is and acknowledge that He is sovereign. In doing this, we confess that He is good and that He knows what He is doing. This is faith, this is trusting His leading. The wonderful thing about being a Christian is that we know that this life is not the end; whatever we endure here will be worth the glory coming in eternity with Jesus.

Jesus took the blind man out of Bethsaida, and after the healing, He instructed the man not to return to the village. This may be because Jesus was trying to avoid a crowd of false believers following Him for the wrong reasons. We know from Scripture that this kind of thing happened. People would follow Him just to see miracles or get some benefit from Him. Another possible reason is found in Matthew 11 and Luke 10. In these chapters, we find that the people of Bethsaida are hard-hearted and will not believe in Jesus. In response, Jesus proclaims a woe of judgement upon them and lets them know that even Tyre and Sidon, evil and gentile cities, would have repented if they had seen Jesus perform His works. Jesus took the man away from these unbelieving people to heal him.

Jesus then spit on the man’s eyes and laid His hands on him. As we read through the Gospels, we see that there are several different ways that Jesus will heal someone. One time He put mud on a man’s eyes and told him to go wash. Sometimes He lay His hands on a person; sometimes all a person had to do was touch Jesus’ cloak. A lot of times Jesus simply issued a command and healing took place. The point being that Jesus will choose how something will take place; and it will somehow fit into God’s overall plan.

When we have some problem in our lives and we ask God for help, deep down, we are hoping for an immediate miracle. We hope that things will be solved right away so that we don’t have to suffer. And sometimes, that is what God does. But most of the time, He will work through some other means. He will work through a doctor to make us well. He will give us the wisdom to use our money wisely so that over time we can get out of financial trouble. God will use the way that is best for His children; even if it’s not the way we would like. He is always looking out for our good. That is why we can trust Him and follow Him without question.

Jesus then asked the man if he could see anything. This is the only time that Jesus asks anything like this when He heals someone. Why would He do this? Jesus would have already known the answer. Keep in mind that Jesus was always teaching His disciples who were with Him. Jesus wanted them to know that the man had only been partially healed.

In the preceding verses, 14 – 21, is the account of Jesus warning the disciples to beware the leaven of the Pharisees. The disciples thought He was talking about bread when He was talking about the teaching of the Pharisees. Jesus had asked them, “Do you not yet understand?” Another way of wording this would have been, “Do you not yet see?” The disciples were dealing with a type of blindness; spiritual blindness. While they understood that Jesus was special, they didn’t grasp how special. Spiritually, they were like the blind man was now.

The man replied, “I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around.” Obviously, the man had not been blind from birth. He had lost his sight due to sickness or accident. But his answer sounds strange to us. Unfortunately, this has led to some pretty outlandish ideas on what this means. But all it means is that he couldn’t see clearly. Things were blurry and out of focus. Just like the disciple’s spiritual vision.

Lastly, Jesus again places His hands on the man’s eyes, and his vision is restored entirely. He can see clearly. Jesus doesn’t allow him to go into the village to evangelize; the city is under judgement. The man is to go home where he can share with his family and friends what God has done for him.

So far, we have an idea that the man’s partial healing from blindness may have some connection with the disciple’s inability to see what is going on spiritually. But we need to consider a larger part of what Mark is writing in his account. Up through the end of chapter 7, Mark writes about Jesus’ teaching and about many miracles He did. Jesus healed disease and leprosy, commanded demons and nature, multiplied food, and raised the dead. The disciples knew He was specially empowered by God; they knew He was a teacher sent by God. They could partially see who Jesus was, unlike the Pharisees and the religious leaders who were still completely blind.

At the end of chapter 7, Mark starts to focus in more on who Jesus is and prepare us for what is coming. Mark has another healing account in 7:31-37. (Read)

These two accounts of healing are only in Mark’s Gospel. But in them we see something new; healings that Mark hasn’t mentioned before: Jesus made the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and the mute to speak. The prophet Isaiah reveals that God will come to His people and will do specific things: Isaiah 35:4-6. (Read)

With these two healing stories, Mark is calling to mind specific Messianic prophecies that Jesus is fulfilling. Beginning with chapter 8, there is the account of Jesus feeding the 4000; which goes along with God saving His people. Next, as we mentioned before, he points out the blindness of the religious leaders, and the inability of the disciple to fully understand.

Following the healing of the blind man, we read about another miracle. This is where the Holy Spirit reveals to the disciples who Jesus actually is and Peter speaks for the group when he tells Jesus, “You are the Christ”. Their eyes are opened; they can see clearly now. They understand that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is the Son of God. Their spiritual understanding has come in stages, just as the blind man’s vision was returned in stages.

The two-stage healing of the blind man teaches us that our own spiritual understanding is a process; we don’t understand everything all at once. For us, this is part of the process of sanctification. Throughout our lives, if we are truly following Christ, we will learn to think more in spiritual terms; we will learn to think more about eternity. That is very important for us: to make decisions in consideration of their effect on our eternal lives. Remembering that this life is very short compared to forever; we want to be prepared for forever.

We know from the Bible that even after this wonderful moment for the disciples, when they could finally see who Jesus really was, there was still much they didn’t understand. They would not receive full understanding until the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. Christians have the Holy Spirit with us always; and He will teach us and open our eyes as we are ready. It is our part to make ourselves ready by following Christ and depending on Him.

Prayer

Lord God, in our natural state, our spirits were dead, separated from You. We could never understand Your word; we were too blind to even comprehend our need for You. In Your great mercy, You send Your Holy Spirit to us, to give us enough understanding and enough faith to turn to You. When we do, our spirits are brought back to life and the Holy Spirit teaches us to understand Your word.

Jesus, we cry out to You on behalf of this community. It is blanketed in darkness; the people cannot see and do not know it. Shine Your light here on this town; let the rays of Your goodness and mercy illuminate the people. Bring many here into Your Kingdom; let spiritual rebirth take place throughout.

Use us, use this Your church; let us become laborers in Your field. Enlighten us spiritually so that we may reflect Your light to others, and draw them into Your merciful and gracious presence. You are glorious Lord, You rightly receive praise and worship from Your creation. Help us to be the living sacrifices You desire us to be.

We pray these things in the mighty name of Jesus

Amen