

“Like Trees Walking”
Mark 8:22-26
(Preached at Trinity, July 20, 2011)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we began **Chapter 8** we found Jesus still in the region of the Decapolis and once again He is surrounded by a large crowd of people. In **Verse 1** Mark describes them as a great multitude. In **Verse 9** Mark records that the number as about 4000.
2. The scene had much in common with the feeding of the 5000 in **Chapter 6**. The main difference was that of numbers. In this scene they begin with 7 loaves and a few fish and end with 7 baskets.
3. Upon rejecting request by the Pharisees for a sign from heaven Jesus and His disciples return to the boat to sail to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. While alone with His disciples Jesus warned them of the wickedness of the Pharisees and Herod.
Mark 8:15 - "Watch out! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."
Jesus refers to their corruption as leaven because of the manner that leaven begins as a small lump but soon affects the entire loaf. Such is the manner of wickedness.
4. The disciples completely missed what Jesus was saying and also failed to remember the power of Christ over creation.
Mark 8:17 – “Do you not yet see or understand? Do you have a hardened heart?”
5. They brought the boat to the northeastern shore near the Jordan River to a town called Bethsaida which wasn’t far from the place where the feeding of the 5000 occurred.
6. **Verse 22** – Immediately some men leading a blind man approached and begged Jesus to heal him. We find some similarities with how Jesus received others who came to Him begging His aid.
We find compassion. We find a gentle touch. Like with the deaf man in **Chapter 6** Jesus led the man away from the crowd.
7. But we find great differences and variety in all of Jesus’ healings. Jesus would not be confined to any particular method or any preconceived notion of men. He could use a touch or speak a word or if He chose, He could heal without being physically present. He continually manifested His sovereignty over every situation.
8. In addition, Jesus had many lessons to teach through His healings and so He had the liberty to deviate from His usual practice. In His usual practice Jesus healed instantaneously and at once. Mark has demonstrated this over and over.
Mark 1:41-42 – “Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed." ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.”
Mark 2:11-12 - "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home." ¹² And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone”

Mark 5:27-29 – “after hearing about Jesus, she came up in the crowd behind *Him* and touched His cloak. ²⁸ For she thought, “If I just touch His garments, I will get well.” ²⁹ Immediately the flow of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.”

Mark 5:41-42 – “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴² Immediately the girl got up and *began to walk*”

9. But in this healing of the blind man Jesus chose to delay the healing. He spat on the man’s eyes and laid His hands on him and then asked if he could see. But he didn’t receive his full sight immediately.
 - A. Why did Jesus do this? We can’t say for certain. Ultimately, it rests in the infinite mind of Christ. But we can be sure, it was not without purpose. Perhaps there is a lesson being taught here.
 - B. Could it be that Jesus healed the blind man in this manner to teach us about our own limited sight?
10. The eye is a receptacle of perception. We often use terminology of our sight to describe our perception, understanding or comprehension. Someone asks us if we understand and we respond, “Yes, I see.”
 Jesus told Nicodemus,
John 3:3 – “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
 It is true that without the new birth or regeneration a lost man will neither see the Kingdom with his eyes, nor will he be able to comprehend it or understand it.
1 Corinthians 2:14 – “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”
11. We can find an important truth taught in this man’s healing. Although God saves a man instantaneously his understanding is renewed by degrees.
 - A. The heart is changed at once. In fact the heart cannot be gradually changed. It has either been renewed, or it has not.
 The will is changed at once. We are moved to embrace the Gospel
 The affections are changed at once. We fall in love with God and His Son
That isn’t to say that any part of us has yet been perfected
 - B. But the understanding is renewed by degrees – through the process of illumination
 Spurgeon – “As the eye is the emblem of the understanding, it is very possible, nay, it is usual, to heal the human understanding by degrees. Probably the spiritual sight will never be, in absolute perfectness, bestowed upon us till we enter into the light for which the spiritual state is intended; namely, the glory of that place where they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light.”
12. Tonight I want to set this healing before you as an example or similitude of our spiritual ignorance. I’ll set it before you under three heads:
 The Case For, Causes Of, Cure for Spiritual Ignorance
 - I. First, I’d like to set before you the case for spiritual ignorance
 - A. I’m not talking about spiritual deadness
 1. The lost man is spiritually blind

2. He's like the blind man before he met Christ. He has no sight
Ephesians 4:18 – “being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;”
 3. The lost man doesn't understand spiritual things and doesn't care to understand them. He may have religious notions but he isn't interested in the truth.
 4. He may taste of spiritual matters but will not be a partaker of them
- B. My focus tonight is on Christians who are lacking in spiritual sight
1. We are talking about those who have renewed hearts, wills, and affections—and yet their understanding has not been made perfect
 2. Jesus is working with a blind man with poor vision. We are not talking about a leper defiled and excluded from the community of God. We aren't talking about a demon possessed man speaking blasphemies against Christ with a hatred of all that is holy.
 3. We are talking about a Christian suffering from degrees of spiritual ignorance. He can see but he can't see clearly.
 - a. This blind man knew enough about men to recognize them – only he saw them as trees walking – he couldn't see clearly
 - b. The spiritually ignorant Christian isn't totally blind. He has an understanding of the important and essential elements of the faith. But he is woefully lacking in understanding.
- C. Keep in mind that each of us suffer to some degree from this blindness
1. None of us have perfect spiritual understanding
 2. As we've seen in the exposition of **Romans 14**, we need to be patient with one another regarding those areas in which we disagree. God is still teaching us. While Christians agree on the essentials, there is a wide range of beliefs on the nonessentials.

II. What are the causes of this ignorance?

- A. Immaturity
1. A new Christian is considered a baby. He is incapable of digesting the deep truths of the faith
 2. God illuminates our understanding by degrees. We are growing in maturity
 3. Sadly, though, some believers spend too much time in infancy
 4. Listen to the writer of Hebrews
Hebrews 5:12 – “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”

- B. Low expectations
1. When you surround yourself with spiritually immature people you will not experience great growth in maturity
Proverbs 27:17 – “Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.”
 2. If you surround yourself with the spiritually immature you will maintain low spiritual expectations of sound doctrine
 3. When I’m around some of my brother ARBCA pastors I’m often humbled. Some of them are brilliant and it reminds me to continue to press upward.
 4. Who do you hang out with? This is why the local church is indispensable in the life of a believer.
- C. Poor teaching
1. It would seem today that the church is suffering from years of poor and inadequate teaching
There is inadequate instruction on the nature of the atonement, on the relationship of the Old and New Covenants, of the Law and the Gospel, the attributes of God – for many the very basic elements of Christianity have been lost.
 2. Pastors are given to the church to build it up – how well are we doing?
Ephesians 4:11-15 – “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. ¹⁴ As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ,”
 3. When there is an absence of sound doctrine how can we expect believers to grow. It is the duty of every believer to seek teachers who will teach them the hard things—not just the things we find easy to receive.
- D. Neglect
1. Growing in Spiritual understanding demands great diligence from all of us.
 2. On this side of glory there is a need for much diligence
 3. When we neglect our soul we will flounder in ignorance
 4. God has given us means of grace whereby we might grow
- III. What is the cure for this spiritual ignorance? What can be done?
- A. Being in a community of faith
1. The blind man was brought to Jesus
Mark 8:22 – “And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.”
 2. John Piper – “Sanctification is a community project.”
 3. We are a part of a covenant community. We are responsible for one another. We are to help one another in our pursuit of Christ. We are to help one another in our understanding of God. We are to correct one another when we fall into error.

4. Look at the example of Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos
Acts 18:24-26 – “Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; ²⁶ and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.”
- Apollos is described as a man mighty in the Scriptures – yet his understanding was not clear. He was a man who saw men as trees walking.
 - Aquilla and Priscilla helped him to see more clearly
 - It is our duty to help one another. The mature should help the immature.

B. The blind man came under the Word of Christ

- Jesus spit on his eyes
Mark 8:23 – “after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?"

 - The spittle came forth from the mouth of Christ
 - This is important since that which proceeds from the mouth of God is always of significance
2 Samuel 22:9 – “Smoke went up out of His nostrils, Fire from His mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it.”
Revelation 1:16 – “In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.”
Revelation 2:16 – “Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”
 - The greatest significance is that which God speaks
Matthew 4:4 – “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”
Psalms 33:6 – “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.”
 - In addition the spittle of Christ was most pure. Our normal response to being spit upon is revulsion, but not with Christ.

- The Word of God is the chief means of grace for giving the knowledge of God
2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

C. The blind man received from Christ

- Mark 8:23** – “Taking the blind man by the hand”
- Jesus touched him, led him
 - We need what only Christ can give - illumination

Conclusion:

1. We cannot expect to grow in the knowledge of Christ apart from our diligent pursuit of Him. This demands diligent study. It demands the help of pastors and of our brethren. It demands the touch of Christ.
2. To know Christ is to experience Him. But you cannot grow in your relationship with Him if you are in ignorance of the truths concerning Him. May God grant us a lively relationship with Him through the knowledge of the truth.