

“The Sovereign Will of Christ”  
Mark 8:22-26  
(Preached at Trinity, August 3, 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. Last time we began to look at this interesting account of Jesus healing the blind man. This particular account is found only in the Gospel of Mark. Having crossed the Sea of Galilee the Disciples 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.
2. **Verse 22** – Immediately some men leading a blind man approached and begged Jesus to heal him. These men are to be greatly commended.
  - A. They were filled with compassion for the affliction of this man. Mark doesn’t give us any information concerning the identity of these men. Were they family members? Were they faithful friends? We aren’t told. But they were obviously concerned and willing to enter into the life of this man. This should also be our heart and desire. Do we believe that Christ can save? We should confidently bring men to Christ knowing that Jesus is the only source of life.
  - B. They were also men of faith. They had confidence that Jesus could heal. They knew that if they could get Jesus to touch this blind man he would be healed. **Mark 8:22** – “And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.”
    1. They had obviously heard of Christ and of His ability to heal.
    2. The blind man also must have had confidence in the healing power of Christ. He was willing to be brought to Christ
  - C. Their faith was an active faith. They didn’t simply believe that Jesus could heal. They were actively seeking the healing. Notice they “implored Him to touch him.” The word means “to beseech, to beg, plead Not only do we seek to bring people to Christ, we also plead on their behalf. We must never forget the importance of prayer as we seek the salvation of souls.
3. In all that there is to commend these men they also had one serious flaw. They sought to confine Jesus to their preconceived method of healing: **Mark 8:22** – “And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.”
  - A. This seemed like a reasonable deduction. They had heard that this was the methodology of Jesus. Jesus healed the sick by laying His hands upon them.
  - B. This is the great danger – to try to box Jesus into our perception of Him, even if our perception is incorrect. And the danger is to place greater faith upon the method than upon Jesus Himself.

4. Their great error was tying Jesus down to one particular method when Jesus is free to work when, where, and how He wishes.  
So in this case Jesus changed His method in order to teach them His sovereignty. He is Lord over all things.  
**Daniel 4:35** – “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"

Let us consider two serious ways people are often guilty of seeking to conform Christ to their ways--

I. In salvation

- A. Human beings all stand guilty before God for all have sinned  
**Romans 3:23** – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
1. All human beings have a knowledge of God and of their condemnation before God  
**Romans 1:18-19** - “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, <sup>19</sup> because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”
  2. Rather than falling down before God in repentance they deny Him and suppress the truth.
  3. They invent fanciful ways to justify themselves before Him.
    - a. This is the nature of all human religion except Christianity
    - b. All religion is based upon efforts by human imagination to bring about reconciliation with the God they have offended.
    - c. It is all an effort to manipulate God. It is a declaration of independence from God – a declaration that we will come to him our way.
    - d. Listen: All of these religions are not devised from a careful study of the Word of God. They are passed down from generation to generation and people assume this is how God works.
  4. This is why Christianity is so despised. It declares us guilty and then takes away all human effort and leaves us naked and helpless before God.
- B. Salvation is a sovereign work of God
1. It is His work from start to finish
  2. The human will being depraved and disposed to sin has no inclination towards holiness and will not humble himself before God.
  3. Only God can convey the power to the lost sinner that will enable him to embrace God’s gracious gift of redemption
- C. God has established very strict terms for dealing with the sin problem of man.
1. A person has to admit his sin and moral bankruptcy – In other words, he has to admit that he is guilty before God and justly condemned and he has to be convinced that there is no amount of good he can do to rectify the situation.
  2. He has to be convinced of the excellence of Christ’s work on the cross – the full sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice.

4. He has to comply with God's terms for dealing with his sin - Faith & Repentance
  - a. Faith being a full trust in Christ alone for salvation  
Spurgeon's Catechism: Question #69  
Q. What is faith in Jesus Christ?  
A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive, and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is set forth in the gospel.
  - b. Repentance being a complete turning from sin unto God with the purpose of living a holy life.  
Spurgeon's Catechism: # 70  
Q. What is repentance unto life?  
A. Repentance unto life, is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does with grief and hatred of his sin turn from it unto God, with full purpose to strive after new obedience.
- D. God has also given strict terms for how a man is to be brought to faith
  1. The means that God uses to save a person is the application of His Word. It is through the Word that the Holy Spirit breathes life into the sinner.  
<sup>NAS</sup> **Romans 10:17** – "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."
  2. The Word can be delivered in many forms but the chief means is preaching  
<sup>NAS</sup> **1 Corinthians 1:21** – "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."
- E. Men have always sought to force God to conform to their wisdom in salvation
  1. Just like the friends of the blind man they thought they have all the answers. They were sure they knew the way Christ should operate. Jesus demonstrated that they really didn't understand Him
  2. Some insist that their good lives will surely be accepted – they don't understand the nature of God.
  3. Some well-meaning Christians insist on using pragmatic ways of reaching sinners. It all makes so much sense. All we need is more creative ways to get them to come to Christ
    - a. Perhaps a concert will work
    - b. Perhaps we can show them a movie or put on a dramatic skit
    - c. Perhaps if we have a stirring invitation they will come
  4. And some attach significance to various actions
    - a. If we can get them to walk to the front of the church they'll be saved
    - b. If we can get them to repeat a certain prayer they'll be saved

5. All of these reveal a failure to trust the sovereignty of God
  - a. There has been an increasing diminishing of the importance of preaching.  
This is God's method of saving His people. John the Baptist came preaching, Jesus came preaching, the apostles came preaching. Paul's unchanging advice to his young protégé, Timothy  
**2 Timothy 4:2** – "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
  - b. We are absolutely dependent upon the power of God  
<sup>KJV</sup> **1 Corinthians 2:4** – "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:"
6. And some sincere seekers hear the testimony of a Christian and expect God to save them in exactly the same way using the exact same circumstances. One may be brought to tears but not all. One may describe a flood of joy that overwhelmed them, but not all. One may describe a warmth in the bosom, but not all. This may not be your experience at all.
7. **Spurgeon**: "Yet you must remember that God has his own ways and times of revealing himself to his people. It is quite possible that you thought too much of that preacher, or that enquiry-room, or that good book, and that you did not think enough of Jesus himself; and, probably, if you had looked to him rather than to the instrumentality, you would long ere this have had your eyes opened, and have seen everything clearly."

## II. In prayer

- A. The friends of the blind man knew what they wanted
  1. The blind man needed healing to his eyes
  2. They also knew what it would take to bring about the healing – the touch of Christ
  3. Were they trusting Jesus or were they fixated the healing and the touch?
  4. Jesus is turning their attention to Him – He heals whom He wills, when He wills, how He wills.
- B. We often pray not only with the details of our circumstances but also details of how we think God needs to answer our prayers
  1. Spurgeon: "Just as these people expected the healing of the blind man to come by the touch of Christ's hand, so many expect *deliverance from trouble* to come in a certain specified way. You know it is so with many of you to whom I am speaking. You have taken your troubles to the Lord, — you have told him all about your case, and you have entrusted it to him, but you have laid down the plan by which God is to work on your behalf."
  2. On one hand, this is appropriate  
We have a physical sickness and we ask for healing  
We have a financial need and we ask for a job  
We are facing a major decision and we pray for wisdom  
We are struggling with a particular sin and we pray for strength

3. But do we trust the wisdom and sovereignty of God who has ordained all things; who rules all of His creation with perfect wisdom.
    - a. Are you willing to trust that He will answer your prayer in the way He desires?
    - b. Are you willing to trust that He will answer your prayer in His time?
    - c. What if His answer is completely different from your expectation.
  4. Do you really believe He is interested in your greater good?
- C. Look at some examples:
1. Jesus - **Luke 22:42** – “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.”
  2. Paul - **2 Corinthians 12:7-9** – “Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-- to keep me from exalting myself! <sup>8</sup> Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. <sup>9</sup> And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”
  3. Do you think Joseph prayed when his brothers threw him in the pit? When they sold him to the Midianites? When framed by Potiphar’s wife and cast into prison? Yet, God’s timing was perfect and His wisdom undeniable. Joseph exalted God’s purpose to his brothers  
**Genesis 50:20** – “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.”
  4. Don’t forget the prayer of James and John:  
**Mark 10:37-38** – "Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on *Your* left." <sup>38</sup> But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"
- D. We must never seek to know more than God  
**Romans 11:34** – “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor?”

- III. While God will not be put into a box He always acts consistently with His Word and His character
- A. This is one issue with the extraordinary gifts
1. The non-cessationists use this very argument in their defense. That God cannot be confined. If God wants to bring fresh revelation today or move in an extraordinary way He can do it. This is John Piper’s position.
  2. No one will deny that God can do what He pleases. Jesus demonstrated this in this passage. He can heal with a touch, with the spittle of His saliva, or both or neither. He can simply speak, “Lazarus, come forth.” He can heal instantly or in steps. He is God.

3. No one questions what God is *able* to do. The question is what *does* God do?  
Is this consistent with His post Apostolic, post Canonical age?  
If the Bible is God's full and complete revelation of Himself then we must conclude that He will not in the future begin revealing Himself in some other way.
- B. The problem today is exactly the same as the problem Jesus faced with the blind man
  1. They did not understand His divine nature—that He is independent and sovereign and will not be conformed to the whims and imaginations of man.
  2. Too many today are trying to conform Christ to their way of salvation
  3. And too often we pray pretending we have all knowledge and all wisdom. We must do what they should have done. They should have humbly bowed before Christ and cried out, "Will you heal his blindness?"  
We must cry out when we pray, "Oh Lord, here is my request, but help me to receive your holy will."

#### Conclusion:

1. Jesus will never allow us to make Him conform to our wills. Instead, He is working to make us conform to His will.
2. It is possible for us to place more importance in the things that are attached to Christianity rather than upon Christ.  
The blind man focused upon the touch of Christ and the healing of Christ but was he focused upon the person of Christ? Were they trusting the touch of Christ more than Christ?  
It is good to seek love, joy and peace but these things must not supplant Christ.  
It is good to seek holiness but never for the sake of holiness alone. We must seek Christ.
3. It is good to seek faith and repentance but are you seeking Christ?
4. Everything must focus upon Christ!  
**1 Corinthians 2:2** – "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."