

## Sermon – Seeing Jesus Clearly Mark 8:22-9:1; Isaiah 52:13-15

### III – Eye chart.

How good is your eyesight? Can you read this eye chart?

Put your hand up if you can read the top line. Who can read the bottom line?

This week I have to renew my driver's licence and I have to do one of these eyesight tests. The purpose I guess is to make sure I can see things clearly on the road – road signs, other cars, buildings, people. It's important to be able to see clearly if you're driving a car.

And as a Christian, it's important to be able to see Jesus clearly if you're following him.

Mark 8 tells us about the difference between being completely blind to Jesus, seeing Jesus with blurred vision and seeing Jesus clearly. Turn to verse 22 with me as we look at this together.

Jesus and his disciples come to Bethsaida and some people bring a blind man to be healed by him. And Jesus takes the blind man by the hand and leads him OUTSIDE the city with his disciples. Now, that's a strange thing for Jesus to do! Why does he do that? Because he's doing what he often does – he's taking his disciples somewhere quiet to teach them. And it seems he's going to use this blind man to help him teach them.

So when Jesus gets outside the city with his disciples, he SPITS on the man's eyes, and puts his hands on him. I imagine the guy was pretty thankful he was blind at that stage – when someone spits in your face, you probably don't want to see it coming! Then Jesus asks him: "Do you see anything?" Jesus actually has to ask the guy if the healing worked! That's strange isn't it? And the man says "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Now either there are actually people dressed up as trees walking around, or Jesus didn't fully heal the guy the first time around! Then Jesus places his hands on the man's eyes, and finally his sight is completely restored. So why was this man healed in two stages? Either Jesus wasn't able to heal him first go, or he was teaching his disciples something. Since we know Jesus has the power to do anything, it makes sense that he healed the man like this to teach his disciples an important point. That when it comes to knowing Jesus, there are three types of people – there are people who are completely blind to Jesus; there are people who have a blurred vision of Jesus; and there are people who see Jesus clearly.

### **BLIND**

Let's turn to verse 27 to look at the first group of people – the blind:

*"Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, 'Who do people say I am?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.'"*

People have different ideas of who Jesus is. Some people are simply blind to who Jesus really is.

III – When I was a high school teacher, 10 years ago now, students would often ask me how old I was. I'd ask them "How old do *you* think I am?" Some would say "19". About 5 years off. I was 24 at the time. That's OK. One child said "46". Another child had described me to his mother, so she could find me at parent teacher interviews. He told her I was "the really old guy with the long hair". I learned two things from that experience. First, long hair doesn't necessarily make you look younger. And two, children are pretty bad at guessing your age. Some of them really have no idea!

A lot of people make *guesses* about *who* Jesus is. And a lot of people really are blind to who he is. Some see Jesus, even today, as just a prophet, or a magician, or as some famous good guy. They are BLIND to who Jesus really is.

## BLURRED VISION

Then there are others who see a blurred picture of Jesus. They see him, but not clearly. In verse 29, Jesus asks his disciples:

*“But what about you? Who do you say I am?” And Peter answered “You are the Christ.”*

This is a *turning point* in Mark’s gospel. For the first time in the whole gospel, one of the disciples clearly sees who Jesus really is. he is the Christ. But we learn very soon after this statement that Peter doesn’t really see Jesus clearly at all. In fact, Peter and the rest of the disciples are a bit like the blind man after the first healing. **They can see, but their vision is blurred.**

It’s like the letters at the bottom of the eye chart. We can see that there’s something there, but it’s not really clear. Peter understands that Jesus is the Christ, but he doesn’t clearly understand what that means.

## CLEAR VISION

So Jesus goes on to tell his disciples what it really means for him to be the Christ. Verse 31:

*“He began to teach them that the son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me Satan!” he said” You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”*

Jesus rebukes Peter. Peter understands that Jesus is the Christ, but he doesn’t realise what the consequences of that are. Peter doesn’t understand that Jesus, as the Christ, must die for the sins of the world. He doesn’t WANT Jesus to die. But Jesus MUST die. It is necessary for Jesus to die to fulfil God’s plan. Jesus sees God’s plan clearly. Peter’s and the disciple’s vision is blurred. They see he is the Christ, but they do not fully understand what that means. We know eventually that, like the blind man, the disciples **will come** to see Jesus clearly. They **will come** to understand his death and resurrection. But at the moment, their vision is blurred.

## What about you? Do you see Jesus clearly?

We live in the time **after** the events of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We have the whole picture laid out before us. But DO WE see Jesus clearly? Seeing clearly means that we not only know **who** Jesus is, but we also understand **what** he has done for us in his death and resurrection, and we understand **how** that impacts our own lives.

Turn with me to verses 34-38:

Jesus says: *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?”*

If we see Jesus clearly, if we understand what he means to our life, then we are prepared to give up the whole world to follow him.

**III** – Over Christmas there was a lottery for, I think, around \$32 million. And as I saw the ads, I found myself wondering “what would I do with \$32 million?” Think of all the things you could do with that sort of money. I thought about it for a few minutes, in my own little dream world. Imagine what you could buy? But in the end, what will you really have? Even if you have \$32 million, or even the whole world, what good is it if you lose your soul? What good is it if you have no relationship with the God of this world?

*“If anyone would come after me he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”*

We may clearly see who Jesus is, but we need to be clear about what that means for our life as a follower of Jesus. Most of us probably accept that following Jesus means a life of sacrifice. And it's easy to see that clearly from the Bible. And it's easy to see that we are called to give up all we have for Jesus. But when it comes to putting it into action, it's often a little more difficult, isn't it?

It's easy to *say* we want to commit to the ministry of the church, but it's another thing to actually commit the time and finances that are needed. That requires action. Imagine if Jesus just talked about dying on the cross and rising again. Imagine if he went on and on about how important it was, but never actually did it? It can be like that for us sometimes. We want to read the Bible and pray every day. We want to be at church every week. We want to commit more financially to the church. We want to commit our time to church ministry. But the world will always make it difficult for us to put that into action.

The world encourages us to make our *own* plans for our lives. I guess many of us have made some sort of plans for this year. Things we plan to achieve. Things we plan to do in 2007. Planning children? Planning moving house? Planning to spend more time with family? Planning to lose weight, exercise more? Planning to work shorter hours?

We may have lots of plans for this year. But what are *God's* plans for us? To see Jesus clearly means to understand the consequences of following Jesus. *To hear His plans for us and to follow them.*

Don't just talk about budgeting your finances better this year. Do it! Sit down and write a budget. If it's important, you'll make the time for it. Don't just talk about spending more time with your family. Actually do it. Commit to being home for dinner every night. Make it happen. If it's important, you'll find the time. Life can become clearer when we put our priorities right and commit to them. It's true for the things in our world, like budgets and family. But it's even more so the case when it comes to our commitment to God. Let's not just *talk* about what your commitment will be. Let's make it happen. Pray about it. Share it with others who can keep you accountable. If you see Jesus clearly, then take your commitment to him this year seriously and commit like Jesus did – with the cross of self-denial.

God's plans mean self-sacrifice. If we want to see Jesus clearly, we need to understand the impact of the cross of Jesus in our lives each day. We need to listen to *God's* plans for our life. We need to be asking God what steps *He* wants us to take next. And *then* we need to actually take those steps. Let's pray that we can do that.