

Sermon – “Seeing Jesus Clearly” Mark 8:22-30

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Sermon text and audio available for download at www.waitara.anglican.asn.au

III – Optical illusions (5 + 2 illusions)

• What do you see?

Sometimes our minds are confused by what we see and it takes a while to process all the information. Sometimes we don't see things at all, other times it's a bit blurry, and other times it's really clear.

When we read this chapter in Mark, the question we're asked is: How clearly do you see Jesus?"

And I want us to ask that question today, but in three ways:

1. Do you clearly see WHO Jesus is?
2. Do you clearly see WHAT Jesus came to do?
3. Do you see clearly HOW Jesus wants us to follow him?

All the way through Mark, we see more and more about Jesus and we're asked to consider these questions. Who is Jesus? What did he come to do? How does he call us to follow him? And if we're going to be disciples of Jesus, we really need to be clear about the answers to those questions.

As we follow Jesus along, Mark keeps showing us the disciples. Now, of all the people, the disciples should probably have the best understanding of Jesus. They should, you would think, see Jesus clearly. But they don't. They don't understand the miracles of the feeding of the 5000. They don't understand Jesus walking on water. And when we get to Mark 8:18, Jesus actually says to them:

- *"Do you still not understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?"*

Even Jesus' disciples don't clearly see or hear or understand Jesus.

So when we come to Mark 8:22 and the healing of the blind man, this is not just a miracle or a healing. Jesus is using the healing of this blind man to teach us something. So let's have a look at this healing:

• The Blind Man

People bring this blind man to Jesus and Jesus takes him outside the city. He spits on the man's eyes and touches him and the man is able to see, **but not clearly**. He sees people but they look like trees walking around. Then Jesus puts his hands on the man's eyes **a second time**, and this time he **can** see clearly.

Jesus can raise people from the dead, he can make the lame walk, cast out demons, make the deaf hear, the mute speak, wouldn't you think he would be able to heal this man completely the first time?!

But the reason Jesus heals this way is because he wants to teach us something.

Sometimes people can be completely blind to knowing Jesus. Sometimes people can see Jesus but not clearly – they don't understand completely who he is or what he came to do. And sometimes, people see Jesus clearly. They understand who he is and what he came to do and what that mean for them.

And that's what Jesus wants. As Jesus performs this healing, he WANTS the man to see. And as we follow him, he WANTS us to see him clearly. Jesus WANTS us to know him clearly, to know what he came to do, and to know what it means to follow him and be his disciple.

1. Seeing Clearly: WHO is Jesus?

So when we come to the next part of the passage, we see this. Jesus says, verse 27: "Who do people say I am?"

The disciples replied: "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah; and still others one of the prophets." "But what about you? Jesus asked. "Who do you say I am?"

- *Peter answered: "You are the Christ."*

And there it is – Peter clearly understands who Jesus is. He's not just a prophet. He's the Christ. The anointed one from God. The King. The Messiah. Peter clearly says who Jesus is.

But... as we read on, we see it's still not really clear for Peter. He sees, but his vision is blurred. He doesn't understand WHAT Jesus has come to do.

2. Seeing Clearly: WHAT has Jesus come to do?

Let's read on. 8:31-34...

"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 clearly explains what he must do and what it means to follow him. But Peter cannot accept what he says. Peter cannot accept that his Lord, the Christ, would suffer, be rejected and die. Peter sees that Jesus is the Christ, but he doesn't see clearly. He doesn't see what Jesus came to do – to suffer and die for our sin on the cross.

You see, we need to KNOW that Jesus is God's son, the Christ, the King. We also need to understand WHAT he has done by his death and resurrection. Otherwise we're only get half the picture. So the disciples are beginning to see the picture, but it's not yet clear.

But then Jesus calls the whole crowd to him and tells them what else they need to see clearly – HOW to follow him – verse 34

3. Seeing clearly: HOW to follow Jesus

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

One more thing to make it all clear for us: Jesus tells us clearly HOW we are to follow him and be his disciple. You may know who he is, and you may know what he came to do. **But do you know HOW to follow him?** Do you know that he calls us to deny ourselves and follow him?

Today, we have the Bible in our hands, and perhaps it's a bit easier to see WHO Jesus is. And to see WHAT he came to do – to die and rise again. But today, this last part can still be difficult. Jesus says: we must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. Jesus calls on us for complete commitment to him – our whole *life*.

To see Jesus clearly means to follow him and deny ourselves. And this is the part I think we really find difficult to see clearly in today's world. To deny ourselves.

But the disciples are a great example for us. They walked with Jesus for years. They performed miracles. They drove out evil spirits. They preached the gospel. Peter even says to Jesus: “You are the Christ!” yet Jesus still calls them blind and deaf. Why? Because they struggle. Even when they know WHO Jesus is and WHAT he came to do, they still struggle to clearly see **HOW** to follow Him.

Not **one** of Jesus’ disciples followed him to the cross. They **all** fail to follow him at that point. And they’re a great example for us because they remind us that there are times we **all** fail to follow Jesus. We all fail. There are times we just don’t clearly see HOW to follow Jesus in our life.

- **III** – This week I had an X-ray taken of my shoulder. And I looked at that X-ray – a completely clear view of my bones. But as I looked at it, it didn’t mean a thing to me! I couldn’t see it clearly at all! It didn’t make **sense** to me...UNTIL someone showed me **what** it all meant. UNTIL someone showed me **how** to make sense of it.

Even if we stepped back and took a good look at our life, it can still be difficult to see what shape our life is in. It’s not always easy to see the struggles we’re facing and the things we can’t see clearly. Sometimes we need someone else to show us and to explain to us our struggles to us. To explain what the x-ray means. Jesus is the one who can show us.

- **Seeing Clearly**

- The message from this passage is that **Jesus wants to see us healed, like the blind man, and see things clearly. WHO** he is, **WHAT** he’s done and **HOW** to follow him.
 1. So my question for us is: Do you **want** see clearly? Do you want to see where your life is struggling to follow Jesus?
 2. Are you ready to hear what may be a difficult truth? What it really means to deny yourself? We live in a society that encourages us to indulge and to have whatever we want, or to go out and get it. To deny our self anything is counter cultural! It’s not normal to choose NOT to have something in life because your priorities are for a different kingdom. And to actually do that, to deny your self the things of this world – that is a challenge!
 3. Are you ready to understand what that means in your life? Are you ready to see clearly and be challenged with eyes that see Jesus clearly and are focused on his kingdom clearly? Do you really want to see what denying yourself looks like?

In other words,

- **Do you want to be healed?**

Do you **want** to see clearly HOW Jesus wants you to follow him, even if that means difficult changes, self denial, sacrifice? Are you prepared to see the parts of your life that need this healing from Jesus? If you are, then let’s pray together right now...

Let’s pray.

Self denial, selfishness, grace, mercy love, forgiveness, generosity. Lord, help us see.