

## Men Like Trees, Walking – *Mark 8:22-26*

**Introduction** – We are disciples of Jesus Christ. And like the disciples who followed Jesus, we often are partially blind to all that He is showing us. The result is that while we say that we are His disciples, we often do not act like it and we often do not experience the “unspeakable joy” and blessedness of being His disciples. Rather, we often find ourselves under the same kinds of rebukes He brought upon the disciples. But those rebukes and admonitions are not from a Savior Who is done with us, or unable to help us. Rather it is from a Savior Who is perfecting us, Who calls us to Himself to be made complete.

**Healing a Blind Man** (8:22-26) – At Bethsaida, the hometown of Peter and the other fishermen, a blind man is brought to Jesus and the request is made for Jesus to heal him. Jesus had previously used His spittle in the act of healing (Mark 7:33), but this time He also heals in installments, a very unique touch. After the healing, Jesus instructs the man not to go back into the town, nor to tell anyone. Clearly, Jesus intended this healing to be an instruction for His disciples. A man had been given his sight, and yet he could not see. Something was wrong.

**Who Do You Say that I Am?** – Just prior to this, Jesus will rebuke their literalistic take on His teaching (vv13-21 – Jesus was not talking about bread, but about the deadly hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Herod). Just after this, Peter gets the catechism question right (v29) but Jesus tells the disciples, like the blind man, that they should not tell anyone. And the next verses show us why. Peter and the disciples had been given sight, and yet they could not see (vv31-33). Jesus rebukes their ‘blindness’ of thinking that there could be a Christ without a cross. Something was wrong. Jesus then addresses all the people as well as the disciples (vv34-38) regarding true discipleship. The one who wants to come after Jesus must himself take up his own cross and follow. Many disciples had been given sight and yet cannot see. Something was wrong.

**Men Like Trees, Walking** – Having gone through the text and the surrounding context of this healing, let’s consider this illustrative teaching that Jesus gave to His disciples, for we are His disciples as well. Overall, or in parts of our lives, we may find ourselves like this man, half-healed. You can’t say this man cannot see because he does see; but you find it difficult to say that he can see because he sees men like trees. Or, like Peter, there is an identification with Jesus as the Christ, the anointed One; but a terrible distaste for accepting the wrath of God over sin, or our need for cleansing, or our responsibility to follow Christ by taking up our own cross and following Him. The result is fuzziness in our fellowship with God, our contentment in Christ, and joy in the midst of our sanctification. It’s a miserable “in between” stage.

**The Reasons for Not Seeing Clearly** – They may not see clearly because they have not accepted the fact that Christ had to die, nor do they see the need for the rebirth. They may call themselves Christians and yet see no reason for needing a Savior. He who is forgiven little, loves little. And so, with little need for a Savior, there fails to be a long-term engaging pursuit of joy in that Savior. If there is any joy, it begins more and more to be in other things, and they seek to ‘save’ themselves in those things, ‘losing’ life. With this divided loyalty, their will becomes divided. They do not see why a man who calls himself a Christian really has to do certain things and stop doing other things. Resentments, bitterness, complaining, all become a part of such lives.

**The Work and Words of Christ** – The man was really touched by Jesus. Peter really got the Person and title of Jesus right. But something was still wrong. Even though Jesus had clearly taught that He had to be rejected and killed, Peter refused to “see” this as the right way.

Similarly, those whose spiritual eyes are only partially healed object to clear-cut definitions. They become like the woman at the well who, when confronted about her immorality, wanted to do a Bible-study with Jesus on where we should worship. They often like theological discussions in general, primarily as a smoke screen from dealing with their own personal situation. They love Psalm 23 and 1 Cor 13 but they are not truly hungry for the whole counsel of God which would open them up like a sharp knife. But they are miserable, and they are easily tempted to begin looking elsewhere for spiritual truth or enlightenment.

**The Cure for Not Seeing Clearly** – First, do not make a premature claim that your blindness is cured (because, like Peter, you have all the right theological answers). Something is wrong and you must return to Jesus. Second, do not fall to the lie that says it is foolish to return again to Jesus. Some fall to the lie that says “*it is hopeless; this is all there is for me.*” The man was fully healed and Peter was fully restored, filled and empowered to take up his cross with unspeakable joy. Instead, Jesus would ask you, “*what do you see?*” Do you see clearly? The next step is of course to turn to Jesus, to have your sight made complete, to have your understanding of discipleship made complete, to be empowered to walk faithfully in, with, and through Jesus.

**The Work and Words of Christ** – “*I will never leave you, nor forsake you,*” He said. “*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ,*” Paul wrote. Christ is not finished with you; He never leaves anything incomplete. The Son of God was not sent from heaven in order to leave us in a state of confusion, doubt, misgivings, uncertainty, or unhappiness. Come to Jesus, again, and again, and again.