



**Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again;
and he looked intently and his sight was restored,
and he saw everything clearly.**

Mark 8:25

Gradually Coming to See and Understand Jesus

MARK 8:22–30 ²²*They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him.* ²³*He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, “Can you see anything?”* ²⁴*And the man looked up and said, “I can see people, but they look like trees, walking.”* ²⁵*Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.* ²⁶*Then he sent him away to his home, saying, “Do not even go into the village.”* ²⁷*Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”* ²⁸*And they answered him, “John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.”* ²⁹*He asked them, “But who do you say that I am?”* Peter answered him, “You are the Messiah.” ³⁰*And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.*

The healing of the blind man serves as a hinge connecting the first and second half of Mark's gospel. It culminates all the previous healing accounts demonstrating Jesus' messianic power. It is particularly linked to the previous healing of the deaf man with the speech impediment. These two healing accounts are similar in several ways. In both accounts, Jesus takes the afflicted person away from the crowd, indicating the separation from one's past that Jesus' message demands (verse 23). In both accounts, Jesus uses bodily signs, including spittle and touch, as instruments of healing. With these two miracles, Jesus completes the prophecy of Isaiah describing the works of the coming Messiah: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy" (Isa 35:5–6).

The healing of the blind man also begins the second half of the gospel which will emphasize the failure of the disciples to understand the full significance of Jesus' messianic identity. The miracle is unique in that it occurs in two stages. At the first stage of healing, the man seems to be severely nearsighted, with things at a distance appearing quite blurry (verse 24). But Jesus will not leave the man with only partial sight. Finally, following a second touch of Jesus, the man is fully healed and able to see everything clearly (verse 25). The account provides the introduction to the rest of the gospel which will emphasize the limited insight of the disciples and their need for a more complete perception of the meaning of Jesus' mission.

Immediately following the healing of the blind man, Jesus travels with the disciples "on the way" (verse 27). In this travel narrative, which will end in Jerusalem, Jesus will teach his followers "the way" of true discipleship. So, first he asks them, "Who do people say that I am?" Their response is similar to the list given earlier when Herod heard about Jesus. He might be John the Baptist, Elijah, or another of the prophets. Then, Jesus asks his disciples directly, "But who do you say that I am?" (verse 29). This is the central question of the gospel. The question of Jesus' true identity leaps off the pages of history and into the heart of every reader of the gospel. The first half of the gospel has led up to this question. Jesus has revealed himself as a teacher and healer with divine authority, the bridegroom, the Lord of the Sabbath, the sower of God's word, the great physician, and the shepherd who feeds God's people. Yet, he has also met with persistent resistance and continual misunderstanding. His teaching in parables and his great deeds have both revealed and concealed his true

- In what way does the nearsightedness of the partially healed blind man express the understanding of the disciples?

- What are some of the mistaken understandings of Jesus that people hold today?

- How has my reflecting on this gospel helped me to understand Jesus more fully? How do I answer the question of Jesus, “Who do you say I am?”

Prayer

Jesus, heal the blindness that prevents me from knowing you and seeing your will for me. Guide me as I journey with you and your disciples along the way to Jerusalem. Deepen my understanding of you as I approach your cross.