

Sight For Poor Eyes

Mark 8:22-26 December 17, 2025

Who here has had or *needs* to have cataract surgery? It's a common experience as we age. One of every five Americans over 65 will develop cataracts. And 50% of those 80 and older will.¹

A cataract is a clouding of the lens on your eye. The lens is the clear layer inside the eye that focuses light. When that lens becomes cloudy, the light entering the eye is blocked or scattered, making what you see blurry or dark.

I was surprised to find out that babies can be *born* with cataracts. They can be caused by infection or a chemical imbalance. Often the specific cause is never determined.² But whether you're young or old, when you develop cataracts, treatment is absolutely necessary. And there's nothing you can do to fix it yourself. You must have a surgeon help you if you want to be able to see.

Thankfully, in the modern world, this process is pretty simple. These days your vision can be restored to bright clarity with a 15 minute, multi-step procedure.

In this short text we see Jesus perform a healing miracle. A man is brought from blindness to blurriness to perfect vision. But there's something about this story that has always bothered me.

Why did this healing not seem to work at first? This is the only miracle of Jesus that happens in two stages. He lays His hands on the man and he's *kinda* healed, but not *fully* healed. There's nothing to indicate the man had partial faith. Was Jesus overly fatigued? Was He distracted? Did He need to get a better grip on it? Some commentators suggest it was because *this* blindness was just so bad. But it shows Jesus could handle even the toughest problems. But is *anything* too difficult for God?³

In 1 Samuel chapter 2, Samuel's mother Hannah is pouring out praise to God for His goodness and His power. In her prayer she says something important: "The LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by Him."⁴ God knows what we are doing and He knows what *He* is doing.

What Jesus did in this story, He did on purpose. This situation was not only about healing a blind man, but helping His disciples understand their own *spiritual* blindness. Rather, not that they were totally blind, but they had proverbial cataracts clouding their spiritual vision.

We know this because in the very last passage Jesus confronted the 12 about their understanding and said, "Do you have eyes and not see?" And now we are barreling toward the pivotal moment of the whole book, where Jesus will say, "Who do you say that I am?" And we'll see Peter step forward to boldly proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah. But then, immediately after, we see Peter's

¹ <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/8589-cataracts-age-related>

² <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/congenital-cataracts.html>

³ Jeremiah 32:27

⁴ 1 Samuel 2:3

spiritual vision is clouded. He *doesn't* see clearly. He *rebukes* Jesus for talking about His death and resurrection and, in response, Jesus says to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan."

So when we see Jesus performing this two-stage healing of vision, many scholars understand that He is performing a live action parable that His disciples could remember and apply later.⁵

And this contains a spiritual lesson not *only* for the apostles moving forward, but for us as well. We *also* have issues in our spiritual vision. Paul said that we see things *dimly*, or as one version puts it, we see only a blurred reflection.⁶ Peter would later write that a Christian can become "blind and shortsighted, [forgetting] the cleansing from his past sins."⁷ A loss of clarity. A clouding of vision.

So let's put ourselves into this parable, understanding that we tend to develop dim or blurred spots in our spiritual vision, and present ourselves to the Physician Who gives sight to the blind.

Mark 8:22 - 22 They came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him.

The setting of the story itself lends to the drama of this live action parable. Bethsaida means "the house of fish."⁸ And it was home to some specific fish: Peter, Andrew, and Philip.⁹

In this familiar town, a blind man is brought to Jesus. We *all* come to Jesus *blind*. We have ideas and experiences and assumptions, but in reality, as Jesus told the Laodiceans, we are blind, wretched, pitiful, poor, and naked.¹⁰ But Christ came as the Light of the world so that we could be called *out* of our darkness into His marvelous light.¹¹ So that we never have to walk in darkness again.¹² But Christ's revelation and vision-adjustment isn't a one-and-done thing in our lives.

As we walk with Jesus, we need His continual illumination. We receive it through the Word of God, which is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path.¹³

The friends of this blind man came to Jesus and seemed pretty convinced about what He needed to do: Put Your hands on our friend!

Their confidence is an interesting contrast to the last situation where the disciples - *who should've known what Jesus was going to do* - say, "We have no idea how anyone could feed 4,000 people in this desolate place." Even though they *had* seen Jesus feed more than 5,000 people in a desolate place shortly before!

⁵ See Ray Stedman *The Servant Who Rules*, Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*, Craig Keener *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*

⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:12 ISV

⁷ 2 Peter 1:9

⁸ *Easton's Bible Dictionary*

⁹ John 1:44

¹⁰ Revelation 3:17

¹¹ 1 Peter 2:9

¹² John 8:12

¹³ Psalm 119:105

Now, the friends of the blind man were in no position to tell Jesus how to perform a miracle. They're operating on some level of assumption. But at least they knew Jesus had power and had compassion and was the source of all that this man needed.

Mark 8:23 - ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village. Spitting on his eyes and laying his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?"

The word Mark uses for "took" means "caught."¹⁴ So, in the house of fish, Jesus *catches* a person who has a measure of faith, and Jesus catches Him so that He can save them, transform their life, give them a new future, and sight instead of blindness.

Once again, Jesus uses saliva in a healing. He's on record using spit three times in His healings. We saw one a few passages ago where He spit on His fingers then touched the deaf/mute man's tongue. Later He will spit to make mud and rub that on another blind man's face. This use is the spittiest of all - He spits right on the guy's eyes. *At least he didn't see it coming...*

We don't know why the Lord used this method. Lot's of speculation but no explanation. Let's see what else He did in this verse.

He took the man by the hand and personally led him out of the village. Maybe this was a fifty yard walk, maybe it was half a mile. No matter how far, it would've been a significant and intimate journey together. These two, hand in hand, as Jesus told the man where to step, what obstacles to avoid, where to turn, how to proceed. What a gentle and tender scene. That God would take *this* kind of time and share *this* kind of interaction with a random stranger.

This is how the Lord wants to lead you. Psalm 107:14 says, "He brought them out of darkness and gloom and broke their chains apart." The Psalmist Asaph once wrote about a time when he was stupid and unthinking toward the Lord - spiritually blurry - but realized "Yet I am always with You; You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me up in glory."¹⁵ And in Isaiah 42 God Himself says to His people, "I am the LORD. I have called you for a righteous purpose, and I will hold you by your hand. I will watch over you, and I will appoint you to be a covenant for the people and a light to the nations, in order to open blind eyes."

After Jesus spit and touched the man, He asked Him a question: "Do you see anything?" It wasn't because Jesus didn't know. It was for the later benefit of the disciples. In the next scene, Jesus is going to ask *them* what they see - who they see Jesus as? But again and again in this section of Mark He's trying to help them understand that they do not see everything as they should. They need *spiritual* restoration as much as this man needs *physical* restoration.

Mark 8:24 - ²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people—they look like trees walking."

¹⁴ Marvin Vincent *Word Studies Of The New Testament*

¹⁵ Psalm 73:23-24

There is a prominent historical theologian who said the reason Jesus did this two-stage healing was to prove to the man - and to us - that as God He has the liberty to pour out grace on *some* people but to only give grace in *drops* to others.¹⁶

Does that fit *at all* with what has been revealed about Jesus Christ in this Gospel? How often have we seen His patience, His generosity, His kindness, His willingness? Even here, He stops all He's doing to interact tenderly, carefully, personally with this *one* man. Does it seem like He did so to jerk him around and say, "You know, I don't *really* have to heal you?"

This scene is not about God penny-pinching His grace. It is about the spiritual impairments that we have in our hearts and minds on this side of eternity.

Now on the one hand, the man's blindness was healed - before he could see nothing, now he saw something. But obviously he wouldn't say, "You know what, blurry is good enough." Obviously he need further help - further correction. He needed greater clarity to be able to move through life. He saw people *dimly*.¹⁷ And so, as Jesus began the work, He would continue and finish the work.

Mark 8:25 - ²⁵ Again Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes. The man looked intently and his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly.

At the start of the story the man is blind - he's in darkness. Then he's able to see some things close up, but they're blurry and he can't quite discern. Finally, he's able to see clearly from afar.¹⁸ That's the word used there. He's no longer blind *or* shortsighted.

In the very next scene we will see how *Peter* had partial vision. He had a blurred view of the Messiah that needed to be corrected. He had a shortsighted perspective on the Messiah's work.

In the same way, you and I have areas of spiritual understanding that are dim or blurred. Sometimes we're not even aware of it as Peter was not aware of his cataracts. But walking with God means His continual shaping of us, His continual, hands-on work of healing our hearts, renewing our minds, adjusting our vision, and clearing away the impediments of our sin nature. Removing the veil from our hearts so that we can see the true glory of the Lord and be transformed by it.¹⁹

Mark 8:26 - ²⁶ Then he sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

We've seen frequently in Mark how Jesus wanted to avoid the hysteria that healing miracles would produce among crowds. His main goal was *not* to perform miracles, but to preach the Kingdom and to lay down His life. He healed out of compassion, not out of a desire to show His greatness.

¹⁶ John Calvin *Commentary On Matthew, Mark, Luke, Volume 2*

¹⁷ Vincent

¹⁸ R. Kent Hughes *Mark: Jesus Servant & Savior*

¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:15-18

But here's what I find interesting about this particular command: The blind man *probably did not know the way to his house!* Whether his friends were still there to help him is unclear. But now he's been sent with orders by his Lord and he will have to figure out how to obey them.

You have been sent out with commands and orders from your Lord, too. You may not know exactly how to carry out certain aspects of the Christian life today or what direction God has for your life in some particular situation. Maybe He hasn't illuminated very far down the path for you. But you *can* obey. You can choose to do what He's asked you to do right now.

If you're not sure what to do in the Christian life or how to serve the Lord, follow the example of this man: Start at home. Go home and be transformed. Have spiritual vision and passion in your home. That's the first place God sends us. And from there more callings will come. More opportunities. More tasks. People were *going* to find out this man had been healed of his blindness. And he'd be able to share his testimony of Jesus' power and grace. But here was the job for today: Go home.

So here we are tonight. I don't think it's inappropriate to say that - generally speaking - *our* cataracts aren't as developed as the disciples' were *at this point* in their walk with the Lord. I doubt we spend a lot of time rebuking Jesus for things He teaches. *But* just like physical cataracts are a normal part of the human condition, so are spiritual cataracts. We see dimly. We have areas of shortsightedness, maybe even blindness. We shouldn't deny it, we should understand it and seek out Christ for the illumination and clarity that we need.

A lot of people suffer from night blindness. Things are fine during the day, but their vision doesn't work the same when it's dark. It doesn't help if those people deny their issue. In fact, it causes problems when they act like they can see when they can't.

So where might we have a cataract developing in our spiritual vision? I can't answer that for you. *You* might not even be able to answer that for you. But the Great Physician can. The Holy Spirit living within you can. And His desire is to illuminate and clarify and focus our spiritual vision so that we can walk worthy and walk effectively where the Lord sends us.

Psalm 119 is all about a passionate disciple of God praying for help and correction and vision and the continual work of God in their lives. It's a beautiful song where a dedicated believer speaks of his love for God, the ways of God, and his dedication to pursue the things of God. He says something important in verse 18:

Psalm 119:18 - ¹⁸ Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wondrous things from your instruction.

Many of you have an annual checkup with your eye-doctor to fix your prescription, right? Oh how we need that regular interaction with our Lord, the Great Physician. May we go to Him, allow Him to take us in His hand, lead us on, heal and shape and correct and adjust us, and then send us out according to His will and His good pleasure.