

**“But Who Do You Say He Is?”**  
**The Gospel According to Mark 8:22-30**  
May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018

You know Motherhood has set in when:

- \* You hide in the bathroom to be alone;
- \* You hear that the average 5-year-old asks 490 questions a day, and you feel proud because your child is above average!
- \* You hear your mother’s voice coming out of your mouth.
- \* You use your own saliva to clean your child’s face.
- \* You say at least once a day, “I’m not cut out for this job,” but you wouldn’t trade it for the world.

In the text of Scripture we study today, Jesus uses His own saliva to bring partial eyesight to a blind man! So, it’s biblical, moms, to do the same with your children!

It’s the second Sunday of May when each year, all over America, we honor Mothers. We all have a mother. Sometimes ‘mother’ is a family member or loved one who has stepped in the gap to raise children whose mother died, was imprisoned, or even abandoned her children.

Some ladies have been called of God to remain single or married without children. For you, dear ones, fight the temptation to think you are less significant today. You are so very important to the life and health of the Church. Your children are the littles of your congregation! *You are* a mother – a Church mother or church grandmother.

We are deep into the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark’s account of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With today’s text, we are halfway through our study of this New Testament book of sacred Scripture. We began this journey, a sermon series I’ve called “*Service and Sacrifice: HallMARKS of Christ* back on the first Sunday of November (5<sup>th</sup>). So, we’re 6 months in!

In today’s text, Jesus heals a Gentile man of his blindness, and the process detailed here serves as an illustration for the disciples Jesus has chosen to minister with Him. As we read the text, I’d ask you to consider how you would answer Jesus’ question of His followers in verse 29.

**The Gospel According to Mark 8:22-30:**

<sup>22</sup> Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him.  
<sup>23</sup> So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

<sup>24</sup> And he looked up and said, “I see men like trees, walking.”

<sup>25</sup> Then He put *His* hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. <sup>26</sup> Then He sent him away to his house, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town.”

<sup>27</sup> Now Jesus and His disciples went out to the towns of Caesarea Philippi; and on the road He asked His disciples, saying to them, “Who do men say that I am?”

<sup>28</sup> So they answered, “John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.”

<sup>29</sup> He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered and said to Him, “You are the Christ.” <sup>30</sup> Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.”

Gregory of Nazianzus, the Archbishop of Constantinople, wrote his answer to Jesus' question in verse 29 back in the year A.D. 381. *Who did he say that Jesus was?*

- \* Jesus began His ministry by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life.
- \* Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water.
- \* Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest.
- \* Jesus paid tribute, yet He is the King.
- \* Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons.
- \* Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears.
- \* Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world.
- \* Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd.

Looking back to the text of Scripture we studied last Sunday, Jesus asked His disciples many questions. One of them, found in verse 18 of this 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Mark, is specifically addressed in today's passage. That question is, "*Having eyes, do you not see?*"

In verses 22-26 of today's text, we have an image of a blind man seeing dimly, then seeing clearly – all because of Jesus. **The first main point is seeing dimly and clearly.**

As Jesus and His disciples arrive in a new town (Bethsaida), some people bring their loved one to Him to be healed. Back in Chapter 2, we learned of 4 men who brought their paralyzed friend to a house in which Jesus was ministering. The crowd was so large, there was no room for them in the doorway. *So, what did those men do?* They got up on top of the house, opened up a whole in the roof, and they lowered their paralyzed friend down to Jesus in the hopes He'd heal the man. And, that's exactly what Jesus did.

In Mark 2, the man's affliction was paralysis. In the present chapter, the man's affliction is blindness. Jesus takes the man by the hand and leads him out of town. Jesus puts some of His saliva on the man's eyes, and asks him what he saw. His response is found in verse 24, "I see men like trees, walking." So, the man could see something, but he couldn't see clearly. Apparently, he wasn't healed fully of his blindness because Jesus places His hands on the man's eyes again. "And (the blind man) was restored and saw everyone clearly."

That Jesus didn't heal the man on the first touch is the source of much conjecture. It could have been that Jesus was aware this man was hardened in unbelief, and was giving him additional opportunity to realize Jesus as the One who healed him. And, quite likely, Jesus was teaching His disciples of their own "spiritual" blindness. And that takes us to the next four verses.

In verses 27-30, we see men Jesus has brought partial eyesight (spiritual understanding), but they have not yet seen Him clearly. **This second point is seeing dimly, but not yet clearly.**

Jesus and crew next traveled to Caesarea Philippi, which lay 25 miles north of Bethsaida. It could not have been more different than the village they'd left behind. Caesarea was a thoroughly pagan area. Herod the Great had built a temple for the worship of Augustus. There was also a cave temple to the mythological creature, Pan, who had the legs of a goat and the body of a man. He was worshipped as a god of shepherds and mountains. One commentator notes, "It's as if Jesus intends to lead the Twelve into the heart of paganism to ask them this supremely important question we see in verse 27, "Who do men say that I am?" (Card, 110)

Actually, to this point in our study of Mark's gospel account, we've seen various answers to that question. Consider these examples from the first 7 chapters (**SLIDE**)

- John the Baptist announced Jesus in **Mark 1:7-8** this way, "One Who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to bow down and loose."
- In **Mark 1:11**, we see God the Father calling Jesus "My Beloved Son"
- An unclean spirit possessed a man Jesus saw in the synagogue in Capernaum. That spirit recognized Jesus, calling Him "The Holy One of God" (**Mark 1:24**)
- In **Mark 3:11**, other unclean spirits called Him "The Son of God."
- An unclean spirit inhabited the Gadarene Demoniac who recognized Him as "Jesus, Son of the Most High God" (**Mark 5:7**)
- Those in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth referred to him in **Mark 6:3** as "The Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon"
- Then in **Mark 6:14**, King Herod believed Jesus to be "John the Baptist." Others in that passage thought He was "Elijah, or one of the prophets."
- Then, in **Mark 7:28**, a Gentile woman in conversation with Jesus referred to Him as "Lord."

The disciples' answer in verse 28 is given in the same order as Herod and others listed them in **Mark 6:14 & 15**, "John the Baptist; but some *say*, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets."

Of course, it's one thing to rehearse the opinions others have; it's another to voice our own convictions. Jesus follows up His question about the opinions of others with a second question designed to uncover His followers' convictions. In verse 29, He asks them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Jesus was leading His disciples to the point at which their sight would become clearer.

Peter hits a grand slam with His short, but thoroughly correct answer in the same verse, "You are the Christ." Where "Jesus" is the name of God's Son, "Christ" is not His last name. Rather, it is His title. "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew title "Messiah" and means "Anointed One." Peter was saying that Jesus was the Messiah; God's Anointed One.

Even though Peter answered the question correctly, the disciples' understanding of what Jesus came to earth to achieve was cloudy like the man in Bethsaida who saw "men like trees, walking." The disciples' "spiritual understanding did not come instantaneously, but gradually. They, too, needed the second touch from the hands of their Master." (Ferguson, 125)

Because they had not yet fully grasped Jesus' mission, He instructed them not tell anyone else about Him. He knew people wouldn't yet understand, to include His followers. While they knew Jesus' identity, they didn't yet understand the nature of Jesus' ministry. In coming days, Jesus would unfold that ministry, and it begins as early as verse 31, which we'll study next Sunday.

**As we apply the text to our lives**, we must realize that we may be in a similar situation the disciples were at this point in Jesus' earthly ministry. Like Peter, who confessed Jesus as Messiah, we may know Jesus as the way of salvation. But, like the disciples, we may not yet fully understand what He has accomplished for salvation from our sins. We may have a verbal profession of faith in Christ, but we live a life that brings that into question. We may be keeping one foot in our old nature, as we try to keep the other in our new nature.

But, as we walk with Jesus, individually and together, He reveals more and more of Himself to us through His written word. As we become more intimate with God's Word, the Holy Spirit enlightens us more and more to the work of God in our hearts and minds. As our mind is renewed by the washing of the word, we grow in our confidence to live as redeemed creatures in a fallen world.

Writing to the Corinthian Church, the Apostle Paul put it this way in **I Corinthians 13:12**, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face." This side of glory, we perceive the life to come, but we don't see it clearly. We know it will come, but our vision is clouded by our sin.

I stopped to check on a couple one day this past week. As we talked, they said they were looking forward to the day when age and physical infirmity didn't restrict their physical activity. There will come a time when walkers and wheelchairs are no longer necessary because we will be with Jesus in glory. I motioned to my eye glasses and theirs, saying I was looking forward to the day when faith becomes sight.

May our prayer and aim be that of the Psalmist David who wrote in **Psalm 119:18** – "Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law."

Someone asked a mother whose children had turned out very well what her secret was. Without hesitation she said: "When in the morning, I washed my children, I prayed that they might be cleansed by the Savior's blood. When I put on their clothes, I prayed they be dressed in the garments of salvation and God's righteousness. When I give them food, I pray they might be fed by the Bread of Life. When I started them on the road to school....when I put them to sleep..."

No wonder her children were early led to Christ. What a joy the mother's heart knows when her children rise up to call her blessed!

\* Christ for joy, Christ for sorrow,  
\* Christ today and Christ tomorrow;  
\* Christ when all around gives way  
\* Christ my everlasting Stay;  
\* Christ my Well-beloved Friend  
\* Christ my Pleasure without end;  
\* Christ my Leader, Christ my Peace  
\* Christ hath wrought my soul's release,  
\* Christ my Wisdom, Christ my Meat,  
\* Christ restores my wandering feet,  
\* Christ my Teacher, Christ my Guide,  
\* Christ my Rock, in Christ I hide,  
\* Christ the Ever-living Bread,  
\* Christ His precious Blood hath shed;  
\* Christ my Master, Christ my Head,  
\* Christ who for my sins hath bled;  
\* Christ my Comforter on high,  
\* Christ my Hope, draws ever nigh.

*Who do you say Jesus is?*