

Seeing clearly - The eyes of faith (Bethsaida)

Welcome and new coronavirus instructions.

Opening reading Ps 27:4-5

Hymn And can it be (MP 33)

Scripture Reading Is 6:1-10 (page 691)

Prayer / testimony

Reading Mark 8:22-26 (refer to Mk 7:32 as below)

Hymn 234 His Name is wonderful

Sermon Seeing clearly - The eyes of faith (Bethsaida)

Hymn MP 1100 Open the eyes of my heart Lord

Closing prayer

Listen to today's sermon by clicking on the link at www.knbc.org.

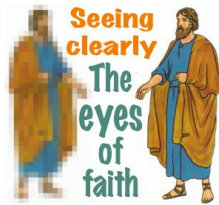
The disciples would have made connection in their minds with another miracle Jesus performed in the Decapolis the ten cities a mixed pagan area... The passage at Bethsaida starts with the phrase **some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him** in Mk 7:32 we read **"There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man.** Pretty much the same and it goes on 33 **After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spat and touched the man's tongue."** Mr 7:32-33

And that is just after the Syro-Phoenician woman demonstrated great faith she could see clearly who Jesus was add...

Welcome, pray

- Decca Records rejected the Beatles. The executives felt that "the Beatles have no future in show business".... They eventually signed with the EMI subsidiary Parlophone, after producer George Martin heard the Decca demos and decided to meet the band. He could see what Decca couldn't

1a



- Piet de Visser though 84 is an unfamiliar name in football. Although he has managed mostly Dutch clubs in the last 30 years he is known as the greatest scout of all time. He discovered his first ever player — Ronaldo. De Visser ranks players on skill, vision, physique, mentality & character. He says "I see all the things a player does well, and what they do wrong"

Both these examples are of those who don't see clearly – or do see clearly!

Today we continue with the people Jesus met. Here is a man who is blind and Jesus heals him. However, the manner and circumstance in which he does this has something important to say to you and I. There is again a front story and a back story. The subject is Faith, and we are thinking about the "The eyes of faith", and asking the question... "are you seeing clearly?"

So firstly what is going on?, - let's fill in the background

"22 **They came to Bethsaida**, OK let's stop here! Where's Bethsaida? **Bulletin**. Please follow - When Jesus took the disciples off to a quiet place to teach them they went we are told to **Bethsaida**. Luke 9:10. Crowds followed them there, he had compassion on them, and there's the feeding of the 5000. After that they returned back westward across the lake **"When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there."** Mr 6:53. (So also Matthew 14:34). John says **they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum** Jo 16:17 same area. All good.

Now it gets complicated - for after the feeding of the 5000 Mark says: **Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd.** Mr 6:45

So to cut a long story short there are actually two Bethsaidas' maybe even more. This Bethsaida is on the west side, near Capernaum.

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Joh 1:44 But which one? **They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee,** Joh 12:21 Although technically Galilee extended all the way around the lake - it was mainly the west side. So we conclude they were from here.

The one on the northern side was raised to the rank of a city by the Tetrarch Philip and called Julias, in honor of Julia, the daughter of Augustus Caesar.

So there's 'Bethsaida Julias' on the north, & **Bethsaida in Galilee** in the West Town names frequently reoccurred in Palestine. The abundance of fish on the lake gives good reason for more than one placed called Bethsaida, which means "house of fishing".

1b

The disciples, after a period of teaching in Capernaum head north to the region of Tyre and Sidon where Jesus commends the faith of the Syro-Phoenician woman. Then they head south east to the Decapolis the 10 cities. This is another mixed pagan area, here the demoniac was cured earlier.

It is here in this a pagan area on the northeast side of the lake that Jesus has compassion on the hungry crowds leading to the feeding of the 4000. We know that was in a pagan area for **they praised the God of Israel.** Mark 8:1-9 After that they return west to **Dalmanutha** Mk 8:10 on the west side.

There the Pharisees confront Jesus, so **“he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.”** Mr 8:13 & Matt. The east, and **came to Bethsaida.**

Now they are back again to where they were before. We can see that it is here because they then go on **to the villages around Caesarea Philippi** which is nearby, Bethsaida being on the road to it. Mark 8:27

On the journey across Jesus teaches the lessons from what has just happened with the Pharisees. 8:17ff. Then the miracle with a difference to bring it home!

✚ Now we know when - and where, - and it is important - as we shall see!

Quickly the details

- some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spat on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village." Mr 8:22-26

That is it, the mechanics of what happened - in five short verses.

What does it all mean to me? – you ask

All of Jesus' miraculous healings are instant, irrefutable, obvious and shout from the roof tops just who Jesus is. Yes, he is the true King of the new kingdom to come! Here is the only miracle that Jesus does where he does not heal completely - at least not in one go. He could, but he doesn't.

When Jesus asked the man "Do you see anything?" He looked up and said, - loud and clear for all to hear - "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

What does that mean? The disciples think to themselves "is there something wrong with my sight as well? Am I like that man?" Yes, you are that man!

Can you unravel this? How good a detective are you? Where are the clues? Look at the last words of the previous section."21 **He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"** So that is the lead in to this episode (thank you Mark).

Go back to the previous passage Mk 8:14-21 Jesus is there with his disciples on his way back from a run in with the Pharisees. All part of Jesus' plan to teach them - and you and I - an important lesson.

"Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod." 16 They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

"Can't you see?" Jesus rebukes his disciples **"Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?"**

And don't you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied.

"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"" Mr 8:14-21

The Pharisees had no intention of following Jesus, they didn't believe in Him. - And why not? Why didn't they believe?

"show us some evidence that you are - who you say you are" x2

Jesus had given them plenty of evidence in the irrefutable miracles he had done before them, the coming of John the Baptist, the fulfilments of all the many prophecies written hundreds of years before in the OT

Jesus had shown plenty of evidence - why couldn't they see it?

They had plenty of signs but couldn't see it. There was ever reason that they should see who he really was, but they couldn't there was a blindness. And how were they blind?

They couldn't see because their hearts were hard. This is how the lost in this world are described **They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them and why? due to the hardening of their hearts.**" Eph 4:18

✚ The Pharisees could see it but they wouldn't see it.

What makes a man's heart hard – one word 'pride' Pride had blinded them.

- Pride puts obstacles in the way. It mists up the glass, it hinders the sight. It's like putting on someone else's glasses it is all a blur - **they look like trees walking around.**"
- Ultimately pride puts up mirrors in the way, in everyone, everything I look at I see myself instead. I can't see them clearly because I am only seeing myself. You can see it in the language 'I', 'I', 'I', again and again.
- In conversation many ask "how are you?" Why? So they can then talk about themselves - their favourite topic of their discussion.
- When there is an issue with someone else all you can see is their faults

There's a connection between heart and eyes

- Take the girl boy situation; a girl is taken to a boy, she will follow him to the ends of the earth and others turn round and say "I don't know what she sees in him!" She can see something in him that others can't.

✚ The truth is - she sees what she wants to see.

Because pride is about me, instead of seeing clearly, I see what I want to see

Bethsaida had seen the evidence

Jesus said "**Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!** (both close together) **If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.** Mt 11:21 Exactly the same in Lu 10:13

Bethsaida had had miracles performed in their town but it had meant nothing to them. They were hard, like stone, unmoved, unaffected, stubborn. There comes a point when there will be no more chances. No more warning, that is it. God is so gracious, so patient, so long suffering but the time comes when that is it. Nothing can be done – nothing will be done. You are on your own – only to await the inevitable judgment.

That is why I believe Jesus **took the blind man by the hand - and led him outside the village.** x2. He was lead out of the village

At the end **26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."** Mr 8:22-26

He is not presumably from Bethsaida.

The AV says **Neither go into the town, and adds nor tell it to any in the town.**

Jesus had brought them to a village where the people were faithless so as to teach the disciples about the serious consequences of having no faith.

3a

Bethsaida had rejected what was done in their town, they had refused the evidence, so they had refused to turn and now only Judgment. So it is with anyone today

Jesus says: "**Do YOU still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?** **18 Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?"** He is saying: "don't become hardened" learn the lesson "don't be like them!"

✚ Watch out - Pride is tasteless, colourless and sizeless, yet it is the hardest of things to swallow.

Their hardness and pride, stops them seeing and believing don't let that happened to you, don't be unteachable.

- The atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell was once asked what he would say if he found himself standing before God on judgment day and God asked him, "Why didn't you believe in Me?" Russell replied, "I would say, 'Not enough evidence! Not enough evidence!'"

✚ There are many who shout "More evidence, more evidence"

You don't need more evidence. In Christ's life it is all there; His fulfillment of predictions, his love, his journey to the cross, his resurrection from the grave, the testimony of changed lives. You've heard it – what have you done about it?

✚ The problem is not lack of evidence - but having a right heart to see it

Some here have heard again and again who Jesus is - but won't respond.

For some Jesus is just like anyone else - trees walking around indistinguishable from each other Jesus is just one good man amongst many Here's the thinking, that is all Jesus is so he makes no demand on my life. I do not have to give him my love and adoration - I can keep that for myself.

Jesus can open blind eyes, he can give the faith to see!

Here, this man is a picture of all men who are spiritually blind. This man had no natural sight; he could see nothing; he had not the least glimmering of anything towards God. Dark and dead, he does not see himself in his sinful, lost, and dangerous state. Without Christ everyone, no matter who they are, are all blind to their poor and miserable condition.

Pride means there is no sight of Christ, nor of His glory nor of his person, nor of the fullness of his grace. If that is you - then you are blind to your desperate need of Christ and his great gift of salvation.

3b

The blind person stumbles around unable to know of the true way of life, he has no peace in Christ, no experience of the Spirit of God upon the soul; nor of any life changing power, nor sight of another world, - or the one to come.

That is how this man is until he is touched by Christ. Until Christ comes to you and I, everyone on this earth are not only in darkness, but full of darkness. Only Jesus has the power to bring complete clear sight.....

25 his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

Jesus can give you faith to see. Jesus came **to give sight to the blind**, and through his finished work on the cross through forgiveness of sins – a changed heart, a soft heart and a loving heart.

This man - who will not bring himself - is brought to Christ by his friends.

Those unaware of their lostness need others to bring them to Christ, **the friend of sinners**. If you know that, if you have entered in, then pray for Christ's work of wonderful grace to others. If he doesn't then only *Darkness will prevail until the light of Christ shines*. The veil covering the eyes will remain, for only in Christ is it taken away.

Remember Balaam? Hired by Barak to oppose God's people (Num 23,24). He was a good choice for he was a weak man, living in an ungodly way. Yet we see a change part of the way through: **"2 the Spirit of God came upon him and he uttered his oracle: "The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one whose eye sees clearly, the oracle of one who hears the words of God, who sees a vision from the Almighty, ..., and whose eyes are opened:"** Nu 24:2-4

■ I remember the day he opened my eyes,

So come with a soft heart - and ask him to open your eyes

After this day things were to change with the disciples. They started to see clearly

Read on - when the disciples came with Jesus to Caesarean Philippi just a little further north, Peter confesses **'You are the Christ.'** He can see clearly! This is a work of God! Jesus says in Matthew's account that this did not come from man but from God the father in heaven.

✚ The truth of God can only be known - when it is revealed by God.

Come humbly, come grieving about your sin and asked him to open your eyes?, that you may see clearly both your sin and who Jesus is. Have you done this?

4a

Sadly, Peter soon afterwards when the challenge came was not so clear minded, he couldn't see the Lord's purpose in suffering on the cross. Jesus said to him you do **not have in mind the things of God but the things of men** Mk 8:33

Your conduct shows how well you see – To misuses God's name in conversation, as many do, or to have no desire to live a holy life – shows that they have not seen Jesus in all his holiness.

Your conduct shows how well you see – Someone inactive in their faith shows they haven't seen Jesus as the great rescuer of the lost that he is.

Jesus desires that you and I trust him, follow him, honour Him and glorify Him. To do that you must see clearly with the **"The eyes of faith"**..... **"Can you see clearly?"**

✚ Beware of Pride - the great disturber of the believer's sweet communion with Christ.

For the believers the amount you trust Christ, and the amount you follow Christ, is in direct proportion to how clearly you see him.

Pray *"Lord let me see, let me see your Glory, You who are enthroned on high, let me see.....you... in all your splendour"*

✚ C. T. Studd said: "Some wish to live within the sound of Church or Chapel bell; I want to run a Rescue Shop within a yard of hell."—

■ C. T. Studd was a servant of Christ who faithfully served His Saviour in China, India, and Africa.

■ His biographer said of him: "C. T.'s life stands as some rugged Gibraltar—a sign to all succeeding generations that it is worthwhile to lose all this world can offer and stake everything on the world to come. His life will be an eternal rebuke to easy going Christianity. He has demonstrated what it means to follow Christ without counting the cost and without looking back.

✚ C.T. Studd; whose life was summed up with the phrase **'Forward Ever, Backward Never!'** famously said: **"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.**

There is a man who saw the Lord clearly –he gave his life fully over to his service. May you and I also see clearly - and respond as he did. ____END

4b