

JESUS HEALS A BLIND MAN AT BETHSAIDA

Mark 8:22-26

Key Verse: 8:25

"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."

Last time the topic of the message was "A Sense of History." It is worthwhile to review what a sense of history is. Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fish. At that time, his disciples did not understand in their hearts what that meant. So Jesus again fed the four thousand with seven loaves. Then the opportune time came to escape from the crowd which was chasing Jesus' company, wherever they might be. This time, the disciples deeply sighed and rejoiced that they didn't see several thousand begging hands stretched out to Jesus. Jesus' disciples felt that the begging hands were going to catch them and do something. They felt taunted and extremely tired from this, for it came in addition to their overtime work hanging around Jesus. Now they deeply inhaled the lake air into their lungs and rejoiced as if they were prisoners released after imprisonment. They forgot everything and enjoyed a moment of rest. Soon, Peter found they had only one loaf of bread in the back pocket of his trousers. When Peter began to worry about what to eat, all the disciples began to worry about what to eat tomorrow morning. At this time, Jesus told them, "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod" (15). His disciples didn't understand why Jesus was suddenly talking about the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod. When they were worrying about the bread problem, and Jesus used the word "yeast," they immediately thought he was talking about having no bread. But in reality, he was rebuking them, that they should not be like the Pharisees and Herod, who were a bad influence to all people like the yeast in dough. As soon as Jesus finished feeding the four thousand, the Pharisees came and began to question Jesus, and asked him for another sign from heaven (11). Of course, it was to test Jesus. But they were as vicious as King Herod. Jesus had performed a miracle—feeding the four thousand with seven loaves. That was a miracle, the miracle from heaven. It was to show that Jesus is the Son of God and the Almighty God. But they exalted themselves as the Pharisees. They did not [believe](#) Jesus as the Son of God even after seeing the miracles that he fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fish and four thousand with seven loaves. In history, there were no such miracles. These days Jewish and Muslim people are fighting intensely. There was a peace treaty between Israel and the Arab nations under the sponsorship of President Clinton of the United States of America. They firmly decided not to harm each other. But before the delegates returned, bloodshedding was going on between [the Jewish](#) people and Arabians. The Jewish people and Arabians didn't know that the previous day they held a peace conference at the Oval Office in Washington. They completely forgot about the peace conference and were fighting intensively. At present, it seems likely to develop into a war. The Pharisees and Jesus' disciples and the Jews and Muslims all are very forgetful about great things that have happened. They only see present reality. Jesus' disciples were conspicuous in looking at present reality. Jesus' disciples were most forgetful people with an "instant" mentality. They must remember that Jesus fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fish. They must remember that soon after, Jesus fed four thousand men with seven loaves. Through these miracles they

must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They saw that Jesus fed the five thousand, and another time, four thousand, and forgot about it after three minutes. This is the weakness of sinful human beings, as well as the weakness of the disciples of Jesus. When they saw that Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish and the four thousand with seven loaves, they had to think about what the miracles meant. But they just saw, remembered for three minutes, and forgot about the meaning. America is now the only superpower nation of the world. This doesn't necessarily mean that we should oppress the weaker people or not supply surplus rice and corn to the hungry people of the nations. God made America to feed the hungry people of the nations and proclaim the gospel to all peoples of all nations. Why did God make America the only superpower nation? It is to play the role of a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. It is to fulfill God's hope for world salvation work. It is to reveal the love of God to the whole world. But most American people do not know why God made America a superpower nation. With mighty army forces, one time, America smashed Iraq. And once, America smashed Serbia, Yugoslavia in order to protect Kosovo. But it is irony that Serbia is a Christian nation, though they are Orthodox, while Kosovo is entirely Muslim. Actually, their battles and wars have continued for the last 1,000 years. It is not likely that the only superpower nation America will stop their old and long battling by bombing several times. It is completely out of the purpose of America. God made America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation to care for all peoples of all nations with spiritual food and in the name of Jesus Christ. In the time of Jesus, the Pharisees were a bad influence. They did not believe in God. They deceived people with many rules and regulations, especially their community traditions. Thus, they blocked the people from coming to God. They were the same as Herod, who was as cruel as Nero. These days, Nero has turned out to be a dog's name. Jesus taught his disciples again and again to remember that Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. Thus, he revealed the mighty power of God. In this way he revealed that he is the Son of God. So they had to perceive who he was and believe in their hearts. But they did not believe; they remembered for three minutes, then forgot. Now they were nervous and fearful and desperate, because on the boat they had only one loaf of bread. At the moment, they were swallowed by an anxiety attack. Jesus reminded them that he fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish. Just before, he fed four thousand with seven loaves, and seven basketfuls of pieces were left over. Here we learn we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God who can feed five thousand with five loaves and two fish and four thousand with seven loaves, and there were seven basketfuls left over. We have to decide, by studying the Bible, that we believe Jesus is the Son of God, and in him we have salvation and eternal inheritance. Or we can look at one loaf of bread among twelve on a boat on the lake and be swallowed by an anxiety attack. We must have a sense of history that Jesus fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish and soon after he fed the four thousand with seven loaves and there were seven basketfuls left over. There are two kinds of people in the world. One kind is those who believe in Jesus, that he is the Son of God, and live in this world as pilgrims full of joy. The other kind only look at their checking account and despair that they worked so hard but what is left over can only buy one loaf of bread. The people of Israel suffered so much because they forgot God's promise. The people of Israel suffered so much because they forgot God's covenant and they tried to find the way to survive in the world. The most adequate example is those Israelites living in the promised land. They were

trained in the wilderness for forty years. But their training did not work in their souls to stand them firmly as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation in the promised land. Soon, they were melted in the melting pot of Canaan. Also, they liked flowing milk and honey and abandoned God. When they lost God's hope and God's purpose for them, they became useless. Finally they were dragged into Babylonia as captives for seventy years more of divine discipline. Those who do not have a sense of God's history suffer much because of anxiety attacks. They are swallowed by a sense of insecurity engulfing up to their necks. The modern time is the time of pragmatism. Everybody wants to be practical. So American people do not use their tongues properly. They only use the tip of the tongues, making English very delicate and difficult to learn for the foreigners. We are human beings created in the image of God. Therefore we must have a sense of history. We must remember what God has done for me and for you. Today's passage is a short story about Jesus healing a blind man at Bethsaida. Let's think about this passage briefly.

I. Some people brought a blind man (22)

Look at verse 22. "They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him." Bethsaida is in northern Galilee, and the place where Jesus fed the five thousand people. After great miracles had happened—feeding the five thousand and feeding the four thousand—people ate to their content and left for a time. Jesus and his disciples were resting quietly. Already, Andrew was snoring and Peter was singing out of joy that he had a vacation away from the begging hands stretching toward Jesus. And other disciples were resting, thinking mainly about their forgetfulness and the "instant" mentality which caused their forgetfulness of what the Son of God had done as the Savior of the world. After a time of peace and rest which followed a long period of hard work, some people brought a blind man to be healed by Jesus. Of course, they disturbed the time of serenity of his disciples and one night of good sleep. However, "some people" who brought a blind man to Jesus are remarkable to think about.

In this world, all people of the world think that their sickness is the most serious. There was a college wrestling team member. He contracted the flu. Then he ran to the hospital and asked his doctor to see him immediately. But the doctor followed the schedule prepared by the clerk. The wrestler got mad and pounded the clerk's desk and came back home and cried one hour. Then he went to the village where his mom worked. His mom took him to a local doctor and he was told that he must rest and sleep well overnight and he would be alright. He was simply overtired because of wrestling training by his coach. Most people think that their flu is more serious than someone else's cancer, spread to his whole body. Men are very selfish and self-centered. Man's ego-centricity is incredible. They want to take care of themselves. And they want to be indifferent to others' affairs. There was a blind man. At that time, a blind man was thought to be cursed by God. In history, there was no example that a blind man opened his eyes. A blind man's sorrow might be most serious. God made man's eyes to see the beautiful and mysterious world that he made. God made the world with many beautiful things. So in the autumn season, travelers are very busy to travel and see the beauty of the world, which is there from one corner to the other corner, and from one country to the other country in the world. Once Cuba was economically sufficient by the subsidy of the Soviet Union. But these

days Russia does not subsidize Cuba anymore. The leader of Cuba has been so great and influential to southeast Asian countries, but he was helpless to take care of his own people. In the past, Cuba was like a prison camp. Nobody could get in there. Nobody could come out if one got in there. But now, in order to make dollars from tourists, they opened the country and make many traditional gifts and musical instruments and sell them to tourists. Moreover, Cuban dancing is very popular in the world. It is because all the national dances were known to the world. But the Cuban dance was secluded until recently. And the Cuban dance is pretty delicate and beautiful. It is a mix of African dance and her own traditional dance. According to Channel 5, people from around ninety-five countries go to Cuba to learn the Cuban dance. They say that they really enjoy learning the Cuban dance which is rhythmical and gentle and expresses artistic sense, even though it is nothing but a folk dance. In this way, Cubans get a lot of American dollars from the learners of the Cuban dance. But the blind man cannot see such delicate and beautiful African-style Cuban dance, because he is blind. Moreover, the blind man thinks he is the most miserable in the world because he loves his mom but he cannot see his mom's face. These days even teenagers are driving cars. But the blind man cannot drive a car even though he has a license because he cannot see the traffic signals. Not only so, but also he cannot see the streaming rivers and green mountains. He sees nothing.

There were some village people who were suffering from poverty. They were busy enough to have a hand to mouth existence. But several people heard the blind man quietly sobbing every night, saying, "I cannot see the sunrise in the morning. I cannot see the sunset in the evening. Everything is dark. I feel mom's love but I cannot see my mom's eyes shedding many tears because of my tragic destiny being a blind man."

"Some people" in Bethsaida were known as very poor people. Usually, poor people have no time to cook bread and eat properly. They always have to rush to go to the working place. For this reason, American people do not eat breakfast, which would provide energy for the daytime. They only eat one sandwich at noon and they eat a huge amount of food at night, which makes everybody very heavy. This is an American tragedy. Both parents work, so they get up early and do not eat breakfast. At lunchtime, they eat a piece of sandwich and drink a diet coke. And at night they eat a huge amount of food and both become very heavy. Then they advise each other to reduce their weight. One morning, the husband says, "You have to reduce your weight a little bit, otherwise you are going to have diabetes." The next morning, the wife advises her husband, "You are going to have to diet, otherwise you will have a heart attack during the time you are driving on the highway." The "some people" of Bethsaida might be the same in their daily lives. They were busy. They had no time to eat breakfast properly after getting up late. And they had no time to eat lunch because their bosses demanded a huge amount of work from them. They came back home and rested and sighed. Since they were poor, they ate a little bit and drank a lot of cold water and slept. People say those who are in a good situation are happy, and those who are in a bad situation are very unhappy. But human beings are all living in this real world. No one is happy without seeing the kingdom of God. No one is happy without having the assurance that he inherits the kingdom of God as his own. Nothing can compensate for what one has done in this world. People work hard and are poorly compensated and live in the world hopelessly and perish.

But there were some wonderful people in Bethsaida. Here, the Bible does not say, "The blind man's friends." It says, "some people." These "some people" brought the blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. Sometimes, we wonder how many good people there are in this world. But Bethsaidan people were really wonderful people. In spite of their struggle to maintain their poor lives, they shared their time for the blind. It is good to share one's time for the blind or spiritually blind people. The world is very superficial. In the 20th Century, Albert Einstein, who invented the theory of relativity; in short, how an apple falls from the tree to the earth, was recognized as the "man of the century." His theory of relativity contributed to science in a sense. But his theory permeated into human thinking and all human respect disappeared. On the other hand, we can say Dr. Albert Schweitzer was like "some people" in Bethsaida. He was born in Alsace, Germany, now it belongs to France, on January 14, 1875. In his early years, he accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. It is because he read many books in his early age. He found a miracle in Jesus through what he had done. After accepting Jesus, he decided to study until he was thirty years old. Then he would go to Africa where there were so many spiritually blind people, to lead them to Jesus Christ to open their spiritually blind eyes. So he studied philosophy and theology. After studying theology, he wondered how he could help African people with his head knowledge of philosophy and theology. Then he entered medical school and barely graduated by the mercy of God. He went to Lambarene, Congo which was French Equatorial Africa; now it is called Gabon. He served many poor people there for more than forty years. There were no kind people for him like "some people" in Bethsaida. Whenever he needed subsidy to maintain his clinic he went back to European countries and had pipe organ concerts. At that time, European people did not recognize the human dignity of African people. So they thought Albert Schweitzer was wasting his life in a wasteland, Africa. They almost did not support him. His pipe organ concerts were the only income source. Sometimes, he felt very lonely and tired and African young people were very unlearning. So out of his deep compassion, he hit one of his unlearning assistants. But nobody said anything because people knew Dr. Albert Schweitzer was a holy man in that area. As a missionary, he loved Africans as much as he could hit and serve, sometimes staying up several nights. Sometimes, he felt very lonely. But he said one time, "I am free from my limitation of human condition because my thought world can travel all over the world any time." In other words, he was a highly intellectual man who stayed a long time in the library. He kept what he studied in his memory, especially Bible study. He attempted to combine the four gospels into one for fifteen years and completely failed. It was an Einstein-like attempt: very high and very absurd. His Bible study was not deep enough. So he ended up as a humanist. However, even in such a thorny nation, the Soviet Union, a newspaper called Pravda, the first-ranking state owned newspaper, commented on Dr. Albert Schweitzer, "He is the lamp of the 20th century."

There is another person who is like "some people" in Bethsaida. He is Pope John Paul II. What he says is absolute. That's the Vatican rule and tradition. But he traveled to so many countries and made peace with hostile countries of a different religion. He even visited India. Several hundred thousand people gathered around him and wanted to see him. But I think John Paul II could not eat beef steak in India and ate food with his left hand. He is a real friend of many bitter and sorrowful people. The

holy Catholic Church persecuted the Protestant churches and their people in 1542. They ruthlessly killed them, tortured them, harassed them and imprisoned them. We call this the Spanish Inquisition. No Pope until now begged pardon for this evil-doing. But John Paul II publicly begged pardon for the Catholic Church's wrongdoing in the Spanish Inquisition. He is like a good Samaritan. But he is not a humanist. Gay people surrounded the Vatican and shouted for their rights. Then he appeared and rebuked them, saying, "You people! Do not sin against God!" He was very clear in the gospel faith and his theology is very near to the four gospels supported by the entire Bible. John Paul II is 80 years old. But we pray that he may live 120 years and do many good things as a good brother to spiritually blind people. His influence is worldwide. Infamous Popes' mistakes and lawlessness of the past seemed to have been all pardoned because of his good influence. He is like "some people" in Bethsaida.

II. Jesus healed the blind man with much effort (23-26)

Look at verse 23. "He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, 'Do you see anything?'" When some good brothers of Bethsaida brought the blind man and begged Jesus to touch him, Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. There, Jesus spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him. Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" The blind man felt the world was going in reverse and something was floating around. So he said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around" (24). Here we see two things. First, this blind man was a strong blind man. Jesus' one touch was not enough. When Jesus took him outside of the town and healed him by laying on a hand, the people looked like trees walking around. In the hospital, patients who are not well have many kinds of tests, including unnecessary kinds of odd tests. But Jesus got himself together and concentrated on him with much prayer. 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 (25). Jesus sent him home saying, "Don't go into the village" (26).

Second, Jesus' compassion was indeed great on this blind man. At his very rarely discovered retreat time, this blind man came led by some good friends of Bethsaida. He was not healed at the first touch of Jesus. Jesus did not give up. Here we learn that Jesus is perfect man and perfect God. He was a perfect man but he needed some relaxation from endless hard work day and night through many months. He was going to relax. The blind man came. His concentration and the power of the Holy Spirit was short of healing the blind man. Once more Jesus concentrated his attention and compassion on him and touched his eyes and healed him. Here our Lord Jesus Christ is like the good Samaritan in the Bible.

In Luke 10:25-37, there is the story about the good Samaritan. In order to test Jesus, a teacher of the law came and asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This expert in the law did not feel life in himself. He always felt like a dead man because he was a ritualist like a cultural Christian. He didn't experience the life of God in himself. So he maliciously came to Jesus and asked him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus knew that he was not a good brother to his neighbors. So he told him a story. A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Robbers stripped him of his clothes and beat him and ran away, leaving the man half dead. A priest happened to be going down the

same road. When he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Next, a Levite in charge of synagogue conducting, came to the place and saw him. He passed by on the other side, saying, "I am already too late for orchestra practice." But a Samaritan, who was known as mixed blooded, despised and rejected by the Jews, came where the man was. He took pity on him and went to him and bandaged the wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said. "And when I return I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have." This parable moves anybody's heart. But there is no man like this. Even the religious leaders all ran away. But the Samaritan who was despised and segregated, took care of him. The good Samaritan is like a good brother and he has the image of Jesus. This story tells us that Jesus is a good Samaritan and a good brother like "some people" in Bethsaida.

Today we learned from "some people" in Bethsaida who brought a blind man to Jesus. These days there are not many friends among men. There are not many friends for the helpless. But "some people" in Bethsaida, who took care of the blind man, had the image of Jesus. Jesus was tired. But he took care of him to the end. Today's passage tells us how we can be a good friend and brother to the needy. May God make American people brothers to all peoples of all nations. May God make America a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.