

“I Need a Miracle”

The unnamed blind man walked around his room. Even though he had never seen where he lived, he knew every square inch of the place. His bed was against the wall. Five steps from the foot of the bed was a table with two chairs. Six steps from there a door. Though he didn't have much, it all had to be neat, clean, and in order because what if the man he had heard about was real? What if this Jesus came to his house?

The blind man knew it was a long-shot but maybe, just maybe through the help of this mysterious man, it was his time to see.

He knew there were others who experienced such miracles. Word had already gotten around about the leper down the road who was cured. And people were still talking about a man named Peter whose mother-in-law was healed by this Jesus in the next town over. He even heard some people talking at the market about a paralyzed man who after being lowered into the house where Jesus was actually walked out of the house, paralyzed no more, carrying the bed he spent so many years in.

Could something similar actually happen to him, a no-body from a fishing village? In this scene not recorded in Mark, the unnamed blind man knelt by his bed and prayed, “God, is it my time to see? If so, I need a miracle.”

Admit it or not, we've probably all been there. Most of us have had times in life when it seems like the only fix that is a miracle from God himself. And sometimes that's just what happens. Make no mistake miracles are real. There are definitely times when God intervenes and overrules the natural order of things. The pages of the Bible are full of such times where God directly intervenes and something impossible happens! A dead person comes back to life. Water is turned into wine. A blind man suddenly is able to see.

There are many many recorded miracles throughout the entire Bible and these events are of great value to our faith because they show the tremendous power of our loving God. But what about the specific miracles of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament? What can we learn from them and how do they apply to our lives today?

Over the next three weeks we are going to give some thought to that question as we focus on three different miracles Jesus performed.

As you hopefully picked up on at the beginning of this message, the first miracle of this series is the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida recorded in Mark chapter 8.

Now, as far as Jesus' miracles go, this text is unique. First of all, this miracle is only recorded in Mark and secondly, this is the only two-step miracle recorded in the Gospels. To recap, the people took the blind man to Jesus and Jesus takes the man by the hand and leads him outside of town. Jesus then spits on the man's eyes and laid his hands on him. Then he asked, "do you see anything?" The man said he could see men but they looked like trees walking. And here is where it gets really interesting. Instead of Jesus saying something like, "My work is done. Before I showed up you couldn't see anything but now you can see something. It might not be clear but you see something," he laid his hands on his eyes again. Jesus laid his hands on the man's eyes again. Then, as the text tells us, the man's sight was restored and he saw everything clearly. It's a two step miracle.

Why it happened this way, I don't know; we can only guess. Maybe Jesus used this opportunity to make a point to his disciples. The question of "do you see anything" after the first laying on of hands might have been directed to them as well as the man. And that question might have ultimately been directed to you and me as well. Here's what I mean.

The disciples at this point in Mark's Gospel were really struggling to understand just who Jesus was. On many occasions, even as witnesses to some amazing things such as the event we are talking about today, they failed to grasp not only who he was but what he was all about. It wasn't until the cross where it finally began to make sense. Even though Jesus told them just a few verses later in this same chapter 8, "that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed and after three days rise again," it really didn't sink in. They were caught up in the present; they liked what they were seeing. It was probably like a magic show everyday. Who knew what this guy would do next? This talk of being rejected, killed, and rising again made no sense. But fast forward a few months when they saw him alive three days after his crucifixion and it all made sense. The whole time they were in the presence of God in the flesh. It made sense in hindsight because only God could do the things they saw Jesus do.

So I ask you today the same question Jesus asked. Do you see anything? Through your eyes of faith, do you see the Christ who laid his hands on you through the waters of Holy Baptism? Do you see those same hands of his that were pierced on the cross for our transgressions, loving you and caring for you? Do you see and understand that he uses those same hands that he miraculously healed the blind man with to miraculously intervene in the natural order of things for us sometimes even when we don't even know it? And just like the two- part miracle we are talking about today do you see that he places those most loving hands on us time and time again?

I sure hope so but I also know we don't see Jesus like that all of the time, do we? Some of us are stuck in step one of this miracle. Jesus asks, "Do you see anything?" And like the blind man we say, sure we see something but we just can't make out exactly what that something is. For some of us we see Jesus as an unrecognizable, fuzzy, tree-like character who we aren't really sure about. He's there in some form but we can't see him enough to really be sure what his life means to ours.

And then there are those who need more proof. Maybe if he would If he perform a miracle or two and prove himself his whole thing would make more sense. But then there's the question of how to get his attention? How do we do that? He must need something from us that gets his attention in order to reveal himself completely. It certainly sounds reasonable. We give to him and he in turn notices something we do and he gives back to us. We are in need of a miracle; Jesus gets up and checks his list of who loves him the most based on their past actions and grants that person a miracle like some sort of genie. And to be clear here, giving more of ourselves to God certainly isn't wrong but it is wrong when we think we can seek God on our terms because when do that we reduce him to only acting in ways that make sense to us. But that's not the way of the cross.

To truly see everything clearly we have to go back to the miracle of the cross even though it makes little sense to us. We want a healer, a miracle worker, a great teacher—and rightly so— we need those things from Jesus but when that's all that we want or all we reduce him to, we fail to see things clearly. Paul writes that "Christ crucified is a stumbling block to many" (1 Cor. 1:23) and nothing could be more true. Our sinfulness makes us unworthy before God. We deserve nothing from him but death yet we want everything. But Jesus has touched us again just like he did to the blind man at Bethsaida and through his Spirit gives us the power to see the everything clearly. As the Psalmist writes, "The Lord sets the prisoners free; The Lord opens the eyes of the

blind" (Psalm 146: 7). We are now worthy before God only because Jesus erased our unworthiness and freed us from our prison of sin by dying for us. And he gives us this assurance again and again. When talking about miracles, we always start here.

You know, with all of Jesus' miracles, I always wonder what happened in the lives of those who received such things after he left them. Like the blind man in our reading today, what happened to him? What was his life like after his sight was restored? I am sure he told as many people as he could about this Jesus of Nazareth.

But what if the man happened to have been in Jerusalem that horrible day his miracle worker was crucified? What if he actually witnessed the darkness that fell over all the land and felt the earth shake and heard the temple curtain tear and fall? I'll bet he was as confused as anyone don't you? But then, what if days later he had actually saw the resurrected Jesus alive and well? Then his confusion would be no more. It would all make sense because the entire time he was in the presence of the Savior of the world. He was in the presence of God.

My friends, like the man from Bethsaida, our eyes have been opened. Through faith, we can now see that the place where Jesus appeared most defeated is the place of our certainty. His death was overturned for us and now we too are in the presence of God. If he can do that for sinners like you and me then any miracle is possible. Believe it and trust in him. Amen.