

**"I see", said the Blind Man!**

OHP!

**Introduction**

- Look at the OHP screen - what do you see?  
- (think I might have used this illustration before?!)
- If you think you see a woman's face, you're dead right! - but what age is she?  
- young or old?
- Look carefully, and you'll maybe see that **there are in fact two images there**, carefully woven together:
  - **an old woman's face**, looking down and left;
  - **young woman's face**, looking away up and right!
- There are often times when it takes time for things to become clear for us.
- **Our understanding and comprehension grows with time, and with the amount of time we spend observing, looking.**
- Over the years we have all been **"looking"** at Jesus, **"observing"** him, and inevitably responding to what we see, making decisions about the way we live based on what we perceive.
- What kind of response does Jesus draw out of us?
- This morning we learn together from three people or groups of people who looked at, and learned from Jesus.

**Progressive Healing (vs 22-26)**

- **First there was the blind man, healed by Jesus double touch.**
- Village of Bethsaida, on northern edge of Galilee, many of the incidents from Jesus' ministry take place round here - he would have been well known in this part of the world.
- Two things are unusual about Jesus' miracle:
  - it was done in **private (v.23)**;
  - and it was **gradual (v.24)**.
- Why? Perhaps it just happened that way, but:
  - maybe a shy man needed time to adjust...
  - or perhaps a helpless man needed to learn to follow and trust...
- Jesus treated this man as an individual, not just another person to be healed.
- God never works in the same way in any two people's lives - a great comfort!
- There's even more comfort in the fact that Jesus was prepared to offer that second touch (v.25):
  - maybe the man's initial response was **"great - I can see a bit, a lot better than before, even if not perfectly"** (like the owl whose cataracts were cleared by laser surgery I heard of a while ago; sight would never be perfect, but better...!); was there a tinge of disappointment? **"Am I going to be left like this?"**
  - so **what would the second touch have meant** - a glorious joy! It just gets better! Wow!
- That should be a great comfort to us too, as we so often need to have Jesus come and touch us **AGAIN**, providing healing, comfort, help, growth when life isn't great.
- Just because he's touched us in the past doesn't mean we've used up his interest in us, his grace, his healing!
- Comfort too for the disciples, who'd just been told off by Jesus - (Mark 8:18) **"Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear?"** - for their lack of faith.
- They needed his second touch, his fuller revelation that they were still able to learn and grow in faith, despite their slow start!

## Progressive Discipleship (vs 27-33)

- Second person we meet in this passage is Peter...  
...I wonder how many sermons heard on Peter's decisive revelation?
- Turning point in Mark's gospel - now heads for the Cross.  
- I've heard so many sermons on this!
- But I have less often really thought very much about the context:  
- what Jesus does immediately beforehand and afterwards
- Here is Jesus, moving Peter on, one step at a time:  
- earlier in the same chapter Jesus has accused the disciples of having "eyes [which] fail to see" (8:18);  
- but shortly afterwards, Peter has this remarkable insight into who Jesus was - the Christ (v.29)!
- It is as if Jesus used the healing as an unforgettable visual aid to lead forward disciples who spiritually could only half see.
- Each incident - the feeding of the four thousand at the start of this chapter, the storm on Galilee, the healing of Jairus' daughter and the woman who was bleeding, the casting out of demons, all the parables, the healing of the blind man (in stages) - leads the disciples on in their faith and understanding.
- **Note:**
- It is Jesus who has to do the leading:  
- for though he was and is the Anointed One, specially appointed by God to fulfil the OT promises and to liberate his people...  
- the way God had planned for this to take place was totally different from the way any human could have foreseen
- It was to take place:  
- in his time (v.30) - and so don't precipitate things by telling folk!  
- and in his way (v.33) - hence rebuke to Peter who was Satan's instrument in tempting Jesus to go another way, a way that avoided the Cross.
- So he needs to make continual "course corrections" to move the disciples on in their faith.
- He has to do the same with us - continually moving us on:  
- for if we are not moving forward, then we are moving backwards...  
- if we are not growing closer to Jesus, then we are actually growing away from him.

## Decisive Commitment

- Jesus has shown through the visual aid of the blind man, and demonstrated through the way he has brought understanding to Peter, the need to progress in faith.
- But as he has done so, he has brought the disciples up against a stumbling block:  
- it had been expected that the way of Christ would take him to a triumphant crown, and that's what the disciples were hoping for!  
- but God had known from eternity that the way of Christ would take him to a sacrificial cross, a criminal's cross (v.34b).
- And they found that really hard to handle!
- They, and the crowd of hangers-on, had to decide whether they were prepared to keep following:  
- regardless of how abhorrent it seemed;  
- regardless of how hard and scary it was, to follow Jesus to death.
- We too are among the crowd of ordinary people (v.24a) who need to heed the warning:  
- there are times when the Christian way will seem a hard choice, perhaps costing everything we have;  
- ultimately its about more than progress: a YES or a NO to God!
- But the cost of that commitment is as nothing to the certainty of knowing that our

souls will be caught up in the glory of God the Father when it comes to our turn to see Jesus as clearly as the blind man did (v.38)

- **Hope and challenge** - threads running through!
  - **hope**: Jesus treats us all as individuals, nurturing our faith, growing our understanding in exactly the way the suits us best; he is always ready with that second touch!
  - **challenge**: always the challenge is to say "YES" to what Jesus calls us on to, as we see more of who he is.
- **Whenever we stop saying "YES" to Jesus, we start saying "NO" to him.**