

Cornerstone's Sermon Conversation Guide

March 7, 2010/Fred Provencher

Trees Walking: Developing Spiritual Eyes

Mark 7:31 – 8:26

The Oscars celebrate and honor the art of story making in movies. These stories will sometimes be very upfront in their message. Sometimes the ideas of the stories will be subtle. And, at other times, the stories will be just random acts of events that leave the viewer to draw upon his/her own conclusions. The stories of our lives can often feel like random sets of events. It leads us to wonder if our lives are going anywhere and if there is something greater to which we can connect ourselves. The stories of Scripture invite us into a discovery during those moments of questioning and wonder.

In Mark 8:22 we come across what seems to be a very random story. At first glance it seems Jesus begins to play the role of creative optometrist as he spits on the eyes of a man and brings sight to his blindness. The different thing about this miracle is it appears Jesus needs two rounds in order for it to become effective. We can turn back to Mark 7:31 and read another story involving spit. This time he is allowing a man who could hardly talk begin to speak. The language in the original text for "could hardly talk" is a phrase that we see in only limited places of Scripture. In fact, one place this is seen is in Isaiah 35:1-6. The language in that Old Testament passage tells vividly of how God is going to love His people into new life. He is doing that through Jesus. He is allowing people to see, hear, and speak in ways they never could before.

At the beginning of Mark 8 Jesus is in the midst of another feeding miracle. It's almost a repeat of a couple chapters earlier in the gospel of Mark. Jesus feeds the multitude with almost nothing, and the religious leaders (Pharisees) are still not convinced. They demand a sign...as if enough signs haven't already been given. That's a great tactic to use when you just don't want your eyes to be opened up to the reality of who God is and how He is at work in the world. It's convenient to simply demand a sign of God. However, God won't succumb to that kind of behavior. Jesus warns to watch out for this kind of behavior that is coming from the religious leaders. And, while in the boat, Jesus' disciples realize that someone forgot the bread. All of these miracles are happening and the disciples are worried about the bread!

Isn't it something how the events and circumstances of our day can overwhelm us and keep us from realizing how God is at work in the world! Isn't it something how we can get lost in ourselves and forget about the way God is bringing newness to all that is around us! We have the opportunity to join Him in bringing newness. He has brought new life to us in Jesus Christ. And He wants to bring new life to all kinds of others through you as you live into the opportunity before you to follow Jesus as he lives a life of serving others.

Take a moment and pray for Steve and Ruth Hoernig in Newark, NJ, as they live and bring the hope of the gospel of Jesus to that urban part of our state and world. Pray that God would bless them as they develop relationships and help people in that setting understand how God is inviting them into His plan of recreation for the world.

What kinds of movie stories do you find yourself being pulled into? What kinds of movie stories keep you at a distance? Share a recent movie story that grabbed your heart and mind. Why did it have that effect on you?

Jesus is the One from God who brings about all that God is doing in the world. You can read in very poetic language found in Isaiah 35:1-6 words that describe the joy of God's redeemed. Is this kind of joy and experience present in your life? How has God worked in your life to bring about this kind of joy and experience? Maybe you feel as if you don't have this kind of experience with God. What kinds of circumstances might God be allowing into your life now to show you how He can bring water from the wilderness?

Have you ever found yourself, like the Pharisees, demanding a sign from God that He just wasn't going to give? How did you respond in this situation? What did you learn in this situation? Tell us a way right now in your life you may be demanding a sign from God instead of trusting who you know He is.

How can you and your small group in the coming weeks not allow yourselves to be overwhelmed by the circumstances and events of your lives in order to follow Jesus as He serves others and, therefore, you move forward and engage in serving others?

What area of life is God inviting you to move forward in so he can reveal himself to you in a deeper way? What else might God be speaking to you through this story? What do you think God might be trying to affirm in you about who you are as his child through this story? What step of action is God calling you to take this week?