

SERIES: GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

SUBJECT: CHRIST AND THE CROSS GO TOGETHER

SCRIPTURE: MARK 8:22-33

SERMON NO. 19

Introduction

Why out of all of Jesus' miracles did this one have to be completed in two stages? Was Jesus in such a hurry that he goofed up the first time and only half healed the man? Or is there something deeper to the two stages of this miracle?

The two stages of this miracle is because it would help Jesus teach us about who He is. This miracle represents a revelation of why He came to earth as a human. And that purpose is critical to our understanding what it means to be a Christian

I. THE HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN. (22). He cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. Jesus' fame for healing people had already preceded Him. *It's interesting to notice that...*

1. Jesus didn't perform this miracle in front of the whole town. (23). Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside of the town, and with just His disciples around Him, spit on the man's eyes and put His hands on him, and asked him if he could see anything. The man opened his eyes, he could see, but not clearly. (24) **He looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking.** Unlike all of Jesus' other miracles, the healing didn't "take" all the way.

Once more Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes (25) and this time his sight was completely restored, and he saw things clearly.

Then Jesus speaks a stern warning to the man, (26). You can go home, but don't go into town, don't tell anyone. Why not go into town? Because Jesus didn't want the word spread as it had before resulting in huge crowds around Him and His disciples. He wanted to be alone with them, so He could concentrate on teaching them.

2. Why was this miracle done in two stages? It was not because Jesus failed! It was to get the disciples ready to understand what was really involved in following Him.

True Christianity involves more than following Jesus as Savior. It also involves following the Cross. One without the other makes Christianity ineffective. *Let us observe these...*

II. TWO ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY. (27-30).

1. The Christ

They've left the village of Bethsaida, and are now walking up to the north end of the Sea of Galilee toward the area near the town of Caesarea Philippi. It is in the mountains above this city that later Jesus would be Transfigured. **And they are talking together as they walk. (27-30). Whom do men say that I am? And they answer...28 John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. 29 And he saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ.**

Peter's statement **Thou art the Christ** had reference to Jesus as being the ruler and the chief intercessor that God had promised,

and that Israel had anticipated for many years. Also that Jesus is the King over God's Kingdom. He rules the people on God's behalf.

This is a spiritual kingdom. This is a kingdom that has no end. This is a kingdom that is more powerful than any kingdom that had ever existed, or that ever will exist. Jesus is the king to whom all kings will someday bow.

Jesus commands them not to tell anyone. (30). Why? Because Jesus would be mobbed everywhere he went like he had been in the past. No one would let Him alone. He would never have a chance to teach His disciples the second element involved in following Him. *Which is...*

2. The Cross (31). He began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priest, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Jesus was teaching the crucial second element to being a Christian. It's not enough to have Christ. For Jesus' mission to be completely effective, His followers must also understand that they have a cross to bear.

The cross represented submission. The cross represented death. The cross represented shame and humility. And this was such a hard concept for the disciples to grasp. Look at the reaction in the next verse (32) **Peter took him, and began to rebuke him.** "Don't talk like that Jesus. Don't talk about suffering and death. You are a king. You are a high priest. You're an important guy. Important guys don't go to the cross."

This is the natural reaction of human beings to the cross. I'll accept Jesus as the Christ. I'll accept Him as King. I'll accept Him as high priest. But the cross? No way. The easy part is the glory "stuff" of King and High Priest. But the hard part is the submission, the humility, and the obedience of the cross.

Look at what Jesus says to Peter (33). He rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of men. Refusal to accept the cross is not from God. It is from Satan, himself. There is no other way of putting it. So He rebukes Peter in front of all the disciples.

What's so important about the cross? There are four important things the cross means:

1. The cross means an end to self-sufficiency. The cross of Jesus points out that you and I are incapable of securing our own salvation.

Illustration: Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the man known around the world as the "prince of preachers" back in the late 1800's died in a war. However, this war was not fought with guns and bullets. And it was not fought for some piece of ground, or some political ideology. This was a war that was fought in the church, over this very issue of self-sufficiency.

The war was known as the Down-Grade Controversy. The issue was that leaders in Spurgeon's denomination in England, the Baptist Union, wanted to move away from the Biblical preaching of the cross that the Bible teaches, and that Spurgeon had been preaching for years. The leaders of the denomination felt that if pastors taught that a person is sinful, and utterly and hopelessly

lost for eternity without a Savior, they would be perceived as "old fashioned". And this would offend people. They felt that if pastors would minimize the sinfulness of people, then more people would come to church.

Spurgeon wouldn't tolerate this kind of thinking. So he preached and wrote a series of articles in the 1880's that became known as the Down-Grade Articles. In these messages, Spurgeon wanted to teach his congregation and his denomination about the dangers of moving away from teaching about the cross. He suggested that this Biblical truth is like the pinnacle of a steep, slippery mountain. One step in the wrong direction, and you'll find yourself on the down-grade, rolling down the mountain.

Once a church or an individual Christian gets on the down-grade, Spurgeon said, momentum takes over. Recovery is unusual and the only thing that will repair the situation is spiritual revival.

In the process of this war with the leaders of his denomination, Spurgeon wound up resigning from the Baptist Union, he was publicly censured, and the strain of this fight is what many feel led to his untimely death. That denomination continued on a path from evangelicalism to liberalism. Leaders eventually denied the deity of Christ. And after World War One, the Baptist Union lost much of its membership and influence in England.

In one of the last sermons he preached, Spurgeon said this... (front of "This Week")

When the doctrines of grace and the glorious atoning sacrifice are not set clearly before men's minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow. It is terrible to me that this dreadful

blight should come upon our churches; for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered, and even the strong are perplexed. (from A Sermon for the Time Present, by C. H. Spurgeon, October 30, 1887).

The cross is there to remind us that we are not self-sufficient! And when we deny the power of the cross, we are on the "down-grade."

2. An end to the power of Satan and Hell. (Eph. 6:12). For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Many of the non-believers, and some believers don't have a clue that a spiritual world exists, where the forces of God are at war with the forces of Satan. That's why Paul wrote...

1 Corinthians 1:18 The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. The power of the cross is power that comes against a specific power. It is the power of God against the power of evil. And the prize is the souls of human beings.

3. The cross means this world and the things of this world are temporary. Temporary things are not something on which to base eternal decisions. The one who dies with the most toys does not win! The cross points this out. Followers of the cross realize that the accumulation of wealth and things, is not what life is all about.

The philosophy of today says that it's important to accumulate things. Because things equal wealth; wealth equals happiness; happiness equals fulfillment; and personal fulfillment is the highest thing a person can achieve. A personal relationship with God must be at the center, for real and eternal fulfillment to take place.

4. The cross means an end to despair. Jesus didn't stay on the cross. He will constantly remind His disciples as they travel to Jerusalem that three days after the cross, He will rise from the dead. Death cannot contain Jesus. Death has no more victory.

The cross means Life forever, life that will not end in death, life that is far better than the best that earth has to offer... is just on the other side. Paul says...

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Conclusion

The blind man was healed in two stages. It is to open our eyes to a great truth. To understand our Christian faith, we must understand there are two essential parts of following Jesus-the Christ and the Cross.

With only the Christ, we see dimly and with distortion. But with the Cross we see fully, clearly and understand our eternal destiny.