

Jesus' ministry was introduced by his announcement that the Kingdom is near.
His call: to repent and believe.

Repentance in the Greek = *to change the way you see.*

It's Lasik procedure for the soul.

Amazing Grace contains the famous line– “[I] was *blind but now I see*”

But Jesus is using it to speak to a change of perspective. The phrase “the Kingdom is near” for Jews in that day would have been wildly different than what God had in mind.

The vision the Jews had of the coming Messiah was one of a national kingdom that would displace the Romans.

And Jesus was about to hit them with a plot twist that would redefine everything they knew about God and his plan for his people. He wasn't taking up a crown. He was taking up a cross.

I say that now and it doesn't phase you.

You've heard the Gospel story again and again.

“**Spoiler**” is the term we use for these unwanted plot reveals.

Being surprised by a plot twist is a one time experience. It's a unique experience that you can only have once. Once you know how a story ends, you can no longer have your mind blown.

Many of us know how the stories of the Bible end. Especially in the Gospels, there are accounts we've heard so many times we kind of skim through them.

The Gospel of **MARK** makes it easy to do just that. Everything seems to happen “Immediately.” Mark uses that word 41 times in 16 chapters. It's rapid fire. Constant motion.

The first half is about **WHO** Jesus is – the Messiah.

The second half is about **HOW** he walks this out – the Messiah would have to suffer.

The ending- like many of the accounts- is immediate.

Readers are left thinking, as the disciples would have – “**Wait, what? What just happened.**”

But Jesus made many attempts to prepare his followers for this coming reality.

“Who do you say that I am?”

When Peter confesses you are the Christ, the one we are looking for... confirming the WHO...

Jesus explains HOW he will become the Messiah: suffer and die shamefully on the cross.

Peter calls a **timeout**. He has his own personal, “**wait what**” moment.

He pulls Jesus aside to rebuke him. But Jesus famously calls him Satan in front of the disciples and explains himself again – how he would suffer and die.

He desperately wants the disciples to understand who he is, why he came, and what that meant for them. He desperately wants that for you. He wants that for each of us.

In 2016 the **Harvard Dean of Education** gave a commencement address that went viral and sparked a NY Times best seller called “**Wait, What?**” about asking life's most important Q's.

In his speech he said: *“Wait, what?” is actually a very effective way of asking for clarification. “Wait what?” is at the root of understanding.*

Wait – it pays to slow down to make sure you truly understand.
But how often do we fail to do this when we read the Bible.
Not because the whole Bible moves at a fast break pace like Mark’s gospel.
Because we do.

I want to take Mark’s fast break Gospel and take a few of its accounts and say TIMEOUT.
Wait. What? And RSVP to the invitation to dig and come to a deeper understanding.

Tonight - **MARK 8:22-26**

#SPITGATE

Chris Paul’s teammate Carmelo Anthony was quoted after the game, saying:
“That’s unacceptable. You don’t do that. You don’t do that to anybody. In sports, on the streets, that’s blatantly disrespectful right there.”

Blatantly disrespectful. To some people, spitting is in a class above everything - even violence.
Because its implication is that the person spat on isn’t even worth laying hands on.

In ancient Jewish culture, spitting on someone wasn’t seen much differently.
In Deuteronomy we see if a man did not take in his dead brother’s childless widow, she was to spit in his face. In Numbers 12 we see if a father were to spit on his daughter’s face, she would be in disgrace and put out of camp for 7 days. In the accounts of Job and the writings of Isaiah we see they were objects of insults and spitting.

This is one of **three times** Jesus uses spit to heal.
Mark 7 he spits on his fingers before touching a deaf man’s ears.
John 9 he spits on the ground to make mud and apply it to a man’s blind eyes.

Here - he spits directly on the man. First of all – that’s gross. And that’s part of why its insulting.

WHY does he do it??

When confused, look to the context of the passage and the greater content of scripture.

Context:

The journey to Jerusalem in **Mark 8:27–10:52** is known as **the discipleship section** of Mark. In this section, Jesus teaches His disciples what awaits Him in Jerusalem and what it means to follow Him. It begins and ends with the healing of **blind men**. That’s important.

And this episode with the blind man happens between two examples of the disciples’ blindness
8:14-21 & 8:31-33

This episode isn’t solely about the man himself.
It’s a living, acted out, commentary about the disciples. He represents them in their blindness.

Jesus had just asked them in **Mark 8:18** - "*Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?*"

How can you be so blind having been with me so long? Do you understand a thing that I'm saying?

What had he been saying? Who he was and why he came.

And throughout the first half of Mark we see again and again the disciples are unable to see WHO Jesus really is and HOW he'd usher in his kingdom.

Not to climb onto a throne.

To climb onto a cross.

Jesus himself would be mocked and spat on.

Spitting in the face of somebody was like a slap in the face.

Jesus' statement that He would be killed in Jerusalem was also like a slap in the face.

So much so that Peter outright rebukes Jesus.

He had just confessed that Jesus was the Messiah.

The idea that the long awaited Messiah would become a curse by crucifixion was disgraceful.

But that wasn't all Jesus was saying...

In this exchange Jesus isn't just saying *he* would face persecution and insult.

His disciples should expect the same.

MARK wants his reader to see that the shocking aspects and actions of the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida were also related to the disciples and the costs of following Christ.

In verse 34:

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

We talk so often about how if God wants you to do something, He will give you a peace about it.

Deny yourself. (kiss your comfort goodbye)

Take up your cross (pain, not peace)

THEN – follow me.

The first steps of following Christ aren't peace, they're unsettling.

It's why so spiritual disciplines, the very marks of discipleship, lay dormant in our lives.

Giving? That would stretch us financially.

Fasting? That makes me hangry.

Evangelism? That gives me anxiety.

Accountability? Opening up makes me uncomfortable.

Here's the thing: All of that is par for the course.

Deny yourself. Take up your cross.

Or don't follow.

We are called to grow as we follow.

The second “wait, what” moment in this passage points right to this.

It certainly seems to take Jesus two attempts to heal the blind man.

Was it because this man’s blindness was a particularly hard case?

Was it because Jesus tried and failed the first time?

We know those answers are no.

So what is going on?

Again... it points to the disciples.

“Do you see anything?” prefaces the question Jesus would ask Peter:

“Who do you say that I am?”

Peter’s correct confession that Jesus is the Christ indicates that the disciples can “see.”

They were believers in Jesus, the Messiah, walking in salvation.

However, they needed to see something else. Their sight is only partial.

They are like the blind man when Jesus placed His hands on him the first time.

They need increased “sight.”

When Christ tells them what will happen to Him, He is in the process of healing their “blindness” about what it means to *follow* Him.

LEGALLY BLIND vs. LITERALLY BLIND

The man was no longer completely blind! He could see. But people looked like trees.

“We don’t yet see things clearly. We’re squinting in a fog, peering through a mist”

1 Corinthians 13:12 MSG

That applies to all of us.

Squinting through a fog. Peering through a mist.

Cloudy spiritual vision afflicts every Christian to some degree.

Blind spots.

Blurry vision.

Areas of our life that aren’t fully developed.

The problem in most cases is that we don’t like to admit it.

We don’t like to be honest about it.

But what saves the man? Honesty.

This is the first time we see Jesus ask the recipient of his miracle about its effectiveness.

Christ didn’t ask him if he could see to get information he didn’t already know.

He desired honesty.

And honesty is what brought this man complete healing.

Instagram. Trophy photos. “Never let them see you bleed.”

“You quote the devil when you say you’re OK” - Propaganda

How do you fix your eyes?

Fix your eyes. (– Hebrews 12:2)

Some of us have fixed our eyes on **our own efforts.**

Some of us have fixed our eyes on **our circumstances.**

Some of us have fixed our eyes on **the sin that still entangles us.**

Fixing our eyes on Christ is the first step and the entire path of the Christian life.

We don’t look to Christ in faith to be saved and then look to ourselves or our circumstances to persevere.

Fix your eyes on Jesus Christ, the hope of the world.