

# Why People Look but Don't See

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Great to see you this morning. We're going to dive into God's Word. Please keep your Bibles open at Mark 8. Well, to start this morning, I want to take you back to the 90s and ask you if you recognize this.

Or is it just a blur to you? For the benefit of those listening, on the audio recording, we're looking at a magic eye picture. There were all the craze in the 90s, and there's a hidden picture in that. If you screw your eyes up just right and focus in just the right way, you'll be able to see this 3D hidden picture. Can anyone see it? I'm curious to know if anyone can see it. Some people get those right away. No one?

Okay, some people are kind of screwing up their eyes, turning their heads, looking. Other people are going, what on earth are these people doing? What is that? Sorry? No, it's not Jesus. Nice try, though. Nice try. Anyone? Let's try the next one. I think this next one's a bit easier because you can kind of merge the patterns together if you focus just right.

[1:04] Can anybody see that picture? No one? I'm disappointed in you guys. Okay, let's try one more. What about this one? Can anybody see that?

Keep looking, keep looking. Focus, unfocus. No? Well, I promise you there's a picture. That one's an eagle. The last one was a lazy boy chair, and the one before, that was a shark. And they're there.

They're there. The 3D pictures are there. But you can stare at it and stare at it. And some people stare at these pictures and don't ever see a picture. It is possible to look at something and look at something and look at something but never see it.

That is the point of the stories that we read in Mark, because exactly the same concept applies to looking at Jesus. It is possible to read about Him.

It is possible to hear about Him. It is possible to come to church for years and yet never to see Jesus. Some people look at Jesus and they don't get what all the Christians make a big deal of.

[2:07] Some people, though, look at Jesus and their lives are transformed. What's the difference? Have you ever wondered why? Have you ever wondered why some people look at the exact same evidence and yet they don't see what others see?

Well, that's what we're going to look at in Mark. That's why these passages and these stories are here. Mark is showing us in Mark chapter 8 that Jesus is once again showing His identity as the Messiah, the one that God has sent to earth to fix the nations and to provide dying sinful people with life and restoration.

And we've been seeing that it's not just for Israel that God does this. Remember, the Israelites thought that the Messiah and what He was going to do is only for the nation of Israel.

They were wrong and Jesus has been showing that His restoration power is available to Gentiles as well, non-Israelites. And we see that here in this feeding miracle. Did you notice? I hope you noticed this is the second feeding miracle in Mark.

This is not just, I've heard this somewhere before, where was it? It was actually in chapter 6, just not like two weeks ago. There was a feeding miracle. The difference is that that was feeding people in Israelite territory.

[3:20] This is now in non-Israelite territory. Jesus is doing a provision feeding miracle showing that through Him, God is providing life for all the nations. And it's a wonderful miracle, again, of Him multiplying food to show that just like God provided for Israel in the wilderness, He has come to provide us with what we cannot earn ourselves.

And yet the amazing thing is that as you carry on reading Mark 8, the immediate thing that happens afterwards is two accounts of groups of people failing to see Jesus, failing to realize who He is.

And as we read that, look at Mark 8, 18. Jesus comes to the point of telling His own disciples that they can't see what's right in front of them. Mark 8, verse 18. Do you have eyes and not see? Do you have ears and not hear? And so as we look at these two stories, we're going to see why that happens.

Why people today still can look at Jesus and yet not see Him. And there's two main reasons I want us to see this morning. But first, as we look at the first account from verse 11 to 13, the first reason is that some people don't see simply because they don't want to see.

[ 4 : 39 ] Read with me from verse 11. The Pharisees came and began to argue with Jesus, demanding of Him a sign from heaven to test Him. Now, I hope you see the irony in this story.

Jesus has just performed quite an amazing miracle. The very next line is the Pharisees saying, perform a miracle for us to prove to us who you are.

You can well understand why He just sighed. Now, to be fair, the Pharisees themselves probably weren't with Him on the other side of the lake when He did this. But they had seen countless miracles.

They had already seen throughout Mark. We've seen, and Mark doesn't even record all of the miracles Jesus did. They had seen sign after sign of Jesus showing His identity, showing His power, and yet they keep asking for more.

Why? Why is that? Why, when people have already seen something, do they keep asking for more? Well, the reason is because their intent is not to believe Jesus. They don't go there with open minds going, OK, well, maybe we should believe, let's just see a sign.

[ 5 : 59 ] No. The text actually tells us why they asked Him for a sign. It tells us their intent, and it's in verse 11. The Pharisees came and began to argue with Him, demanding of Him a sign from heaven to test Him.

Their intent was to test Jesus, not to test their beliefs or their presuppositions. They weren't interested in changing what they believed.

They wanted to test to see if Jesus could fit into what they believed already. That's why they asked Him. They wanted to see if Jesus could fit into their framework of belief.

And you actually see that all the time in today's world as well. We think wrongly that evidence will convince people, but it doesn't. Why?

Because people will interpret evidence differently based on what they already have decided to believe. Am I right? It happens all the time. People will look at a particular piece of evidence, a fact, and people will interpret that very differently based on their presuppositions, what they've already decided to believe.

[ 7 : 10 ] In fact, there's a famous anecdote that illustrates this quite well. The man who believed he was dead. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. But a man woke up one day and he believed he was dead.

He went and told his wife and children, I'm dead. I'm so sorry. You must be so sad. They looked at him and said, No, Dad, you're not dead. You're walking around. You're breathing.

You're speaking. You're not dead. But he was convinced that he was dead. And he carried on telling his family he was dead. And so they were exasperated with him eventually. They took him to the doctor.

The doctor listens to his story. And the doctor takes some books down off his shelf and opens them up and says, Have a look here. And he proves to this guy, factually, he proves to him that dead men can't bleed.

Because the blood flow isn't happening. If your heart's not beating and so you can't bleed. You can only bleed if you're living. And then the man looks at the books and he looks at the facts and goes, Yeah, I suppose you're right.

[ 8 : 09 ] I see what you're saying. Dead men can't bleed. And then the doctor takes his hand and takes a pin and pricks his hand. Ow! He goes. And he looks. And his eyes widen because he sees blood coming from his finger.

And he looks. And he goes, Wow, doctor, look at that. You were wrong. Dead men do bleed. You see, people interpret the evidence based on what they've already decided is true.

And the Pharisees were doing that exact thing here. When they came to Jesus, these Pharisees had already got a framework of beliefs that they were quite happy with. And they treat the evidence of Jesus quite clear.

They treat it in a similar way. They've already made up their minds about Jesus. They've decided he's a false teacher. No evidence will change that. If he did a miracle then and there, they probably would have said, You see, false teachers can do miracles.

And so, that's why Jesus doesn't. He doesn't give them a sign. It's not going to change their beliefs. They've already decided what to believe. And the reason, it turns out, is that they don't want to believe that Jesus is from God.

[ 9 : 16 ] And they don't want to believe that he is in authority over them. They just, they don't want to believe that. They want to be in authority over themselves.

And the Bible makes that quite clear about the Israelites. But not just the Israelites, all of us at heart. But they were actually, even the Israelites, the Jewish people, who should have known better, were in active rebellion against God.

And God tries to show them time and time again, Guys, you think that you are following me, but you're actually rebelling against me. You're my enemies. It got to the point where he had to send a foreign nation to conquer Israel.

To try to wake them up to the fact that they were God's enemies. When they were supposed to be his people. And even when God warned them, and warned them before that, they continued to not listen.

And it's in Jeremiah 5, that passage Rowan read for us earlier, that we see what God is saying to them. You can turn there. I'm going to read from Jeremiah 5. And you see this exact same thing happening.

[ 10 : 17 ] Where people just refuse to believe what God is revealing. But it's in this passage, and this is why it's an important passage in the Old Testament. That we learn why they don't see what God is saying.

And hear what God is saying. Jeremiah 5, from verse 21. This is God speaking through the prophet Jeremiah. Hear this, you foolish and senseless people.

They have eyes, but they don't see. They have ears, but they don't hear. Exactly what Jesus said to his disciples in verse 18 of Mark 8. And then carry on from verse 23, because we find out why they don't hear or see.

Verse 23. But these people have stubborn and rebellious hearts. They have turned aside and gone away. They have not said to themselves, let's fear the Lord our God who gives the seasonal rains, both autumn and spring, and who guarantees to us the fixed weeks of the harvest.

In other words, God provides for them, and they don't recognize him as their provider. See what's happening? Same thing in Mark 8. Jesus is providing, and providing, and showing, and they refuse to recognize.

[ 11 : 28 ] Why? Because of rebellion. Because they don't want to face the truth. If Jesus is who he says he is, it would mean they have to change their beliefs. It would mean they have to change how they think and how they live.

It would mean there's a new authority over their life, and they just don't want that. Verse 25 of Jeremiah 5. Sums it up. Your guilty acts have diverted these things from you.

Your sins have withheld my bounty from you. The Israelites, religious as they were, were actually rebels against God. And that's why when Jesus came to reveal himself as the long-awaited Messiah, they did not see him.

And their failure to see wasn't because they didn't have enough evidence. I want you to see that this morning. The reason people didn't believe in Jesus was not because of lack of evidence.

And it's the same today. The reason people often do not believe in Jesus is certainly not because of lack of evidence. You might be someone who says, You know, I would believe if God showed himself more clearly.

[ 12 : 40 ] If God made it more obvious. If only I had a little bit more evidence, I would believe. No, you wouldn't. No, you wouldn't.

There's enough evidence. There's more than enough evidence. The resurrection of Jesus Christ as a proven historical fact alone is mountains of evidence. That has, people have been trying to disprove for 2,000 years and have failed.

And the amount of evidence we have for the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ would still pass in a court of law today as factually true. We have enough evidence, let alone all the other stuff that scripture reveals.

If you have heard the news of Christ and you still don't believe it's for another reason, it's not because you don't have enough evidence. It might be because you just don't want to. And you don't want God's rule over your life.

That's certainly what it was for the Pharisees. And that's why, as we turn back to Mark 8, Jesus responds the way he does. In verse 12, Sighing deeply in his spirit, he said, Why does this generation demand a sign?

[13:52] Truly, I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation. It's frustration. You wonder why Jesus, who normally is so full of mercy, acts in this way.

He's just now frustrated and he stops. He says, no, no. Actually, I'm not going to reveal anything more to you. You might wonder why he does that. And you might actually wonder why there are no miracles today.

Have you ever wondered? You read in the Bible, you see all these miracles. Why doesn't he carry on doing miracles today? So that we would see and believe? Well, firstly, we've already seen that's not necessarily going to happen because people evaluate evidence according to what they've already decided to believe.

And so if miracles happen today and the CNN and the SABC cameras were there and they recorded it and it was viral all over YouTube, you know what people would say?

It's CGI. It's fake. It's fake news. It's computer-generated graphics. That's what they're doing. People will make all kinds of excuses not to believe.

[14:55] So miracles won't make a difference. But the second and more important reason why Jesus refused to do miracles here is I think to emphasize the fact God doesn't need to prove himself to us.

He doesn't owe us evidence for his existence. If we don't want to believe what he's already revealed, he's well within his rights to say, fine, and turn his back and go to those who actually are interested to hear what he has to say.

God doesn't owe us evidence. It's by his mercy alone that he has given us any revelation of himself. But there's also a point, and I think that's what Jesus is showing us here, where a continued stubborn refusal to believe what God has revealed causes him to actually just stop giving you any more revelation, and the door becomes closed.

And so walk through it while you still can, while you're still at church, while you're still hearing this, while there's still rays of light. Grab them while you can.

Don't ignore that. You might be someone who says, you know, I'll think about this church stuff and this Jesus stuff more seriously when I get a bit older.

[16:10] I'm just so busy, and there's so much to think about now. When I'm older and I'm closer to kind of thinking about eternity and things like that, then I'll think about Jesus. I'll decide when I'm old.

Well, I want to tell you, next year might be too late. Next week might be too late. Do something while you still have the light. Don't be like the Pharisees who keep wanting more revelation from Jesus even though it makes no difference to them.

So that's the first reason we see why many people do not, they can look at Jesus and not see him because deep down, even subconsciously, it's because they don't actually want to see him.

But there's another reason that Jesus reveals why people don't see him, and that's the next story with his own disciples. And that is that some don't see because they're too preoccupied to see.

Look at verse 14 to 21. Let's read that again. The disciples had forgotten to take bread and only had one loaf with them in the boat. Then Jesus gave them strict orders.

[17:19] Guys, watch out. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. They were discussing among themselves that they did not have any bread. Aware of this, he said to them, Hey, why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread?

Don't you understand or comprehend? Do you have hardened hearts? Do you have eyes and not see? Do you have ears and not hear? Do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the 5,000, how many baskets full of leftovers did you collect?

Twelve, they told them. When I broke the seven loaves for the 4,000, how many baskets full of pieces did you collect? Seven, they said. And he said to them, Don't you understand yet?

Now this story is almost comical after what Jesus has just done. Do you see what's happening? The disciples are with Jesus worried that they don't have enough bread.

Do you see the irony? They had just seen him provide bread for 4,000 people. Just seen him. That's the very last thing he did. And now they're worried because they don't have enough bread with him in the boat.

[ 18 : 30 ] It's amazing how quickly people can forget what God has done. Even in our own lives. Isn't that the same? We might laugh at the disciples. How stupid they were.

And yet, when we're in a time of crisis and we fail to trust that God will see us through even though he's done it a thousand times before and we freak out, we're not that different to the disciples, are we?

It's amazing how quickly people forget what God has already done. especially in times of crisis like the disciples were in here when even though they had seen Jesus miraculously feeding people again, there's a whole crowd that need to be fed.

The responsibility is on the disciples' shoulders and they're freaking out. How do we feed all these people? They forget. Forget what Jesus has already done. And we see this also in the wilderness. You know the story of Israel coming out of Egypt? Going through the wilderness. The interesting thing is that despite all that God had did for them miraculously, He took them out of Egypt, parting of the Red Sea, defeating the Egyptian army, the mighty Egyptian army that were coming to kill them, rescued them from that army, then in the wilderness provided manna and quail, miraculous food, in a land that was desolate so that they could go for 40 years through the wilderness to reach the promised land.

[ 19 : 51 ] And yet, almost every time they ran out of food, they were like, we're going to die, we're going to die. Where's our food coming from? And God has to remind them, Moses, tell them, I've done this before, I will keep doing it.

Every time they came across a powerful enemy in the wilderness, we're going to die, we're going to die, they're too powerful for us. And God's like, hello, the Egyptians, do you remember them? Moses, tell them.

That's kind of the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy summed up. It's God's people continuing to forget what God has already done. And we see it happening again.

And God has to, God has to say, you know, stop. Just calm down. Focus on me. Listen. I'll see you through like I have before. And the disciples are in a similar situation here in the boat.

They're freaking out that they don't have enough bread. That's their entire focus. We don't have food just for the 12 of us. Jesus is trying to tell them something important.

[ 20 : 52 ] And yet they're still, even the verse after, they're still discussing, who didn't bring the bread? Come on, guys. I thought you took it. John, no, no, no. I thought you had it. We don't have enough bread.

What are we going to do? And Jesus is just saying, guys, shh, just listen to me. Just focus. Just don't worry about that. Focus on me here. And then he says something weird.

Verse 15. Watch out. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod. You know, he's like, okay, you want to talk about bread?

Let me talk about bread. And he uses another parable, the leaven. It's a weird thing to say, but we've got to just take a minute to understand what he's saying. Leaven is something that was put in bread to make it rise.

And it's put in beer to make it fizz and stuff. It's yeast. And so the way it works is that you only need a very small bit of it that affects a big batch.

[ 21 : 55 ] And when Jesus referred to leaven also in the other Gospels, he was referring to the unbelief of the Pharisees that we've just seen. And so he's talking about their growing unbelief, their growing stubbornness and refusal to believe and how it might start small, but it can infuse into the whole and cause, in fact, wholesale rejection of Christ if it's not dealt with.

That's what it means. It could also, interestingly, remind the disciples of the Exodus. So, when they went into the wilderness from the Exodus, from out of Egypt, they were told by God to only have unleavened bread for the journey through the wilderness.

And so, unleavened bread became associated with the wilderness and following God. Leavened bread became associated with the world and back in Egypt and the luxuries of Egypt.

And so there could be some of that as well. Either way, Jesus is trying to show the disciples that their preoccupation with worldly concerns is preventing them from seeing Him and trusting Him.

Their preoccupation with the immediate concerns of the world, daily life, are actually stopping them from focusing on Him and seeing Him. And it's the same today.

[ 23 : 10 ] It's a warning that His disciples then needed, but it's a warning that His disciples need today, let alone other people whose preoccupation with the world causes them to not see Jesus.

His own disciples could not see Him because of the preoccupation and the worries of the world.

And that warning is given not only here, but throughout the New Testament.

that same warning to Christians. I want to read to you from Hebrews 3. It's a very serious warning and we need to hear it soberly. Hebrews 3 from verse 12.

Watch out. The same phrase Jesus uses and in the original language it's an attention-grabbing phrase. Watch out, brothers and sisters.

This is from Hebrews 3 written to Christians today. Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

[ 24 : 11 ] But encourage each other daily, while it is still called today, so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception. For we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.

you've got to hold on to the... if you've come to see Jesus, you've got to hold on to that. Because we become partakers of Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.

And Jesus is warning His disciples, Hebrews is warning Christians, that unbelief starts very small, just like yeast in a big batch, tiny amount, and yet it can infuse into the whole.

You just become a little more preoccupied with the world and what's going on out there than you are with God and His kingdom. Start small. Just a little bit of a change of attention.

A little preoccupation more with the world and your daily needs and just your life and your habits.

And then you start skipping church. Just every second week.

[ 25 : 26 ] You know, I'll go every other week. I'll watch online. It's fine. Don't worry about me. Don't phone me because I'll be watching on YouTube. That's fine. No worries. And then you say that and then you actually only watch every second week online.

And then you only watch when you have time. And then you have no time. And then you stop praying and reading the Bible at home. And then one day you wake up and you don't believe anymore. And you wonder when that happened.

It starts small. And Jesus is giving a serious warning to His disciples to watch out for the yeast, the unbelief that starts unnoticeably.

We must take it seriously. We must guard against it. And we must make sure we don't get preoccupied with life so much that we lose focus on Jesus. But rather, as Hebrews 3.13 says, how do we prevent that?

But encourage each other daily while it is still called today. Christians, be together. Spur each other on so that none of you is hardened by sin's deception.

[ 26 : 29 ] And the primary way we do that is just by coming to church. There's other ways, of course, that we spur each other on. Growth group, keeping in touch with each other, reading the Bible together, praying together.

But the key way is to come to church because it's when we come to church and we put aside all the things that are telling us, no, we can't. We've got to sleep in. We've got busy.

We've got sports. We've got all this stuff on. And we actually put that aside and we come to church.

That's when Jesus says, hey, hello. Just forget about all that. Focus on me. Church is the key way we do that, where we stop life and we focus again on Jesus.

And it's essential. It's essential. Jesus is giving a serious warning here. His disciples in this story are concerned. Their only concern is their lack of bread.

Jesus' only concern is their lack of faith. Their real danger therein of losing sight of Him. That is Jesus' concern.

[ 27 : 28 ] How much is it your concern? My concern? How much is it our concern for both us and others versus the concern we have for our salary and our safety and school fees and job promotion and all the things that we worry about day to day?

How much is our concern actually losing faith and other people that we know drifting from Christ? Christ. We're very quick to pray when someone loses their job, when someone is sick, when someone's had an accident, rightly so.

We put it on the prayer chain, prayer email, we pray for them. But are we as concerned for them? Do we pray for them as urgently when we hear that they've been missing church or missing growth group?

Or do we just write it off as, oh, they're so busy. It's okay. It's not okay. Jesus wants us to take note and to listen and to be on our guard for the yeast of growing unbelief.

And so this passage, it gives us some serious and sobering warnings just before the climax of the book that's coming at the end of chapter 8.

[ 28 : 49 ] But Jesus wants us to take note before we move on in Mark, before his disciples move on, he needs us to hear this warning. There are some serious warnings. The warning of not seeing Jesus because deep down you might not want to and the warning of not seeing Jesus or losing sight of Jesus because of preoccupations with the world.

But I want to end on a positive note. That's pretty heavy stuff. And I want to end on a positive note because this passage actually does. Right at the end, verse 21, look what Jesus says.

Do you not yet understand? Do you not yet understand? That yet gives a ray of hope for the disciples that the Pharisees didn't have.

It points to the next passage where Jesus actually gives eyes to the disciples to see and ears to hear what evidence alone could never convince them of.

We'll see that next week. But, what is the difference? Why do they get that yet and the Pharisees don't? What is the difference between them and the Pharisees? I'll tell you. They're still with Jesus in the boat.

[ 30 : 00 ] The Pharisees have been left behind on the shore. They're still with Him. So there's still hope for them to see. And in the same way, even if you're not yet seeing Jesus and you're still struggling with this Christian stuff, this Bible stuff, and you're not seeing clearly, maybe you look at Jesus and He's still like one of those fuzzy pictures to you.

I want you to take heart and I want to tell you just stick with Him. Stick with Him. Keep listening to His voice. And then sooner or later He will give you the eyes to see and the ears to hear the things that you were not able to see and hear before.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank You that not only do You give us enough evidence for the reality of Your plans for this world and who Jesus is, that You also open our ears to hear and our eyes to see.

I pray, Lord, that You would help us to keep seeing, to keep following, and not to be distracted by the preoccupation of the world. And I pray for those who are here or listening online who are not yet seeing and not yet hearing.

And I pray, Lord, that they would take heart and continue to listen and continue to follow You because, as we'll see next week, Lord, You and You alone can give power to hear and to understand.

[ 31 : 24 ] Lord, be with us, walk with us, and help us to stick close to Jesus and help us to encourage each other to do that. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.