



Beyond the Miracles of Jesus

During His life, Jesus performed some incredible miracles, some of which we are blessed to be able to read about and study. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, fed the hungry, and even raised the dead. When we study the life of Jesus we quickly learn that He has power over everything!

The simplified vision and mission of Pathway is to live and love like Jesus. It comes from our greatest commands to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. His new commandment is to love as He loved. What we as a church have to realize is that while we may not be able to perform miracles the same way Jesus did (maybe we can with faith the size of a mustard seed!) that does not stop us from being able to love the same way that He did.

As we study these miracles we want to look at the obvious lesson in seeing what God has the power to overcome. But we also want to take time to look beyond the miracle itself to see what Jesus communicated while He performed the miracles. His actions in healing, His words, His timing, and His heart all communicate intimate love for the person that was standing in front of Him. Our goal this series is to learn from each miracle to better understand how we can love people everyday like Jesus loved.

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06-14	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Drives Out an Evil Spirit: Mark 1:21-27 and Luke 4:31-36
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06-28	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus heals many: Matt 8:14-17, Mark 1:29-34, Luke 4:38-41
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07-12	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Heals the Leper: Matthew 8:1-4, Mark 1:40-45, Luke 5:12-14
07-19	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals the Paralytic: Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26
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08-02	Open Mic: Sharing Sunday
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08-16	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter: Mt 9:18-26, Mk 5:21-43, Lk 8:40-56
08-23	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Woman in the Crowd: Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:42-48
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Sep	Series
09-06	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Feeds 5,000: Mt 14:13-21, Mk 6:30-44, Lk 9:10-17, Jn 6:1-15
09-13	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Walks on Water: Mt 14:22-33, Mk 6:45-52, Jn 6:16-21
09-20	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals Multiple Blind Men: Mk 8:22-26, Jn 9:1-12
09-27	Beyond the Miracles of Jesus: Jesus Heals Servant's Ear: Lk 22:50-51



Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Jesus Feeds 5,000

Mt 14:13-21, Mk 6:30-44, Lk 9:10-17, Jn 6:1-15

Scripture:

Mark 6:30-44

The Feeding of the Five Thousand

30 Then the apostles gathered around Jesus and told him everything they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come with me privately to an isolated place and rest a while" (for many were coming and going, and there was no time to eat). 32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to some remote place. 33 But many saw them leaving and recognized them, and they hurried on foot from all the towns and arrived there ahead of them. 34 As Jesus came ashore he saw the large crowd and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he taught them many things. (Luke 9:11 "But when the crowds found out, they followed him. He welcomed them, spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and cured those who needed healing")

35 When it was already late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is an isolated place and it is already very late. 36 Send them away so that they can go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said, "Should we go and buy bread for two hundred silver coins and give it to them to eat?" 38 He said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five - and two fish." 39 Then he directed them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they reclined in groups of hundreds and fifties. 41 He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. He gave them to his disciples to serve the people, and he divided the two fish among them all. 42 They all ate and were satisfied, 43 and they picked up the broken pieces and fish that were left over, twelve baskets full. 44 Now there were five thousand men who ate the bread.

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations:

(30-32) The twelve had just returned from being sent out to preach and heal with authority from Jesus (Mark 6:7-13). On that trip, they went without taking any bread, bag of supplies or money and God provided. After returning and telling Jesus about everything, Jesus moved to bring everyone to rest in a remote place.

(33-34) People recognized them and rushed to get to the boat's landing spot before they arrived. There was enough buzz around Jesus, and now His disciples working with the authority of Jesus, for the crowd to rush ahead. Even though they were trying to retreat to rest, Jesus saw them and had compassion on them. Through the different gospels we see that Jesus "taught many things" (Mark), "healed their sick" (Matthew), and "spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and cured those who needed healing" (Luke).

(35-37) They had already been there for some time healing and teaching the people. The disciples, realizing that afternoon was turning to evening, approached Jesus to have the people leave to eat. Jesus answers, “*You* give them something to eat.” (Emphasis added) “The silver coin referred to here is the denarius. A denarius, inscribed with a picture of Tiberius Caesar, was worth approximately one day's wage for a laborer. Two hundred denarii was thus approximately equal to eight months' wages. The disciples did not have the resources in their possession to feed the large crowd, so Jesus' request is his way of causing them to trust him as part of their growth in discipleship.” (NET Bible Notes) In John's version of this story, the disciples say that 200 silver coins would not even be enough for everyone to even get a little. (John 6:7)

(38-42) They found a boy with 5 loaves and 2 fish (John 6:9). “The loaves (artoi) were a basic food, often eaten stuffed with fish (ichthys) from the Sea of Galilee.” (Expositor's Comm on Luke). “Bread and fish were staples in Galilee, especially for the poor. John 6:9, 13 specifies barley loaves--the cheaper, coarser bread.” (Expositor's Comm on Matthew) The people organized themselves into groups and Jesus gave thanks for the food and they began distributing the meal. Everyone ate until they were satisfied.

(43-44) What began with 5 loaves and 2 fish became enough to feed 5,000 men. The count of 5,000 does not include women and children (Matthew 14:21). Not only was everyone satisfied, but there were 12 baskets worth of food left. God shows His power to be able to multiply what little we have to leave an abundance, which is even more than we began with. The number twelve has significance as the number of tribes of Israel and the number of disciples. Jesus, as the bread of life, can satisfy the needs of all of God's people.

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith, or lack of faith, of the boy and the disciples. Do you notice anything different now?

The boy gave what he had and Jesus was able to multiply it. He had 5 coarse loaves and 2 small fish. Look at what God can do with what little we have. Even a young boy, offering what was a child's meal, was able to feed a great number of people. And the boy himself was included in Mark 6:42. He surely would have been able to eat and be satisfied. It does not matter how young or old we are, nor how much we can give. If we offer what we have up to God, our loaves and fish can make a great impact.

The disciples just finished coming back from a trip that Jesus sent them on. Mark 6:7-9 “7 Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a staff - no bread, no bag, no money in their belts - 9 and to put on sandals but not to wear two tunics.” After being provided for on their work and telling Jesus all the great things they had done, they failed to see that God not only provided for them on their trips, but could also provide for the 5,000. Taking time to understand how God worked in our lives should change our hearts to look at other situations where God can do the same. Every experience we have can grow our faith.

• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

In this series we have talked about how each miracle shows the incredible power of God, but that Jesus communicates a lot in His actions and how He communicates love through these miracles. The 5,000 were fed and were satisfied, but the next morning, they would be hungry again. The purpose of this incredible feat was not just the feeding. There was something with a longer lasting impact.

“Jesus performed this miracle primarily for their [the disciples] benefit, though also out of compassion for the people. Luke recorded no crowd reaction to it. His account contrasts the inadequacy of the disciples with Jesus' ability to help the crowd. Jesus' compassion for the people also contrasts with the disciples' unconcern. . . He can enable them to provide greater blessing for others than they can by themselves. And He takes good care of His servants; each disciple received a basket of "left over" broken pieces.” (Constable's Comm on Luke)

Jesus showed God's incredible power to take what little we have to bless others for His glory. He also showed the power of having a compassionate heart. When they were all supposed to be resting after doing a lot of work to help others, the disciples probably wanted some downtime. After telling Jesus to have the people leave, and logically explaining that they would not be able to feed this many people, Jesus calls them back into His plan of glory.

Serving God may not be in our ideal moments, and we may not think we have enough to do anything significant, but “if God is passionate about something, He alone is responsible for the results. You just have to make yourself available to do the work.” (Unknown) Living and loving Jesus moves us to both offer up ourselves for God's purpose, but also to recognize the loaves and fish of other people and to invite them into serving with us! Have compassion on people, trust God, and take action.

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):

- Offering Yourself to God in Compassion: Acts 2:42-27, Hebrews 10:32-39, 1 Corinthians 9:19-23
- Encouraging Others in Faith: Hebrews 10:23-25, 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11, Proverbs 27:17

• What is God calling you to do? What is your, “YOU feed them,” challenge that God is passing on to you? And do you have, or have you fought past, any logical statements to tell God why those things wouldn't work? What holds you back?

• Do you see the “loaves and fish” in other people? What can someone in your group or in your life offer up that God can use to bless others? Affirm each other's gifts and talents and spur each other on towards love and good deeds!

• Share and Pray:



Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Jesus Walks on Water

Matthew 14:22-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:16-21

Scripture:

Matthew 14:22-33

Walking on Water

22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he dispersed the crowds. 23 And after he sent the crowds away, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone. 24 Meanwhile the boat, already far from land, was taking a beating from the waves because the wind was against it. 25 As the night was ending, Jesus came to them walking on the sea. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the water they were terrified and said, "It's a ghost!" and cried out with fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them: "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." 28 Peter said to him, "Lord, if it is you, order me to come to you on the water." 29 So he said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the strong wind he became afraid. And starting to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" 31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" 32 When they went up into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

34 After they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret. 35 When the people there recognized him, they sent word into all the surrounding area, and they brought all their sick to him. 36 They begged him if they could only touch the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Mark 6:51-52

51 Then he went up with them into the boat, and the wind ceased. They were completely astonished, 52 because they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations:

(22-23) Five thousand were fed, as well as healed, and taught about God's kingdom.

This was all as Jesus was taking the disciples to rest after returning from their trip being sent out in two to do work on Jesus' authority. Now that another full day of compassionate ministry had finished, Jesus sent the disciples away to rest while He prayed. John 6:15 shows some of the motivation for Jesus to disperse the crowd, send the disciples on and pray. He prayed so long that this giant crowd of 5,000 men (as many as 15,000 or more in total count with women and children) had dispersed. John 6:17 shows that Jesus prayed longer than the disciples thought they would, and so after He had not arrived when they thought He would, they began to move again.

(24-26) After travelling about 3 or 4 miles (John 6:19) sometime between 3-6am, the disciples saw Jesus walking towards them on the water. On top of the darkness during that time of the night, plus wind and potential mist/fog from the storm, it took a while for them to realize that it was Jesus.

(27) "Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid." A very comforting phrase, with a chiasmic structure. Be of good courage because it is I, so do not be afraid. Two phrases to calm and comfort because Jesus is there with them. This is an important statement for us to remember when we are in the middle of our dark nights and storms.

(28-32) Peter immediately responds to Jesus identifying Himself and calling him to have courage. He does not just step from fear to calm. He moved from fear to boldness. Translations on verse 28 can be "If it is You," or, "Since it is You," order me to come. Jesus responds and calls Peter to come and Peter steps out of the boat to walk on water. It is unknown how far Peter actually walked, but it had to be far enough for him to be out of reach from the safety of the boat. When the storm took his attention away from being solely on Jesus, he began to sink and called out for help. Jesus caught Peter, asked the question, "Why did you doubt?" and then again calmed the seas. Focus on the magnificent act of walking on water sometimes moves a reader to gloss over the fact that Jesus calmed another storm.

(33) The response to this miracle is the first profession of Jesus as "the Son of God." "The stilling of "the wind" is not the climax of the story. The disciples' worship of Jesus is. This is the first time they addressed Jesus with His full title: 'God's Son' or 'the Son of God'" (Constable's Comm.) "Retrospectively, the disciples, in making this confession, are giving answer to the earlier question they had raised in an equally perilous situation at sea: 'What sort of man is this, that even wind and sea obey him?' (8:27)." (Kingsbury in Constable's Comm.)

(Mark 6:52) Mark's gospel is written with Peter as his source. This may be why Peter walking on water was not included in this gospel's version of the story. "Perhaps Peter 'was reluctant to picture himself in such a unique and spectacular incident.'" (Constable's Comm.)

Peter may have influenced verse 52 recognizing in hindsight that the disciples should have recognized Jesus as He fed 5,000 people with just a few loaves and fish. "Mark relates his explanation of the disciples' panic at seeing Jesus walking on the water and their amazement at the calming of the wind to their failure to understand about the multiplication of the loaves. Had they understood about the loaves, i.e., that the sovereign Lord of the universe was in action there, they would have been prepared to understand walking on water and calming waves." (Expositor's Comm.)

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith, or lack of faith, of Peter and the disciples. Do you notice anything different now?

It is important to recognize Peter and the other disciples separately. While all just finished their journey to be sent out in Jesus' authority, and each collected a basket full of leftovers after feeding the 5,000, there are two very different responses to Jesus on the water.

Peter's response is explicitly recorded. He may have been in equal fear with the rest of the disciples at seeing the apparition on the water, but once Jesus identified Himself, Peter was

moved to boldness. He may have doubted or hesitated, but he always wanted Jesus to call Him out on the water. He got out of the boat and is the only person, not named Jesus, to have been documented as walking on water. Peter was both a bad and a good example of faith. Bad in that he took his eyes off of Jesus and allowed his focus to be on the storm around him. This is a reminder for us to not allow the waves and wind of our lives to take our focus away from Jesus who is leading us to do incredible things.

Peter is a good example of faith here because he took a literal step of faith when he got out of the boat. Fear or distraction may have allowed him to sink while he was walking on water, but we must not forget that he was actually walking on water. Even when he was sinking, he did not try to swim back to the boat or reach for his friends. He knew Jesus was there to catch him. Psalm 144:7:

“Reach down from above!

Grab me and rescue me from the surging water”

In contrast, the 11 other disciples were still in the boat. They also failed, as noted in Mark, to recognize who Jesus really was after the loaves. They had done as Jesus did. They healed others, cast out demons as they travelled. They were able to help feed the 5,000. Peter began to recognize that the disciples had the power and authority in Jesus to do as He did. In the walking on water incident, none of the other disciples realized or took the initiative to act upon it.

While both groups “failed” we would say that Peter failed aggressively while the other 11 failed passively. An aggressive failure is when you try but you do not get the results you were hoping for. A passive failure is when you do not get the results you hoped for because you did not make an attempt. A passive failure will never yield any results. An aggressive attempt, trying to do the things that God puts in front of us may not yield the results we hope for, but it will always accomplish exactly what God planned on happening for His glory.

Peter had to learn that he could take steps out of the boat, beyond limits of thought in this world, to do things undone. That attitude would lead to God using him to initiate the early church and gentile evangelism (Acts 10) “. . . there are two kinds of storms: storms of correction, when God disciplines us; and storms of perfection, when God helps us to grow. Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God and had to be corrected. The disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Christ and had to be perfected.” (Wiersbe)

• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

Following Jesus using the boy with a few loaves and fish, Jesus empowered His disciples to do incredible work. We see a time where Jesus sent out His disciples to do work amongst the people. Now, Jesus invites Peter into performing an incredible miracle. A few simple statements give us insight into how we can live and love like Jesus as we serve with others.

“Have courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.” Encouraging others to see Jesus with them and to take heart in the work in front of them is essential for anyone to step out in faith. You may



know someone that has a God given opportunity to serve someone else, or be a leader at church, but they may need encouragement. Remind them of Jesus' call to "Come" and to step out of the boat. Failure is okay because we will not always get the results we want, but it is better to get out of the boat and walk on water than to stay in the boat and not walk at all.

"Why did you doubt?" Many read this as a rebuke, assumed to be stern. I think it can be seen as a loving nudge to have more faith and to not lose focus. Why did you doubt. . . after you were already walking on water? It was obviously directed towards Peter but maybe it was said loud enough for the other disciples to hear. "Why did you doubt, and not get out of the boat?" In any case, Jesus helped Peter when Peter was feeling swamped and to live and love like Jesus often means reaching in as our friends feel overwhelmed. Then we can follow with an encouraging word to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we take steps of faith.

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):

- Trusting in God amidst struggles: Romans 5:1-5, James 1:2-8, 1 Peter:12-19
- Hearing God calling us to serve Him: Isaiah 6:5-9, Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-20
- Failing Aggressively (Going out to work, but not always getting the results you hoped for): Mark 6:1-6 and 7-13

- **Have there been moments where you have felt God calling you to step out of the boat, but you were too afraid to do so? Have you ever felt like you missed an opportunity that God created? What happened? How did you feel?**
- **Have you ever stepped out of the boat in faith? What did God do through that? What successes (like walking on water)? What kind of aggressive failures (not getting the results you wanted)? Have you ever looked back on those "failures" but seen how God used them later? His work happens in His timing, not our own.**
- **Is God calling you to step out in faith now? What does that look like? And can you encourage others in the boat to walk on water with you?**
- **Share and Pray:**

Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Jesus Heals Multiple Blind Men

Mark 8:22-26, John 9:1-12

Scripture

John 9:1-12

Healing a Man Born Blind

1 Now as Jesus was passing by, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who committed the sin that caused him to be born blind, this man or his parents?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but he was born blind so that the acts of God may be revealed through what happens to him. 4 We must perform the deeds of the one who sent me as long as it is daytime. Night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 Having said this, he spat on the ground and made some mud with the saliva. He smeared the mud on the blind man's eyes 7 and said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated "sent"). So the blind man went away and washed, and came back seeing.

8 Then the neighbors and the people who had seen him previously as a beggar began saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some people said, "This is the man!" while others said, "No, but he looks like him." The man himself kept insisting, "I am the one!" 10 So they asked him, "How then were you made to see?" 11 He replied, "The man called Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and was able to see." 12 They said to him, "Where is that man?" He replied, "I don't know."

Mark 8:22-26

A Two-stage Healing

22 Then they came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to Jesus and asked him to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and brought him outside of the village. Then he spit on his eyes, placed his hands on his eyes and asked, "Do you see anything?" 24 Regaining his sight he said, "I see people, but they look like trees walking." 25 Then Jesus placed his hands on the man's eyes again. And he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations:

(Mark 8:22-23) We find some similar themes to previous miracles. There is a healing initiated by the friends of someone in need who have faith in Jesus as a miracle worker. But strangely, Jesus led this man out of Bethsaida. "Our Lord's action here is significant. Having abandoned Bethsaida to judgment (Mt. 11:21-24), He would neither heal in that village nor permit further testimony to be borne there (v. 26). The probation of Bethsaida as a community was ended, but He would still show mercy to individuals." (The New Scofield Reference Bible, p.

1059) After removing the man from the town, Jesus used His own saliva to dress the man's eyes. ". . . the use of saliva was a well-known Jewish remedy for affections of the eyes." (Constable's Comm.)

(24) The man had sight before since he knew what he was seeing was not clear yet. Any vision would be unique to someone born blind, but this man was aware that the people he saw was not quite a clear picture yet. They looked like trees (something else he would only have knowledge of with previous sight).

(25) Moving past partial vision using a common cure of saliva, Jesus gave clear vision with just His hands.

(John 9:1-2) Different from the Mark 8 healing, this man was born blind. The disciples questioned the reason for His blindness, which they assumed was caused by the sin of someone in his lineage. "He [God] does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation' (Exod 34:7). They construed this to mean that if a person suffered from any ailment, it must have been because his parents or grandparents had committed some sin against God (cf. Exod 20:5)." (Expositor's on John)

(3-5) Jesus corrects the disciples' thinking. Not every event is a consequence of sin (outside of the greater picture of any imperfection existing because of the fall of mankind) but any circumstance can be used by God to reveal His power. The time to do the work of God is short and a time will come when no more work can be done. Not only does Jesus give sight to this man, but He is the revealing light of truth in a world of darkness. There is physical sight, but also spiritual clarity to be understood.

(6-7) Jesus again uses saliva to show the intent He had to heal the man, using what culture suggested was a cure. He prepared the man to receive vision, but the blind man still had to do work, cleaning off the mud from his own eyes under the direction of Jesus. The man's life was transformed in a way where those who saw him regularly did not recognize him or believe that it was him.

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith of the blind men and the disciples. Do you notice anything different now?

The blind men: Both blind men in these healings appear before Jesus, but not due to their own actions. In Mark, it was the blind man's friends that initiated contact in faith. The man did have to show some faith by following Jesus out of the town. In the story in John's gospel, the disciples and Jesus passed by a man born blind. Similarly, this man did not initiate contact, but he did have to take steps in faith by moving to the Pool of Siloam.

In John 9:3 Jesus said, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but he was born blind so that the acts of God may be revealed through what happens to him." We may find ourselves thrown into situations, whether as consequences by our own actions, or things that go beyond our control. What we have to remember is that in any situation, God's work and glory can be revealed. If you find yourself in a less than favorable circumstance, God is definitely with you and will have plans to work in your life. He may lead you out of the city, or ask you to wash your

eyes. Will you be able to take steps of faith as He leads you in the midst of a hard life situation? It is very hard to admit our own weaknesses or embrace hard life circumstances, but can we embrace them more, knowing that God has a plan to use them for His glory? Would we boast in our weaknesses if we knew that God could use it to encourage, challenge, or bring spiritual clarity to those around us?

The disciples: "The importance of this story for Mark is that it anticipates the opening of the eyes of understanding of the disciples. It is the second in a pair of incidents that only Mark records (the first one is 7:24-37) and that fulfill the OT messianic expectations of Isaiah 35:5-6. Mark uses both incidents to lead up to the revelation of the messianic dignity of Jesus to the disciples (8:27-30). Their eyes too are opened, not by human perception, but by the miracle of God's gracious revelation, which was as much a miracle as the opening of the blind man's eyes." (Expositor's Comm on Mark)

Sight is a metaphor for understanding. It is after the miracle in Mark 8 that Peter confesses that Jesus is the Christ. There is a two step healing of this man to give partial vision, then full clarity. The disciples had a fuzzy picture of who Jesus was and what His power was through many miracles that led to challenges and rebukes (Calming the storm, feeding 5,000, walking on water). Following this healing, Peter very clearly answers Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" with "You are the Christ." There is still greater understanding to be had in the presence of God for all eternity, but to this point in life on earth, there is no clearer picture of our world and God's plan for us to understand that He is the Lord, that He has a plan and is working, and that we can follow the way He moves.

• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

"Jesus did not consider the blindness as punishment or as a matter of irrational chance; it was a challenge to manifest God's healing power in the man's life." (Expositor's on John) Just as we are individually called to embrace our weaknesses so that God's glory may be revealed in us, can we cultivate an environment that allows others to show their weaknesses? While the disciples assumed that there was something to be ashamed of in the life of the man with congenital blindness, a personal sin or sin in his parents, Jesus looked at his condition and knew that there was good work to be done.

When we look at the difficult situations of those around us, lives that we do not understand, the church must be careful to not make that person feel like the disciples of Jesus are passing by, looking, and wondering what shame brought them to that place. Instead, while there is still light and work to be done (John 9:4-5) the church should approach these people with compassion so that they can experience God's loving provision. There is some action required of those blind to make steps in faith, but following in the footsteps of Jesus, we can take the first step towards them so that they would respond in steps of faith.

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):



- Bringing Our Weaknesses to Light: John 3:16-21, 2 Corinthians 12:5-10
- Reaching Out to People in Need: 1 John 3:16-17, Galatians 6:1-5,

- **How can the church initiate connections and reach out to people that are hurting or in hard circumstances? How can the church create a culture of transparency and vulnerability?**
- **What weaknesses, or difficult situations, do you find yourself in? Be vulnerable and share these hurts with someone else that will look at you with love and support, not in judgment. Can you see that God has a plan to reveal His glory in this? If not, is there someone in your group that can see how God could be using this?**
- **Share and Pray:**



Beyond the Miracles of Jesus:

Jesus Heals a Servant's Ear

Matthew 26:51-56, Mark 14:47-52, Luke 22:47-53, John 18:10-11

Scripture:

Luke 22:47-53

Betrayal and Arrest

47 While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd appeared, and the man named Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He walked up to Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said to him, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" 49 When those who were around him saw what was about to happen, they said, "Lord, should we use our swords?" 50 Then one of them struck the high priest's slave, cutting off his right ear. 51 But Jesus said, "Enough of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him. 52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders who had come out to get him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs like you would against an outlaw? 53 Day after day when I was with you in the temple courts, you did not arrest me. But this is your hour, and that of the power of darkness!"

• With each miracle, we want to understand what is clear and obvious in the text, and then we want to reread each story to see if there are things to be understood that might not be easily seen. What do you see and understand from a straightforward reading of this story?

Here are some basic observations:

(before v.47) Jesus is getting last things into place before the passion story begins. John 14-17 has His upper room discourse as He teaches His disciples to prepare them for everything after He is gone. He institutes the Lord's supper, then goes to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. While there, the disciples fell asleep as Jesus prayed "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."

(47-48) A crowd led by Judas came to arrest Jesus. Luke emphasizes that Judas was one of the twelve to show the depth of betrayal. Judas went from the inner circle of Jesus to leading a crowd against His teacher. On top of that, he identified Jesus with a sign of intimacy. Jesus pointed out the irony in this action 48.

(49-50) Jesus knew what was coming and even told His disciples about it. Their reaction showed that they had not fully understood, "when those who were around saw what would follow. . . one of them struck the servant." The right ear of Malchus was cut off by Peter (John 18:10). Mark uses "the diminutive *otaron* for "ear." Perhaps only the lobe was cut off. This would explain Luke's statement that Jesus healed the ear instead of replacing it (Luke 22:51)."

(Expositor's Comm on Mark)

(51-53) The attitude of Jesus, especially coming out of His prayer to submit to the will of God, stops the fight from continuing by rebuking His disciples, healing Malchus, and surrendering himself. This response quickly cooled off what could have been a very heated situation and is probably why Peter was not also arrested (Expositor's Comm on Matthew).

Jesus then addressed the chief priests, officers of the temple guard, and elders there to arrest him at night. They could have arrested Him in the daytime, and without a large crowd, but instead they came with strength and in darkness. "This is your hour, and that of the power of darkness!" They did not want to arrest Jesus around all of His followers or in the daytime and Jesus, while He went with them peacefully, made it known that the work they were doing was in the power of darkness, in contrast to His work as the light of God.

• With these things in mind, reread the passage. Consider perspectives and angles you may not have noticed before. Consider the faith, or lack of faith, of the disciples. Do you notice anything different now?

The arrest was already the beginning of Jesus standing alone. Judas betrayed Him and Peter would soon deny Him. The rest of the disciples would soon flee. All of this was in fulfillment of what God had planned, but it does show a lack of understanding and limited restraint of Jesus' closest followers.

"Peter had been sleeping when he should have been praying, talking when he should have been listening, and boasting when he should have been fearing. Now he was fighting when he should have been surrendering... Each of us must decide whether we will go through life pretending, like Judas; or fighting, like Peter; or yielding to God's perfect will, like Jesus." (Wiersbe Comm. on Luke)

What Peter did as an act of protecting God's kingdom, actually showed a lack of understanding. The difference between what he wanted stood in direct contrast to what Jesus taught about multiple times (Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 9:30-32, Luke 18:31-34). The disciples were not ready to accept their leader being arrested. Peter was specifically rebuked for not being ready to accept this in Matthew 16. "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, because you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's. If anyone wants to become my follower he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it." (Matthew 16:23-25)

There are times to fight for God's purposes, and other times when loving your enemy (even healing those who are there to do you harm) speaks louder than your own protection.

• Looking Beyond the Miracle to Love like Jesus: While we may not be able to perform this miracle the way Jesus did, we are called by His new commandment to love as He loved. So what can we learn and apply to our lives? (Discuss your thoughts first)

Submission to God's will must trump any other thought process and action. Humans often operate in self preservation, but a focus on God's glory is one that includes self sacrifice physically, mentally, and emotionally for His purpose.

In Matthew 5:44, Jesus teaches "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you." He heals the ear of Malchus. He even prays for those who are crucifying Him, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." God "causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous." While others prepare to protect themselves from their enemies, Jesus expresses an example of humble submission.



“[T]he representatives of the various groups-religious, military, and political-that had come to arrest Jesus. . . had come prepared for a fight, but Jesus assured them that He would not give them one.” (Constable’s Comm on Luke)

Jesus not only healed an enemy’s ear, but He also calmed a contentious situation, protected disciples from a large crowd that could have overrun them, and glorified God in all of it. We are often quick to protect our own reputation, fight for our friends, and are ready to take out our swords to protect a faith and church that we love. God often calls us to a humble love as a response to an aggressive attack.

Additional Scripture (extra scripture to consider if you do want to look deeper into any of these themes):

- Loving Our Enemies: Matthew 5:43-48, Romans 12:19-20, James 1:19-27
- God’s Will Above Our Own: Matthew 26:36-46, Isaiah 55:6-11, Proverbs 3:5-6

- **What causes you to enter into an agitated or angry state? Do you know what your shortest fuses are and when you become the most defensive or protective? Are you in a place like that right now?**
- **Have you ever loved someone that was hurting you? Or found a way to be humble and compassionate when everything in yourself wanted to fight back against something? What does it look like to love your enemy? Have you fought back against a friend or loved one and had someone in your own inner circle turn into an enemy?**
- **What are some of the best practical tools you have found to help yourself submit to God’s will in loving your enemies and responding in humility and grace?**
- **Share and Pray:**