

ANOTHER TOUCH AND A NEW VISION**Mark 8:22-26****(Read Mark 8:22-26)**

Intro: My dad was a house painter most of his first years of marriage. It was good steady work but he had to give it up as a livelihood because the fumes from the paint were making him very sick. So he became an electric motor repairman and that's what he did for the rest of his life.

But those years of painting didn't go away. Daddy remained the fastest and most skilled painter I ever knew. His work was perfection. I guess paint ran in his veins because all of his sons and a couple of his grandsons and granddaughters became painters too, working our way through high school, college and grad school. Some of us continued on with it, making it our livelihood, at least for a while. My brothers and I all had our own painting businesses and often we would collaborate on particularly big or intricate jobs. We LOVED working together. All of us are perfectionists like our dad and we take great pride in our work.

The transformation that comes from a good paint job is very satisfying. For a number of years my youngest brother, Kent, and I had quite a thriving business and one particular project stands out for me. It was large, two story, frame house owned by Mrs. Jones, an elderly widow. This was the late '70s and aluminum siding was coming into its own and vinyl siding was still in the future. That means there were still many, many wood sided homes and a home like a house this size, was a moneymaker. It would keep us busy for several weeks and use many gallons of paint.

Mrs. Jones's house was a bit challenging, however. You see, it had not been painted in over 25 years. On top of that, the walls were covered with ivy. What siding you could see, had, at one time, had a coat of white paint; and the trim, though badly faded, had what can only be described as chartreuse paint on it. Any glory it had ever had was long in the past.

Mrs. Jones chose Williamsburg Colors, which were all the rage at the time. She chose a deep tan for the siding and a deep burgundy for the trim and Kent and I went to work. We trimmed trees, pulled away vines, and fought wasps which infested the eaves. All this just to be able to get to the preparation process which was days of scraping and sanding in Southeast PA humidity. What I mean is, in such conditions, paint chips seem to melt into your pores. Next we slathered on gallons of primer as the transformation of the formerly ivy covered house progressed. Finally came the finish coat and the transformation was complete.

We stood back and looked at our handiwork and if you could have sold our pride by the pound we would have been gajillionaires. It was BEAUTIFUL!!!! My brother proclaimed it the EPITOME of our craftsmanship. The transformation was breathtaking. What had seemed to be a hopeless mess that had been overtaken by trees and vines was a testimony to persistence and a belief that it could be restored.

Like that old house, the church needs to be restored. For some people the situation seems almost hopeless. They have seen the vines and shrubs of the world climb up over so that you can barely see the church's former glory. Culture has swarmed in like so many angry wasps and attacked what we hold dear. Discouragement is rampant. But people of faith must not, cannot, and will not give up. They can see the faded hues that shine through the tangled mess. They also know that Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against his Church (Matthew 16:15-20). This means, despite the need for some serious revitalization, his Church will be breathtaking in its beauty once again.

The old term for this process is called revival. The picture it conjures up for us old-timers is one of weeks long services either in the church building or maybe, during the warmer months, in a tent. An evangelist would come and he would "preach revival" and people would get saved or come back to Jesus and there was new life breathed into the people of God.

Those kinds of meetings rarely happen anymore and it's probably good they don't. This is because, though, revival is needed, new times call for new methods. It's the same story, and it's the same Gospel, but how it impacts the world is different. For this reason our series for these summer months up to the end of August is, REVIVAL: Living the Gospel and Restoring the World.

A couple weeks ago I told you that our ABC leadership team, with your input, has been seeking what God's vision is for ABC. As I said, the world is changing and how we impact it needs to change too. I assured you then and I will forevermore insist, that the adaptation we must do is not compromise. But it will be effective for the culture we live in. I also told you the Gospel message is the same but how it gets out is what changes.

We know this will take thinking in different ways and take great faith. Because of that, one of our leaders asked: “Are we even ready spiritually for what God has in store for ABC?” And the answer is, “I don’t know, are we?” Well, let’s make sure. With that in mind, for the next twelve weeks, we will look at revival in light of the 21st Century.

And with that loooooong introduction done, let’s unpack the text I read as I began this talk. Like this blind man . . .

It’s going to take restored vision

- There once had been eyesight. Unlike someone who had been born blind, this man knew what he was missing. Somehow, in his mind’s eye he had a picture of the beauty of creation. Forget that he stubbed his toes and tripped over stuff, he just wished he could see the beauty of his granddaughter or the magnificence of a sunset. He had seen it before, and now that it was gone, he would do anything to get it back.
- We can all look back at the good old days. We can wish for the church as it once was.
 - At the center of the community
 - Respected
 - Making an impact
 - Being consulted on the key things of life
- But what really was this concept of “The good old days”? You see, I think we squandered our place in society when we had it. I think we got people saved and they received eternal life, but we didn’t help them with living life from there on out. In the process we slowly lost our vision. We assumed we would always have our safe place in society. We need to be brought back to Jesus for a restoration of our sight.
- Like the blind man’s friends who brought him to the Lord . . .

We need to go to Jesus and beg him for his touch.

- The ones who still see, need to take those who cannot see, to Jesus. And then we need to beg him for his restoring touch. This means we need to be passionate about the blindness we encounter around us. I mean, do we care that people are living, and potentially dying without Jesus? Do we? We need to.
- It doesn’t say who these people were who brought the blind man to Jesus – it doesn’t say they were friends or relatives – it just says “*some people brought a blind man and begged him to touch him.*” **Some people.** Now, let’s not be naïve, they no doubt were friends or family – but that’s beside the point. He was blind and he needed to be healed and the man that could do the healing was right there. We are surrounded with blind people. Let’s introduce them to the One who can heal them. And when we do . . .

We need to make sure we are not shocked by what it takes to bring healing to them

- I mean, Jesus SPIT on the man’s eyes. If you look in the previous chapter, Jesus healed a deaf and mute man by spitting. What’s with all the spitting, Jesus? Isn’t that a bit weird?! Hey, it worked and Jesus did it, that’s good enough. In chapter 7 the deaf and dumb man was healed. He could both hear and speak. Here in our text the man’s sight was restored. Both were healed in an unconventional way. But then again, when is healing ever conventional? Jesus healing work is nothing less than miraculous, always.
- That is why we need to get ready for the awesome and creative ways God is going to do a new thing in our world – through ABC. Over the next three months we will see how we can be provoked by the world’s blindness but not offended, thereby bringing a vision of a healing God. We will look at how we can be creative in how we breakthrough the blindness rather than criticizing and driving people away. We will see how every one of us who call ourselves Christ Followers are called to restoration. It is not just the job of preachers. We check to see that we are properly grounded so that we can prevent being distracted and thrown off course by the diversionary tactics of the world. One of the biggest things we’ll look into is how being the church is lived in community and how it is no place for Lone Rangers. We will learn civility in an outrage prone society. In other words we will show how being Jesus is the infinite countercultural movement. If we know all this, we will have the tools for restoration.
- And then we will see that . . .

Jesus finishes what he starts

- This was the only place in all the accounts of Jesus’s healing ministry that he asked about the progress of the healing process. Why did he do that? Why didn’t he just heal the man’s blindness and save the time it took to

ask as he does in verse 23, “*Do you see anything?*” Well, he had some teaching to do. His disciples were beginning to see his point. But their vision wasn’t completely clear. Paul said, for us, on this side of heaven, we only see partially; but as we are perfected in love, the vision gets clearer. (1 Corinthians 13:12). Jesus was magnifying the impact of his teaching.

- Once the blind man acknowledged the fact that his vision had been restored from darkness to semi-focus, Jesus moved him to full sight. Jesus finishes what he starts and he has given us the privilege of joining him in the mission.

Conclusion: So let’s have a revival. Let’s do our part to get humanity back to the Garden. We need to bring the blind to Jesus; that’s what restoration is – it’s another touch and completely new vision for a blind world. It’s not just something we should consider doing, it’s what we OUGHT to be doing. Amen.