

I don't like having to do things twice. Knowing that I wasn't good enough or smart enough the first time around, and starting all over again drives me crazy. I most often run into needing to do something twice when I wash dishes. I really try to do a good job, and it seems to me that the dishes have been cleaned. My wife notices the clean dishes I am putting away and then she notices my mistake. Now, she is not being nitpicky- it's like I leave a whole trail of refried beans on one corner. Invariably, I wash the plates to satisfactorily clean male cleanliness, and then after a failed inspection I have to try again. It really drives me insane to have to do things twice. But it's simply because I lack vision. I don't lack visual acuity- my eyesight is 20/20 if not better, I lack the vision because of my expectations. I have never been a neat person, in fact I am actually quite messy, so when it comes to some things, I can't see what is clearly in front of me- my expectations of cleanliness simply don't measure up. I am looking at the same thing everyone else is, I just don't see it for what it really is. I sometimes have to do things twice because I lack vision. I understand why I have to do things twice; in fact I understand why any human has to do things twice. We are imperfect beings, prone to myopic mistakes. But as I read a story about Jesus this week, I was amazed. In this story, Jesus heals a blind man, but it takes him two attempts. Why in the world would it take Jesus two attempts to do anything? In this story, Jesus touches a man's eyes, but at first his vision is partially restored and everything is blurry. He touches the man a second time, and now the man is fully healed.

I realized in reading this story that Jesus did not need two attempts to heal this man. He wasn't running low on Jesus juice, his Messiah power wasn't lacking because of a poor night's rest. Jesus did something twice for the same reason I did. Because of a lack of vision. However, it was not Jesus that lacked vision, Jesus heals a man's physical vision as a picture of his healing the disciples' spiritual vision. The disciples could not see what was hidden in plain sight. The grand story that God had been weaving since day one was unfolding before their eyes, and yet they couldn't see it. The messiah was in their presence and they couldn't see him. And so today Jesus tries to open their eyes. Through the story of this double healing. Not a physical vision but a spiritual vision.

Mark 8:22-30

Mark the author highlights the juxtaposition Jesus uses in word and deed to illustrate a point. Jesus takes two attempts to fully heal a man of his physical blindness, and then he turns to his disciples. After living with them and touching their spiritual eyes for almost three years, he finally turns to them, and says who do people say that I am? They let him know. Then he turns, and asks them- but who do you say that I am? Peter steps up as usual. Poor sweet Peter, he is the kid on the front row of the school room, always ready with an answer, and almost always wrong. But not this time. Peter says

something monumental. You are the Christ. Wow- it seems like their vision is just fine. They see Jesus for who He is. They recognize him as the long awaited Messiah. But we find out, just like the man who needs to be touched twice, their vision is still a bit blurry.

Mark 8: 31-36

Poor sweet Peter. He finally got an answer right. He proclaimed this Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. The divine savior the Jewish people have long waited for, and then in regular Peter fashion, he botches it once again. His vision is blurry. Right after proclaiming Jesus as the messiah, the Christ. Jesus begins to teach the disciples what is going to happen to him in the coming days. He will suffer immensely, be rejected, and eventually be executed by the state. Peter begins to rebuke Jesus here. The irony and or idiocy of Peter's actions are amazing. He has just proclaimed his beloved Jesus not simply as a Rabbi, or a prophet, but the long-awaited Messiah, and then the very next teachings from Jesus mouth , Peter rebukes this messiah. Poor sweet Peter. But we shouldn't be too hard on Peter here, you and I would have fared no better. We are prone to belittle Peter and say, "How can you not see it?" Many of you in here are well aware of the hundreds of OT prophecies pointing to Jesus- how can you not see it? You walked and talked with this messiah for three years, you saw healings, exorcisms, amazing miracles- how can you not see it? It because Peter, like all of the other disciples lacked the vision to see it. Not because they were dumb or uneducated. They had skewed expectations. Their expectations for the messiah were skewed.

A first century Jew was looking for a Messiah to be in the line of David, and they expected him to rule literally like King David. The Jews were looking for a conquering King not dissimilar from Brad Pitt in the movie Troy, or Mel Gibson in Braveheart. The deliverer was to come in on a white horse and expel foreign occupiers, and lead Israel to economic, social, and political preeminence. All of the deliverers in Jewish history, had been types like Joshua, and Gideon, then David, and Judas Maccabeus. In the early first century AD, Israel was occupied by Rome, and so the Jewish people were expecting a deliverer to conquer and expel the Romans and then begin a Kingdom like no other. Instead they got a messiah who included the Romans and then began a Kingdom like no other. Instead of a King on a white horse, they got a carpenter on a donkey. Instead of an imperial prince from the palace they got the offspring of an unwed mother born in a manger. Instead of a warrior who would conquer the Romans, they got a servant who was slaughtered by them. The disciples' spiritual vision was flawed. And so Jesus touches them again. You proclaimed me as Christ, but you need to understand what that means. The disciples' vision was continually clarified over the rest of their lives. Their vision changed as they did.

I want to give you a few encouragements today to help clarify our vision. I want to allow Jesus to open our eyes today. Because it is easy to get blurred vision. Our expectations of Christ and our preconceived notions of Christianity make this life blurry. But I want to assure you this morning, Your role in God's divine story will come into focus when you see Jesus. Not as you want him to be, not as he is portrayed in books or TV shows, but as he really is. I want to ask you today- do you see him? Do you know Him?

- I. Our vision is clarified when we see Jesus as the provision for redemption (our eyes are opened when we see the centrality of the Christ)
  - A. Step 1 to this entire process is found in 27-30. Read.
  - B. Jesus turns to his disciples, and asks the simple question- who do people say that I am? As they walk around the villages of Cesarea Phillipi, which had a major pagan influence from the Greek god Pan. Pan was a god associated with being a shepherd. So in a town where many people worshipped this shepherd god, the great shepherd God walked among them. In the midst of paganism and idolatry- Jesus turns to his disciples and says who do people say that I am. He is essentially saying-what do you see? He is checking their vision in the middle of a city and culture that is blind. What do you see?
  - C. Peter says, you are the Christ. As I am sure most of you know, this is not Jesus last name. He was not looked up in the Jerusalem yellow pages- Christ, Jesus. He was Jesus, son of Joseph. Or Jesus of Nazareth the carpenter. Christ is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word Messiah. Which means anointed one. The savior, the long awaited redeemer and deliverer. This was no small statement.
  - D. This was no small statement because Peter's proclamation would have far-reaching implications. In this moment, Peter has elevated Jesus at the exclusion of all others. The search is over, there is no more equivocation. The singular Messiah, the Son of God is in their presence. This is a bold statement of faith. It would be safe to leave the door open for more options- if Peter simply called Jesus a teacher, or a prophet. But he elevated him with dogmatic clarity- I see you as the lone, long-awaited Messiah.
  - E. It was a bold statement then, and it is still today. When you address American culture today, it is growing more and more rare for someone to dogmatically elevate Jesus as the one and only Christ. The lone messiah.
  - F. Illus- In fact, people have all different ways of seeing Jesus today. Jesus action figures.

- G. We live in a society today that doesn't have much room for a dogmatic savior that demands our sole attention and affection. Pluralism and tolerance make a monotheistic approach to religion more and more difficult.
  - H. Illus- San Francisco- great vacation- but I saw a shirt that blew me away. A picture of a crucified hand, and the phrase above it said "no one likes a know it all." This is the anthem of the world around us. Sole allegiance to a dogmatic savior is antiquated in many settings today.
  - I. This entire series, Hidden in plain sight has brought us to this moment. God chose Abraham and began a genealogy through which he would one day introduce his Son. All of the covenants, all of the promises find their fulfillment in Jesus as the Christ. No other answer will do, no other option is viable.
  - J. And so the same question comes to you- who do you say that he is? And then are you willing to live under the implications of your statement? You see my vision gets blurry here. Even as a pastor sometimes, it is easy to be heretically compassionate. Maybe there are many ways, I mean one way is very difficult. In John 14- Jesus says quite clearly- I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me. When you declare Jesus as Christ, your vision is clarified because all other routes to abundant and eternal life fall by the way side. All of the other competing narratives fall away. There is no room for Jesus plus. Jesus plus Buddhism. Jesus plus philosophy. Jesus plus capitalism. Jesus plus politics. The only path to redemption comes through Him. If you are unclear on this, then your vision is blurry. You don't see Jesus for who he really is. Your life will continue to be out of focus for every hybrid iteration of Christianity you come up with.
  - K. C.S. Lewis- "I believe in Christianity as I believe the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."
  - L. You haven't see Jesus today, I want to invite you to it. You don't have to do anything or know everything. You have to take that first step. Admit that you are blind as a sinner, and ask for forgiveness in your declaration that he is the Christ. Although salvation and the Christian life are not summed up in this statement, it surely begins with it.
- II. Our vision is clarified when we see the cross as the process for redemption.  
(Our eyes are opened when we see the centrality of the cross)
- A. Many of us in this room have received the first touch of Christ. Our eyes have been opened to see the truth of his glory. But our vision has gotten blurry over the years. Like Peter we are prone to rebuke and rebuff the

real call of Jesus in favor of our watered down and safe versions of Christianity. We need a second touch today. This has nothing to do with losing or keeping salvation. It has to do with focus in this life. It has to do with abundant living in this time that we have. Do you see him today?

- B. 31-36- Jesus explains the essence of his messiahship, and then gives them the hard implications of this calling. In order to get the entirety of Jesus message, here- we have to see the cross. If our vision is to be cleared up, we have to see the cross. Just as a reminder, the cross has lost its disgusting and degrading quality over the years. Crosses now are worn in gold and silver around people's necks, and used as décor for our homes. Crosses are white and majestic as monuments atop churches and hilltops. It is not wrong or bad to display the cross as jewelry or décor, but its ubiquitous nature can cause us to forget its impact. The cross in its original form was ghastly and obscene. Because the power and obscene nature of the cross has been mitigated and sterilized over the last 2000 years, I want to help reorient ourselves. Replace our cross decorations with an electric chair. A hard wooden chair, with leather straps, and metal wires. Gruesome and foreboding. An instrument of death that conjured up images of men being executed in a horrendous fashion as their bodies are coursing with electricity, their skin smoking, their eyes rolling up in their heads, and their limbs flailing. Are you disturbed enough? Now imagine, and replace every cross with an electric chair. From jewelry to steeples. Little bitty electric chairs hanging from people's necks. 100 foot tall recreations of electric chairs atop steeples of countless churches. That unsettling image is what we are supposed to feel when we are reminded of the cross.
- C. When Jesus began to foretell his rejection, humiliation, and eventual death- Peter had good reason to rebuke him. Jesus that is not what we need here. We need you to gather the people not be rejected by them. We need you to ascend to a throne not descend to a cross. But Jesus- rebukes Peter in a seemingly harsh response. Get behind me Satan- you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of men. Men want a King who will improve their bank accounts, God provides a King who will improve their spiritual accounts. Men want a king who conquers foreign enemies, God provides a King who loves them. Men want a king who will make them famous, God provides a King who makes Him famous. Jesus makes it clear- your vision is flawed. Everything must be seen by way of the cross. There is no other method that will do. No other process will work. The cross alone was God's instrument of redemption. Your vision in

this life will be clarified when you see the cross as the only way. But not the gold plated piece of jewelry, or the steeple top, or the home décor, but the gnarly instrument of death, lowly, and disgusting. A constant reminder that our savior made a way through the most awful of routes.

- D. When you begin to see Jesus in the way of the cross, then his following words clarify your vision even more. The calling of Jesus- in the way of the cross is radical and ground-breaking. Because the cross was not the only way for Jesus, it is the only way for us. Deny yourself, pick up your cross- the instrument of humiliation and death, and follow me. Lose your life for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel- and you will find true life.
- E. This is where my vision often gets blurry. I am prone to spiritualize and water down these claims from Christ. The calling to deny, die and follow in the way of the cross is something I easily forget. My vision gets blurry because of my own sin, and because of the culture we live in. I have to confess to you, that many times my blurred vision is related to my worship of suburban Jesus. I want to introduce you to suburban Jesus, and see if you have ever met him. Suburban Jesus is safe. He never asks you to get out of the boat. He never asks you to be thrown in jail or stoned. Suburban Jesus is practical. He never asks you to give away your money. He never asks you to move jobs or change your schedule. Suburban Jesus is comfortable. He never asks too much. He never asks you to share your faith. Suburban Jesus is refined. He never asks you to speak intolerant truth. He never asks you to stand up against sin. If you want a picture of suburban Jesus, he is obsessed with making sure you are healthy and wealthy, he cares about the status of your 401k, and he wants you to look exactly like your neighbor- what you buy, where you live, and what you drive, he wants you to look exactly like your pagan neighbor in every way except the fact that you call him the Messiah.
- F. Have you seen suburban Jesus? I do all the time. I worship him all the time. My natural human, sinful inclinations for my safety, my happiness, and my comfort above the Gospel and the Kingdom leads me to live practically when the Gospel is anything but practical. What other system do people ascribe to that calls them to love the unlovable, pray for enemies, give away money, care for the poor, set aside your pride and your goals for the sake of something bigger. But often times, I worship suburban Jesus or inkblot Jesus. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hermann Rorschach came up with what is now a ubiquitous model for psychoanalysis. The inkblot test. An ambiguous image is shown, and the patient is asked, what do you see? Because of the ambiguous nature of

the image, people are prone to project onto the image exactly who they are, and what they value.

- G. This is story from Mark 8 is the crux of our series, hidden in plain sight. In the beginning at creation, there was a tree that led to our fall. At the end there will be a tree that leads to our recreation. In the middle of it all, there was a tree that led to our redemption. The real Jesus was right in front of the disciples, but for a long while they missed him. The real Jesus stands in front of us, but we miss him. Our vision as Christians often gets blurred by our passion for the American dream, and not the divine Kingdom, our vision gets blurred trying to keep up with the Joneses instead of pursuing the Christ.
- H. I do it all the time. The good news today is that he is always willing to touch our eyes again. This has nothing to do with losing or maintaining salvation. That initial touch from blindness to vision is a free gift that we cannot lose. What I am talking about is the progressive revelation and progressive sanctification that comes in walking with Jesus. Do you see him today? Or more appropriately, how close does your Jesus look like the Jesus who radically embraces the way of the cross and calls you to do the same? Or is Jesus a Rorschach inkblot image that allows you to see what you want. Your vision changes when you do. As Jesus touches your life and changes you, your vision will change. You will have a whole new view of suffering. You will have a whole new view of death and life. You will have a whole new view of true riches. Do you see him?

Conclusion: The past week, people have been going crazy for the apple iPhone. You have heard of the two founders- Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, but there is a third founder of Apple. Ron Wayne. The 76 year old lives in a small house in Nevada. He is not a billionaire, he is not even a millionaire. After agreeing to a 10 percent stake in Apple, he sold it after 11 days. The work was going to be too hard, and he feared it may require his whole life.

I felt that the way these guys were going, they would bulldoze their way through anything to make this company succeed, but it was going to be a very rough ride and if I wasn't careful, I'd end up the richest man in the cemetery," Wayne tells [CNN](#), explaining why he wanted out.

And so Ron Wayne sold his 10% share of Apple for \$800. If he owned it today, he would have unspeakable riches- 22 billion dollars. Ron Wayne's vision was blurred. Too much work, and something that may have required his whole life drove him away. In a

sense the call would have led to his death, but also possibly unspeakable riches. Too many times, I as a Christian want to cash out. The road looks rocky and treacherous and I am afraid it will ask for more than I have. The way of the cross is hidden in plain sight, Jesus wants to restore our vision to the way of the cross and the call of the cross. I want to challenge you with one thing this week: when you wake up each day this week allow Jesus to ask you a simple question? Who do you say I am? In a sense look, him in the face, and answer the simple question: What do you see?