



**Sunday School Lesson**  
**Mark 8:22-26**  
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**Healing a Blind Man**



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In this second lesson of the "What Did Jesus Do?" series in the Smyth-Helwys Formations Sunday School lessons, our attention shifts to a healing miracle of Jesus at Bethsaida during his Galilean ministry.

**I. Context**

In a recent study on Mark 12:28-34, a detailed exploration of the external history of Mark was attempted, as well as the literary relationships between Mark and the other gospels. The reader is referred to [that study](#) for greater details. In this lesson we will simply summarize the high points of that study and add new elements that emerge from our passage in 8:22-26.

**a. Historical**

The **external history** of the Markan gospel focuses upon the early church tradition that placed John Mark as the composer of this document. This tradition reaching back to Papias and as quoted by Eusebius places Mark in Rome in the 60s just prior to the execution of the apostle Peter. The gospel is understood to be a reflection

of Peter's recollections of Jesus' life and ministry that Mark put in writing either before or just after Peter's martyrdom at the hands of the Roman emperor Nero. Modern scholarship has been cautious about accepting all aspects of this tradition, since hardly any of them can be proven objectively from corroborating evidence. Internal analysis from a narrative critical methodology provides a somewhat different perspective suggesting that the writer of this material was situated in either Galilee or north of there possibly in Antioch. At least, the narrational vantage point places both the narrator and the reader here geographically. For example, when elsewhere Jesus always comes to Galilee in Mark, he doesn't go to Galilee. This in contrast to Luke, who places the narrator and reader in Jerusalem and thus Jesus always goes to Galilee.

The **internal history** of Mk. 8:22-26 focuses upon the city/village of [Bethsaida](#), where this healing took place. A couple of questions need answering. Was this a village or a city? Mark (8:23) calls it a village (κώμη), while Luke



<http://www.keyway.ca/htm2002/index.htm>

(9:10) and Matthew (11:20) call it a city (πόλις). Many scholars take Mark's term as more accurate since it politically functioned as a village under [Herod Phillips'](#) reign. Luke, Matthew and John (1:44) used the term city quite loosely from all indication. Thus Mark's term village may be a more precise characterization. All seven references to Bethsaida in the New Testament, except one (John 12:21), place the village outside the Roman province of Galilee on the northeastern coast of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Corazin. John identifies [Bethsaida](#) as the home of Philip, Andrew and Peter.



The other internal history aspect is related to the literary context: at what point in Jesus' ministry did this event take place? As defined in my [Life of Christ outline](#) (III.C.), this event took place at the end of the Galilean ministry when Jesus began spending most of his time in northern Palestine outside the province of Galilee because of danger from [Herod Antipas](#) who ruled Galilee and increasingly became alarmed at Jesus' popularity with the people. This would place the event in late winter/early spring of AD 30.

## b. Literary

The **literary setting** places this event in the context of the middle of the Gospel of Mark and that will enable us to understand the text better along with possible implications of its details. Out of Mark's [104 total pericopes](#) in the entire gospel, [this one](#) is #42. During the period of withdrawals at the end of Jesus' Galilean ministry (pericopes #33 - 54), this one stands about in the middle. This period begins with the [feeding of the 5,000](#) in 6:30-44, and ends with the call to resist the temptation to offend others (9:42-50). This period of ministry by Jesus is largely centered on preparing his disciples for the trip to Jerusalem where he would face arrest and crucifixion. The danger from Herod Antipas in Galilee has created an atmosphere where Jesus needed to create a low profile publicly in order to fly under Herod's radar as much as possible. God's plan was for crucifixion in Jerusalem, not execution in Galilee.

Many scholars see 8:22-26 as a hinge point. Robert Guelich (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) provides helpful insight after summarizing numerous approaches:

**Why introduce the story at this point in the narrative?**

First, it belonged together with 7:24-30 and its "hellenized" twin 7:32-37 in a section that focused on Jesus' ministry in predominantly gentile territory.

Second, it offered symbolically to the readers an explanation of the disciples' situation as depicted by the evangelist from 4:10-8:21 and prepared them for the disciples' obtuseness in 8:27-10:52.

The story also brings to a close the first half of Mark's narrative (1:16-8:26). This half consists of three sections (1:16-3:12; 3:13-6:6; 6:7-8:26). Each begins with an account focusing on the disciples (1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:7-13). Each concludes with the motif of rejection (3:1-6; 6:1-6a; 8:10-21), but not before an additional note points to Jesus' redemptive ministry despite rejection (3:7-12; 6:6b; 8:22-26). In other words, Jesus' healing of the blind man, as did the previous summaries (3:7-12; 6:6b), shows that his ministry continues despite apparent setbacks. In this case, the story offers hope for the resistant, myopic disciples, while no such hope was offered at the end of the previous two sections to either the religious and political representatives in 3:1-6 (cf. 3:7-12) or to Jesus' hometown and household in 6:1-6 (cf. 6:6b).

The **literary genre** of 8:22-26 is that of a healing miracle. [Three basic kinds of miracle narratives](#) exist in the NT gospels: exorcisms, healing miracles, and nature miracles. 8:22-26 is a healing narrative in which blindness is cured and sight restored. Out of [the 35 specific miracles](#) recorded in the four gospels four of them are about blindness being cured: Mt. 9:27-31; 12:27-37 (// Mk. 3:19b-30; deafness also); Mk 8:22-26; Jn. 9:1-41. [Miracles stories](#) abounded throughout the ancient world in both the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. Thus studying those in the New Testament must be done against this cultural backdrop.

Modern ways of understanding miracles are very different from those in the ancient world, especially in Judaism and early Christianity. For moderns, a miracle typically represents an intrusion of the divine into nature and a temporary setting aside of the laws of nature. Within this definitional framework, debates have continued almost endlessly about whether or not such can or do take place.

In the ancient Jewish/Christian world, a different understanding formed the definitional framework. God is not outside His creation; instead, His presence is continuous inside. No such thing as "laws of nature" exist. His creation is sustained by His power and presence solely. Thus a "miracle" occurs whenever God decides to express that presence and power in unusual, noticeable fashion. Sometimes the ability to "see" a miracle depended upon the spiritual sensitivities of those observing. Certainly, understanding its deeper significance was linked to the

level of spiritual insight in the observer.

The importance of the Greco-Roman miracle backdrop for 8:22-26 is that this miracle, along with the one in 7:31-37, have a more Hellenistic tone to them via Jesus' touching the individual and using spit as a 'healing agent.' Another distinctive of 8:22-26 is that it is a "two-stage" miracle -- the only such miracle story in the gospels. Some are convinced that this explains why neither Matthew or Luke picked up this story in writing their materials at this stage of Jesus' public ministry. Whether this is so or not cannot be proven at all and remains pure speculation.

The summation is that this exclusively Markan miracle story has distinctive tones with a Greco-Roman echo. It also becomes an important transition narrative in Mark's story of Jesus. The deeper,

possible symbolical linkage to the disciples is less clear.

## II. Message

Ancient miracles stories revolved around three key elements: the need for a miracle, the working of a miracle, and the consequences of the miracle upon both the person in need and possibly upon bystanders observing it. Mk. 8:22-26 follows that ancient pattern, with subtle verb shifts etc. in the underlying Greek text that are hard, if not impossible, to maintain in English translation. For details, see both the [Block Diagram](#) and [Semantic Diagram](#) in the larger internet version of this study. The [Exegetical Outline](#), growing out of these diagrams, provides the core basis for our study.

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### a. A Blind Man, v. 22

#### Greek NT

<8:22> Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν. καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ τυφλὸν καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἅψηται.

#### NASB

22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him.

#### NRSV

22 They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him.

#### NLT

22 When they arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus, and they begged him to touch and heal the man.

#### Notes:

Guelich (WBC) helpfully summarizes geographically the movements of Jesus during this period of ministry and a likely significance in light of the stance taken against the Jewish purity laws in 7:15-23:

Mark appears to have arranged the itinerary from 7:24–8:21 that has Jesus moving from Gennesaret (6:53) to the territory of Tyre (7:24), then through Sidon across to and down through the middle of the Decapolis (7:31) to the Sea of Galilee which he crosses to Dalmanutha (8:10) from where he crosses back to Bethsaida (8:13–22). The journey covers the area bordering the northeast shore of Galilee, which was predominantly gentile. The materials involving a Syrophenician woman, two miracle stories laced with an inordinate amount of hellenistic thaumaturgical traits (7:32–37; 8:22–26), and a second, "hellenized," Feeding located in the Decapolis aptly constitute all but two events (cf. 8:10–13; 8:14–21, both mostly redactional) of this "itinerary" since the discussion of the purity laws in 7:1–23 set aside that critical social boundary between Jew and Gentile (7:15–23).

Not much is known about the village of Bethsaida. Michael Holman (Eerdmans *Dictionary of the Bible*, Logos Systems) provides a helpful summary:

A city located 3 km. (1.7 mi.) NNE of the mouth of the

Jordan River on the Sea of Galilee. It was home to the apostles Peter, Andrew, and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21). The abundance of game and fish inhabiting the nearby plains and waters is responsible for the name Bethsaida, which means "house of the hunter/fisherman."

Josephus reports that sometime before 2 B.C.E. under the tetrarch Philip Herod, Bethsaida's status increased to that of a *polis* and was renamed Bethsaida Julias after the Emperor Augustus' daughter (*Ant.* 18.2.1). Philip is also said to be entombed at Bethsaida (*Ant.* 18.4.6).

Several miracles in Jesus' ministry are reported to have occurred at or near Bethsaida, such as the feeding of 5000 (Mark 6:30–44), Jesus' walking on water (6:45–52), and the healing of a blind man (8:22–26). Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Bethsaida appear to remain largely unmoved by these wonders, as the city is cursed by Jesus along with Chorazin for not heeding his message (Matt. 11:21–22).

Excavations on the mound of Bethsaida, modern et-Tell (208255), began in 1987 and have unearthed many remains dating from Iron II to the early Roman period,



including several fishing implements such as anchors, hooks, and net weights.

Jesus and his disciples arrived in the village after crossing over to the region of Dalmanutha (8:10). The location of this is unclear, although it appears to be west of Capernaum. This uncertainty generated a wide variety of names in different copies of the Greek text: Dalmounai, Megeda, Magedan, Melegada, Magdala. Then Jesus and his disciples went by boat (8:13) eastward across the northern end of the Sea of Galilee to get to the village of Bethsaida (Βηθσαϊδά; =Bethsaida).

Upon arriving there Jesus was met by a unidentified group of individuals bringing a blind man to him and strongly requesting (παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν) that Jesus heal him. Their specific request was that Jesus "touch" him (αὐτοῦ ἅψηται). The implication was that Jesus' touch would bring healing. R.T. France (*Mark, New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Logos Systems) reminds us: "They expect Jesus to heal by a touch, as he has regularly done (1:31, 41; 5:23; 6:5; 7:33); cf. the desire of those seeking healing to touch Jesus (3:10; 5:27–28; 6:56). The method of healing by Jesus varies in the gospel accounts. Often he merely speaks to the sick or demon possessed individual; other times he touches or comes in physical contact with the individual in some manner. To be noted is that Jesus followed no set pattern or used a set formula of words. In the Greco-Roman tradition set patterns and formulaic secret

words were typical.

The nature of the request to touch plays some role in how Jesus responded to heal the man. In a Jewish world where one touched others only very cautiously because of the danger of ceremonial impurity, Jesus demonstrated his compassion as well as disregard for these "traditions of men" (cf. 7:3–5).

What can be gleaned from this verse for us today? In the larger context of this narrative some things come to mind. Jesus was trying to concentrate on preparing his disciples for his coming death, as 8:27–9:14 demonstrate. Thus the blind man represents an interruption to his agenda. While some might brush off such an interruption, Jesus demonstrates here what he was talking about in the Parable of the [Good Samaritan](#) (Lk. 10:29–37) where some were too busy to help, but not the Samaritan.

Also, ministry often needs to be done with "touch." Physical contact with others can still be risky in our world because of communicable diseases etc. With proper precautions, we need to be willing to "get our hand dirty" in ministry. The disaster relief needs recently are a prime example of this.

Finally, the example of those who brought the blind man to Jesus with their urgent plea challenges us to care about people in need. We don't know their names, and who they are isn't really important. What they did to help their friend is the point. And our challenge.

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## b. A Healing, vv. 23-25

### Greek NT

<8:23> καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἐξήνεγκεν αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς κώμης καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ, ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν, Εἴ τι βλέπεις; <8:24> καὶ ἀναβλέψας ἔλεγεν, Βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅτι ὡς δένδρα ὀρῶ περιπατοῦντας. <8:25> εἶτα πάλιν ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, καὶ διέβλεψεν καὶ ἀπεκατέστη καὶ ἐνέβλεπεν τηλαυγῶς ὅπαντα.

### NASB

23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." 25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.

### NRSV

23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" 24 And the man looked up and said, "I can see people, but they look like trees, walking." 25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

### NLT

23 Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. Then, spitting on the man's eyes, he laid his hands on him and asked, "Can you see anything now?" 24 The man looked around. "Yes," he said, "I see people, but I can't see them very clearly. They look like trees walking around." 25 Then Jesus placed his hands over the man's eyes again. As the man stared intently, his sight was completely restored, and he could see everything clearly.

## Notes:

These verses bring us to the miracle itself, which is divided into two stages. This aspect is unique among all the recorded gospel miracles. Vv. 23-24 is the first stage which results in partial healing; v. 25 completes the healing.

Why was this done in such a manner? No other miracle of Jesus happened this way. Thus we know it wasn't lack of divine power that caused it. R.T. France (*Mark, NIGTC*, Logos Systems) echoes the answer of many scholars:

The argument for a symbolic intention is strengthened by the peculiar character of this healing, as one accomplished in two stages. The 'blindness' of the disciples is similarly dispelled only gradually. Already in 4:11 they are declared to have received special revelation concerning τὸ μυστήριον τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ [the mystery of the kingdom of God] and yet that revelation has left them with much still to learn (6:52; 7:18; 8:17–18, 21). The new phase of the narrative which is now beginning will focus on their further enlightenment, but it will not be completed in a single 'cure'. Successive examples of their failure to understand will each be followed by further re-education, but even when the journey is complete and the narrative reaches its climax in Jerusalem the disciples will be characterized more by dullness and failure than by the dynamic new perspectives of the kingdom of God. Even Peter, the spokesman, whose ringing declaration of Jesus' messianic status is the foundation of the disciples' new perspective, will a few verses later be rebuked for viewing Jesus' mission from the human, not the divine angle (8:29–33). He has 'seen', but not yet clearly. Of all this the two-stage healing of the blind man at Bethsaida offers an apt illustration.

Resorting to a symbolical level of interpretation has serious risks and limitations. Here it is driven mostly by the lack of clear surface level language signals of meaning. Illustrations of this are found in how the church fathers handled aspects of this miracle. For example, Ambrose found this meaning from the phrase "he put salvia in his eyes" (*Mark, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, Logos Systems):

So too he placed mud upon you, that is, modesty, prudence, and consideration of your frailty.... You went, you washed, you came to the altar, you began to see what you had not seen before.<sup>3</sup> This means: Through the font of the Lord and the preaching of the Lord's passion, your eyes were then opened. You who seemed before to have been blind in heart began to see the light of the sacraments. THE SACRAMENTS 3.15

To get salvational baptism from this phrase is stretching the meaning of the text more than just a little!

D. A. Carson ("Mark," *New Bible Commentary*, Logos Systems) has a better answer:

Why did this healing take two stages? Was it perhaps because of the man's imperfect faith? Mark does not say. It is enough that Jesus did not leave the man half-healed but persisted until he saw everything clearly. Is this a picture of the way that even Peter would only half-see the truth about Jesus at first? The man was warned to go straight *home* without going back to the village, where people who saw him might be tempted to follow Jesus only as a healer, not as a saviour. There is always a danger where healing miracles take place in the preaching of the gospel that people will come to Christ for the wrong reasons.

The simple truth is that we don't know why the miracle was done this way. Many possible answers have been put forth, but Mark doesn't validate any of them.

Another distinctive of this healing is that Jesus led the man out of the village before healing him. J.R. Edwards ("Mark," *Pillar New Testament Commentaries*, Logos Systems) notes:

Jesus personally takes the hand of the blind man and conducts him outside the village.<sup>24</sup> We are not told explicitly that Jesus desires to be alone with him (as in 7:33), although he does desire to separate him from the village, perhaps because of its unbelief (see 6:45). In several instances in Mark the essential work that Jesus does with individuals necessitates his separating them from crowds.

Thirdly, the methodology of healing is different. Not only did Jesus touch the man with his hands, he πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ ("after having spit into his eyes"). This seemingly distasteful action was not unheard of in the ancient world. J.R. Edwards calls attention to a Roman healing narrative:

As in 7:33, Jesus heals the man by applying spittle to his eyes. Such gestures, as we noted at 7:33, were not unknown to Hellenistic healers. Tacitus [*Hist.* 4.81] records a story of Vespasian (Roman emperor, A.D. 69–79), who was importuned by a person whose sight was failing to "moisten his cheeks and eyes with his spittle."<sup>25</sup> Unlike the account of Vespasian, however, with Jesus there is no calculation, no hesitation, and no use of the infirm individual for ulterior ends.. The story is repeated in a shorter form by Suetonius, "The Deified Vespasian" (7), *The Lives of the Caesars*. Both Tacitus and Suetonius agree that Vespasian initially ridiculed the request out of disbelief in such cures. Only after his advisors reasoned that a failed attempt would make the blind man look foolish whereas a success would crown him with glory did Vespasian consent to the healing. The restoration of the man's sight (which was diminished but not completely gone) was regarded by both Tacitus and

Suetonius as something less than a true miracle, perhaps owing to autosuggestion.

This action, coupled with the laying on of hands, highlights Jesus' physical contact with the blind man. It may have put the blind man's faith to the test with Jesus spitting in his eyes. At minimum these actions represent Jesus sharing himself with the man. Some have suggested -- with possibility -- that these actions attempt to emphasize Jesus as a powerful physician more than as a miracle worker.

The two stages are broken into the first segment where the man can only partially see as a result of the spital and Jesus' touch. When Jesus asks him (v. 23) whether he can see, his response is that he sees men walking around looking like trees. In the second stage Jesus again places his hands on the man's eyes; note that the first time Jesus had placed his hands on the man.

This time the man focused his eyes intently and he could see clearly as he began looking around. Jesus' touching of the eyes completed the healing and it was complete. The nature of the experience was that these actions took place immediately (series

of Greek aorist verbs climaxed by inceptive imperfect tense verb; cf. statements 7-10 in the [Block Diagram](#)). No long, drawn out process of healing took place; just Jesus' touch.

The application? One should resist the spiritualizing tendency to subtly shift physical sight here to spiritual sight in the application. The church father Jerome reflects the extremes of this approach:

*Christ laid his hands upon his eyes that he might see all things clearly, so through visible things he might understand things invisible, which the eye has not seen, that after the film of sin is removed, he might clearly behold the state of his soul with the eye of a clean heart.*<sup>5</sup>

*TRACTATE ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK, HOMILY 5 (Mark, Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scripture, Logos Systems)*

What we can glean from the healing is the compassion of Jesus for the physical needs of others, even complete strangers. He took time apart from his schedule to meet their needs. A Christianity only concerned with "saving souls" has departed from the example of its Lord. Also, Jesus challenges us to deep involvement in ministry here. He interacted with the blind man personally, not distantly from a position of superiority.

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### c. Instructions, v. 26

#### Greek NT

<8:26> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ λέγων, Μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσέλθῃς.

#### NASB

26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

#### NRSV

26 Then he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

#### NLT

26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go back into the village on your way home."

#### Notes:

In the pure healing narrative structure, the effects include vv. 25b-26: "and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Then he sent him away to his home, saying, 'Do not even go into the village.'" But having already considered v. 25, we will end with an exploration of verse 26.

First, some exploration of a wide variety of different readings of ancient copies of the Greek text of verse 26. Since no original writing of the New Testament is known to exist in our time, we must determine the wording of the original wording of the Greek text by comparing existing copies of this text. The earliest of these dates back to no closer than a century after the original writing of the text, and most of the more complete, important copies are two to four centuries away from the original writing.

Some minor variations of the preceding verses, vv. 22-25, do exist, but verse 26 contains the most extensive and important variations.

The reading adopted in both major modern printed Greek New Testaments (UBS 4th rev. ed and the Nestle-Aland 27th ed) translates as is reflected in the above translations: "Do not even enter the village." The primary variation (cf. [the list](#) in the larger internet version of this study) reads: "Do not speak to anyone in the village." A variation off this alternative reading combines both into "Do not speak to anyone in the village, and do not go into the village." The weight of evidence favors the reading adopted in the above translations, and thus it is the one used by the English Bible translators.

If the healed man was forbidden to return back into Bethsaida, he must have lived somewhere else and his friends brought him to the village knowing that this was where Jesus was.

The interpretative significance of Jesus' instructions is debated. Robert Guelich (Mark, WBC, Logos Systems) offers a detailed and somewhat technical

description of how this has been understood:

To what extent, however, does this dismissal take on a more symbolic character of a secrecy motif? Doubtless a formal part of the pre-Markan tradition, did it connote concealment or even privacy? Mark certainly uses “house” or “home” as a place of privacy elsewhere (cf. 7:24; 9:28, 33; 10:10; see Comment on 7:17). But 2:1, 11; 3:20, 31–35; and 5:19–20 demonstrate that “house” or “home” per se does not necessarily imply privacy or secrecy.

“Do not enter the village!” (Μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κώμην εἰσελθῆς) only makes sense if the man did not actually live in the village. This injunction has generally been assigned to Mark’s redaction as a variation of his secrecy commands (explicit in v.l., see Note d’). Read in conjunction with Jesus’ having taken the man outside the village before healing him (8:23) and now sending him home without the chance to enter the village, it supposedly supports Mark’s “secrecy motif” (e.g., Wrede, *Secret*, 35; Klostermann, 78; Lohmeyer, 159; Kertelge, *Wunder*, 161; Koch, *Wundererzählungen*, 69–70; Nineham, 220; Schenke, *Wundererzählungen*, 309; Pesch, 1:419; Gnllka, 1:314; Ernst, 230; Theissen, *Miracle Stories*, 69, 147–48).

Not everyone, however, subscribes to the view that Mark added this injunction and thus the secrecy motif. For example, Luz and Roloff, for different reasons, take the injunction to have been pre-Markan. Luz argues on the basis of style, noting that Mark’s secrecy commands are much more explicit (ZNW56 [1965] 14–15; similarly, Johnson, NTS25 [1978–79] 373). The silence commands of 1:43; 5:43; and 7:36 are quite similar to each other and straightforward. Why then this oblique approach, if all four such commands are redactional?

Roloff (*Kerygma*, 128–29) takes the command as having been related to the judgment motif associated with the woe formula in the Q saying about Bethsaida (Matt 11:21–22//Luke 10:13–14). Accordingly, both the leaving of the village (8:23) and the command not to enter the village (8:26a) in keeping with Jesus’ own actions in Nazareth (6:1–6a, 6b), and the instructions of Matt 11:21–22//Luke 10:13–14//Mark 6:11 regarding how to respond to places that reject the mission, signify the village’s prior rejection of Jesus’ “mighty works.” The weakness of this suggestion lies in the absence of any hint of the village’s rejection in the present story.

Even if one were to take 8:23 as a traditional thaumaturgical trait characteristic of healings and grant that 8:26b represents Mark’s shifting of that special secrecy motif to a “silence command” about Jesus as in 1:44–45; 5:43; and 7:36, the injunction here would play the same role as the other silence commands. Instead of contributing to a “messianic secret,” these injunctions serve as a literary device by which Mark

prepares for the next scene. When the next scene requires crowds, the disregard for the silence command leads to great crowds (e.g., 1:45; cf. 2:1–2; 7:36; cf. 8:1–9). When the injunctions are apparently followed, a change of venue without crowds follows (e.g., 5:43; cf. 6:1–6a; 8:26; cf. 8:27–30). Perhaps this was Mark’s way in his narrative of letting Jesus get away despite the wonder of the respective miracles (e.g., 5:35–43; 8:22–26) that inevitably would have drawn a crowd (cf. 1:22–28 and 1:32–34; 1:40–45a and 1:45b–2:2; 3:6 and 3:7–12; 5:1–20 and 8:31; 6:7–13, 30 and 6:32–44; 6:34–44 and 6:53–56; 7:31–37 and 8:1–9).

At the heart of this discussion is the debate whether symbolic interpretation again enters the picture. In the last century or so of interpretation, a belief in the Messianic Secret of Mark has found popularity among New Testament scholars. To be sure, some indication does exist in Mark’s narrative that Jesus deliberately tried to keep his identity a secret as a means of controlling his destiny. God’s plan was for a crucifixion in Jerusalem as a Lamb of Sacrifice. Only by controlling his identity, especially to those willing to kill him on the spot, could he fulfill that destiny. Very quickly after our passage, Jesus will begin talking about his coming crucifixion in Jerusalem for the first time with his disciples (8:31–9:1).

The interpretative challenge debated among scholars is whether this plan originated with Jesus or was read into the text by Mark as a later interpretation of Jesus’ strategy. Many adopt the latter view, while Guelich attempts to make a case for the former with some new twists. For Bob there is an important difference between a messianic secret and a silence command. He sees this instruction to the blind man as the latter, more than the former. I tend to concur with his interpretation. Mark highlighted the command to silence as a precursor to the subsequent discussion about his impending death -- something that would shake the disciples to their foundations.

What can we learn from this? Some things come to mind. Jesus controls the situation, both in his earthly life and in ours. He knows what he is doing, even if we don’t. There also are times when we need to speak out for our Lord and other times when we shouldn’t. This reflects to some extent his assertion in Mt. 7:6 about throwing holy things to dogs. See my contribution to the German Festschrift on this topic: <http://cranfordville.com/Cranfordville/FestschriftMSS2.htm>. Our prayer should be: “Lord, help us trust your leadership. Give us wisdom to clearly understand it.”

## Greek NT

<8:22> Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν. καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτῷ τυφλὸν καὶ παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἄψηται. <8:23> καὶ ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ τυφλοῦ ἐξήνεγκεν αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς κόμης καὶ πτύσας εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ, ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν, Εἴ τι βλέπεις; <8:24> καὶ ἀναβλέψας ἔλεγεν, Βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ὅτι ὡς δένδρα ὁρῶ περιπατοῦντας. <8:25> εἶτα πάλιν ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χεῖρας ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ, καὶ διέβλεπεν καὶ ἀπεκατέστη καὶ ἐνέβλεπεν τηλαυγῶς ἅπαντα. <8:26> καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ λέγων, Μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κόμην εἰσέλθῃς.

## NASB

22 And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Jesus and implored Him to touch him. 23 Taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes and laying His hands on him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I see them like trees, walking around." 25 Then again He laid His hands on his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. 26 And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

## NRSV

22 They came to Bethsaida. Some people brought a blind man to him and begged him to touch him. 23 He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" 24 And the man looked up and said, "I can see people, but they look like trees, walking." 25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 Then he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

## NLT

22 When they arrived at Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus, and they begged him to touch and heal the man. 23 Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. Then, spitting on the man's eyes, he laid his hands on him and asked, "Can you see anything now?" 24 The man looked around. "Yes," he said, "I see people, but I can't see them very clearly. They look like trees walking around." 25 Then Jesus placed his hands over the man's eyes again. As the man stared intently, his sight was completely restored, and he could see everything clearly. 26 Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go back into the village on your way home."

### Textual Variants of Verse 26:

#### NASB:

Text Reading:

And He sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

Variants:

None

#### NRSV:

Text Reading:

Then he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even go into the village."

Variants:

Other ancient authorities add *or tell anyone in the village*

#### NLT:

Text Reading:

Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go

back into the village on your way home."

Variants:

None

#### Greek Text:

UBS 3rd rev Text >  $\aleph^c$  B L cop<sup>sa, bo, fay</sup> geo:

καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ λέγων, Μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κόμην εἰσέλθῃς.

1st Variant > it<sup>k</sup>:

καὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ λέγων, Μηδενὶ εἶπη ς εἰς τὴν κόμην.

2nd Variant > A C K X Δ Π etc.:

αὶ ἀπέστειλεν αὐτὸν εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ λέγων, Μηδενὶ εἶπη ς εἰς τὴν κόμην μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κόμην εἰσέλθῃς.

Several other variants playing off this core diavation.



## Greek NT Diagram

8:22  
1 Καὶ  
ἔρχονται  
εἰς Βηθσαϊδάν.

*Need*

2 καὶ  
φέρουσιν αὐτῷ τυφλὸν  
καὶ  
3 παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτὸν  
ἵνα αὐτοῦ ἄψηται.

8:23  
4 καὶ  
ἐπιλαβόμενος τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ τυφλοῦ  
ἐξήνεγκεν αὐτὸν  
ἔξω τῆς κόμης  
καὶ  
πτύσας  
εἰς τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ,  
ἐπιθείς τὰς χειρὰς αὐτῷ  
5 ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν,  
Εἴ τι βλέπεις;

*Healing*

8:24  
6 καὶ  
ἀναβλέψας  
ἔλεγεν,  
Βλέπω τοὺς ἀνθρώπους  
ὅτι ὡς δένδρα ὁρῶ περιπατοῦντας.

8:25  
7 εἶτα  
πάλιν  
ἐπέθηκεν τὰς χειρὰς  
ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ,  
καὶ  
8 διέβλεπεν  
καὶ  
9 ἀπεκατέστη  
καὶ  
10 ἐνέβλεπεν... ἅπαντα.  
τηλαυγᾶς

*Results:*

8:26  
11 καὶ  
ἀπέστειλεν αὐτόν  
εἰς οἶκον αὐτοῦ  
λέγων,  
Μηδὲ εἰς τὴν κόμην εἰσέλθης.

### Semantic Diagram

		Καὶ							
I.	A.	-----	1	Pres (Hist)	Dep	Ind	3	P	(αὐτοί) JC & D
				καὶ					
	B.	-----	2	Pres (Hist)	Act	Ind	3	P	(αὐτοί) BMF
				καὶ					
	B.	-----	3	Pres (Hist)	Act	Ind	3	P	(αὐτοί) BMF
				καὶ					
	A.	-----	4	1 Aor (Const)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) JC
				καὶ					
			1.	Impf (Incep)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) JC
			2.	Impf (Desc)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) BM
II.		-----	6	Impf (Desc)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) BM
				εἶτα					
			1.	1 Aor (Const)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) JC
				καὶ					
	B.	-----	8	1 Aor (Const)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) JC
				καὶ					
			3.	1 Aor (Const)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) JC
				καὶ					
	A.	-----	10	Impf (Desc)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) BM
III.		-----	11	1 Aor (Const)	Act	Ind	3	S	(αὐτός) JC

### Exegetical Outline:

- I. (1-3) In Bethsaida Jesus encountered a blind man needing to be healed
  - A. (1) Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida
  - B. (2-3) A blind man was brought to Jesus for healing
    - 1. (2) Some people brought a blind man to Jesus
    - 2. (3) They pleaded with Jesus to heal him
  
- II. (4-9) In two attempts Jesus healed the blind man
  - A. (4-6) Outside the village Jesus made his first attempt to heal the man
    - 1. (4) Jesus led the man by the hand out of the village
    - 2. (5-6) Jesus made an initial attempt to heal the man
      - a) (5) After having spit in his eyes and placed his hands on him Jesus asked him if he could see
      - b) (6) The man answered that he could see men looking like tall trees
  - B. (7-9) A second effort succeeded in healing the blind man
    - 1. (7) Jesus again placed his hands on the man
    - 2. (8) The man looked intently
    - 3. (9) The man's sight was restored
  
- III. (10-11) The healed blind man was sent home.
  - A. (10) The blind man began seeing everything clearly
  - B. (11) Jesus sent him home without returning to the village