As we continue with our series of messages from the Gospel of Mark, please open your Bibles to Mark chapter eight. And just hold your place there. We will get to our text in just a moment.

You will find them most everywhere you go. You shop with them in the stores, you eat with them in restaurants, and you share the road with them every time you go anywhere. Some of them work with you. Some of them live near you. And some of them are even related to you.

I am talking about people who are “spiritually blind.” Spiritual blindness is far worse than physical blindness. The consequences of physical blindness are temporal; the consequences of spiritual blindness are eternal.

When one is “spiritually blind” he or she lives in spiritual darkness. Their minds.....hearts....and spirits are blinded to the truth! A “spiritually blind” individual can have the truth of God’s word plainly laid before them in a manner that even a child can understand, and yet they still cannot or will not grasp the truth.

-They can’t see the truth that THEY NEED GOD IN THEIR LIVES.
-They can’t see the truth that THEY NEED JESUS CHRIST as their Lord and Savior.
-They can’t see the truth that they need SALVATION and the FORGIVENESS OF THEIR SINS.
-They can’t see the truth that THEY CAN’T POSSIBLY SAVE THEMSELVES.
-They can’t see the truth that one day THEY WILL STAND BEFORE THE LORD TO BE JUDGED AND CONDEMNED FOR THEIR SINS!
-They can’t see the truth that ETERNAL PUNISHMENT IN HELL AWAITS THEM if they leave this world without Christ as their Lord and Savior.
In today’s message we are going to be focusing our attention on some of the most “spiritually blinded” people who ever lived. I’m talking about the Pharisees......the “religious leaders” of the Jewish people in Jesus’ day.

First, let’s consider......

I. The Pharisees REQUEST A SIGN From Jesus (vs. 11)

MARK 8:11,12 (NKJV)

11 Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.

1. Jesus had just performed the incredible miracle of “Feeding the Four Thousand. (Mark 8:1-10) And we learned in verse 10 that immediately after that miracle, Jesus and His disciples got in the boat and left Decapolis and headed to Dalmanutha, clear on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, about eight miles from Capernaum.

2. When Jesus arrived in Dalmanutha, Mark tells us in verse 11 He was immediately met by a group of Pharisees “who came out and began to dispute with Him.” Now there’s a surprise! Imagine that, the Pharisees disputing with Jesus!

The Pharisees were always disputing with Jesus! They were always trying to drag Jesus into an argument. Disputing with Jesus was their “favorite past-time.”

3. As we have already seen on a number of occasions in our study of Mark, the Pharisees didn’t like Jesus very much; in fact they hated Him so much they wanted Him dead. (Mark 3:6)

   Jesus had exposed the truth about their self-righteousness. He had exposed the truth about their false teachings. He had exposed the truth about the errors of their vain human traditions.
And as a result, many of the Jewish people had “broken free” from the legalistic Jewish religion, and turned their backs on the scribes and Pharisees, and started following Jesus.

4. So here in verse 11 we find the Pharisees up to their “same old tricks.” They are disputing with Jesus......they are “testing Him” they are trying to “lure Jesus into their trap.”

5. The Pharisees REQUEST that Jesus give them a SIGN (v.11)

   v. 11 Then the Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, testing Him.

6. The Pharisees were “tempting” Jesus....they were “daring Him, even “double-dog daring Jesus” to perform some kind of a miracle to reveal where He got His power and authority.

   Remember back in Mark 3 after learning that Jesus had cast out demons, the scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub. In other words they were accusing Jesus of getting His power and authority from the devil.

7. So now, they are tempting Jesus to perform a miracle......to give them “a sign from heaven” to prove whether His power and authority came from heaven or from the devil.

   The Pharisees had heard all the reports of the miraculous things Jesus had done in the power of God. They had heard the reports of how Jesus had healed the sick........and cleansed the lepers........and drove out the demons.....and raised dead people back to life again. They had heard the reports of how Jesus walked on water, and calmed the storm, and miraculously multiplied the food to feed the 5,000 and then the 4,000.
8. The Pharisees knew all the things Jesus had done, but in their minds, it wasn’t enough to prove His power and authority came from GOD. They wanted more! They wanted their own “personal miracle.” They wanted Jesus to give them their very own “special sign from heaven.”

The Pharisees had heard enough of Jesus' Gospel message to save their souls! They had already seen enough evidence of His heavenly power to convince even the most hard-shelled of skeptics. But they were “spiritually blind!” They didn't want to believe in Jesus! They didn't want Him to be their Messiah. They refused to bow before Him as their Savior.

9. You know, some things never change! There are lots of people today who are just like the Pharisees of Jesus' day. There are lots of people who demand “a sign” from God before they will believe He truly exist. There are lots of people who demand something “sensational or spectacular” before they will follow Jesus.

10. How can one see an incredible sunrise or a glorious sunset and not believe in God? How can one see the brilliant sun, or a beautiful full moon, or the glistening stars in the night sky and believe that those things got there as the result of some cosmic explosion? SERIOUSLY!!

And how can someone stand on the shores of a massive ocean or behold a towering, majestic mountain, and fail to see the handiwork of a Creator?

Psalm 19:1,2 (New Living Translation) The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known.
11. And how can anyone be so “spiritually blind” as to look at the cross of Calvary and not believe there is a God in heaven who loves me so much that He willingly sacrificed the life of His only begotten Son to save my wretched soul?

If you are looking for “a sign” there’s your sign! LOOK AT THE CROSS OF CALVARY!!!

12. And yet, those who are spiritually blind can see the glorious beauty of God’s creation around them every single day.......and they can hear the message of the cross preached over and over again......and yet still refuse to see......refuse to believe......refuse to surrender......and refuse to accept Jesus Christ as LORD and Savior.

“THERE ARE NONE SO BLIND AS THOSE WHO WILL NOT SEE!”

So the Pharisees requested a sign from Jesus. Now moving on to verse 12 we see Jesus’ response and that is......

II. Jesus refused to give the Pharisees a sign. (v.12)

v. 12 But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, “Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation.”

1. Remember in the previous chapter, Mark 7, “Jesus sighed” just before He healed the deaf mute man. That was a sigh of compassion......a sigh of sympathy. (Mark 7:34)

2. Now here in Mark chapter 8, verse 12 we read that “Jesus sighed deeply” when the Pharisees requested “a sign from heaven.”

This was a different kind of sigh. This was a sigh of exasperation......a sigh of disappointment......a sigh of great sorrow......that these Jewish religious leaders still refused to open their “blinded eyes” to see the truth.
3. In Matthew’s account of this same encounter in Matthew 16, Jesus called the Pharisees and all their followers “a wicked and adulterous generation.”

In that passage in Matthew 16, Jesus reminded the Pharisees how they could look at the sky and discern what kind of weather they were going to have, but yet they could not discern “the signs of the times.” They could discern “seasonal changes” but they could not discern that this was “the season of their salvation.” (Matthew 16:1-3)

4. Also in that same passage, in Matthew 16, Jesus told them the only sign that they were going to get was the “sign of Jonah.” Remember that “sign” was that “just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and nights, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.” (Matthew 6:4)

In those prophetic words Jesus was foretelling His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus already knew that the Pharisees would play a key role in His crucifixion. He knew that the Chief priests and elders, who were Pharisees, would conspire with Judas Iscariot to have Him put to death.

Jesus was telling the Pharisees, “this is the only sign that you and this wicked and adulterous generation are going to get.” When I am crucified.....and buried......and arise from the grave on the third day, it will prove that I am who I claim to be!

5. Would the Pharisees then believe in Jesus? Would they then surrender their lives to Him? Would they then bow before Him and accept Him as their LORD and Savior? NO! Their “spiritual blindness” would only deepen.......and their hardened hearts would only grow harder.

You see, Jesus could have “tap danced” on water..... He could have raised a dead person to life right before their very eyes. He could have called up a storm and calmed it in His very next breath, AND THEY WOULD STILL HAVE REFUSED TO BELIEVE IN HIM! In His wisdom, Jesus knew that giving the Pharisees “a sign” would only lead to the demand for another, and another, and another.
“Signs don't save souls, faith in the LORD Jesus Christ does!”

6. And what was true of the Pharisees two thousand years ago, is still true today. Like the Pharisees, many today still want to trust in their own goodness, their own righteousness to save them. Many refuse to open their “blinded eyes!” Many REJECT Jesus! Many REFUSE to believe in Him! Many refuse to BOW before Jesus and accept Him as their LORD and Savior!

7. But one day soon, every blinded eye is going to be opened to see the truth, but it will be eternally too late!

Philippians 2:10,11 (NKJV) tells us that one day “every knee will bow in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father.”

CONCLUSION

Illustration: The story is told of a truck driver who was taking a load to a new destination he had never been to before. As he drove he was intently watching the signs leading to his destination. But in his effort to find the right road, he missed “a sign” that warned him of a low overpass ahead.

Soon, the truck driver realized he had made a horrible mistake when his truck became stuck under the overpass. He could not go forward and he couldn’t back up. Traffic started backing up for miles and tempers began to flare. The police were called to the scene and so were the big wreckers, but attempts to free the truck were to no avail.

By this time a huge crowd had gathered to watch the workers in their attempt to free the truck. And in that crowd was a young boy who was riding his bicycle over the overpass. He had stopped to watch. And after a few minutes the boy hollered down to one of the policeman below, “Hey officer, I know how to get that truck out from under the overpass.” The officer looked up at the boy, but just ignored him.
The boy hollered once again, "Officer, I know how to get the truck unstuck." With a sense of irritation in his voice, the officer said, "Ok, young man, tell me how."

The boy said, "Let some air out of the tires." Reluctantly the officer passed on the advice to the workers, who followed the boy's wisdom. They let some air out of the truck tires and before long they were able to free the truck from under the overpass.

I don't know whether that is a true story or not; but it certainly teaches us a couple of valuable truths: For one thing, it teaches us that wise people pay attention to all the signs. And two, it teaches us how easy it is to be blind to the obvious, even when its staring you in the face.

Why can't our lost loved ones.....our lost friends.....our lost neighbors......and our lost co-workers see what we see? Why can't they see they are hopelessly lost without Jesus? Why can't they see how desperately they need a Savior? Why can't our "prodigal sons" and our "prodigal daughters" who have turned their backs on the LORD see they need to come back to Him?

It is because they are spiritually blind to the truth. They can't see the truth because they don't want to see the truth. They can't see the truth because they refuse to see the truth.

Let us be fervent and diligent in our prayers for those who are spiritually blind! May our prayer be...........

Dear LORD,

Open the blinded eyes of my loved ones, my friends, and the people that I work with each day. Father, may their eyes be opened to see their lost condition; may their eyes be opened to see how desperately they need a Savior.

And Father, open the blinded eyes of my prodigal son or my prodigal daughter. May they come home to the faith they once knew when they were young. May their eyes be opened to Your love, Your grace, and Your forgiveness!

In Jesus' Name I pray!
AMEN