They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and wanted Jesus to cure him.

He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?”

“I can see clearly now…” the buoyant melody and infectious lyrics of Johnny Nash’s 1972 chart-topping song echo through the back of my mind as I reflect on Jesus’ healing of a blind man at Bethsaida.

Like many of those Jesus encountered, this man met Jesus not through his own initiative, but through friends who cared and saw in the itinerate rabbi a spark of hope for their friend. If only they could lead him to the place of encounter, if only they could get him close enough that Jesus could reach out and touch him, then perhaps there was hope. Just maybe their friend could, and would, see.

Jesus, though, was not a public showman. He took the man by the hand and led him out of the village, to a quiet and private place where he could attend more intimately to the man’s need. He first spit in the man’s eyes and applied his touch, then asked if he saw anything. Indeed, the man could now see people, but his vision was not clear—the people appeared “like trees.” In this case, the miracle happened in two stages—it took a second touch from Jesus to restore the blind man’s sight fully.

The buoyant melody and infectious lyrics of Johnny Nash’s 1972 chart-topping song echo through the back of my mind as I reflect on Jesus’ healing of a blind man at Bethsaida.

We live in a fast-paced culture that prefers the immediate over the prolonged, the event over the process, the destination to the exclusion of the journey. We visit “fast food” restaurants and prepare “instant” meals at home, expect not only next day but same day delivery, and access libraries of information with the click of a mouse or touch of a link in our smartphones.

This story of Jesus healing the man at Bethsaida reminds us that genuine transformation often—probably most often—happens over time rather than in an instant. Just as it took both an initial and then a second touch from Jesus to restore the blind man’s sight fully, making disciples of Jesus involves both leading persons to an initial commitment to Christ (“baptizing them”) and ongoing formation in the way of following Jesus (“teaching them to observe,” Matthew 28:18-20).

International Ministries’ global servants, staff, and volunteers work cross-culturally to invite people to become disciples of Jesus. This involves leading individuals toward making an initial life commitment to Christ, and then supporting the ongoing transformation of individuals and communities by “proclaiming through word and deed God’s reign of justice, peace, and abundant life for all creation.” IM’s ministries touch whole persons and whole communities, engaging body and spirit, toward the wholeness that comes from fullness of life in Christ.

Your support of IM in prayer, encouragement, and giving makes possible amazing transformative work around the globe, from ministries of evangelism and discipleship to work in health and wellness, abolition of global slavery, peace and justice, and more. In all of this, we work toward the vision of a time when God’s will is done fully “on earth as it is in heaven.” That will most assuredly be a “bright, bright sunshiny day!”

PRAYER GUIDE

“Do you see anything?”

“I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

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During this year’s World Mission Offering, our global servants and staff invite you to join us in prayer. Our theme for this year (‘I was blind, but now I see’) reflects on the story of Jesus’ healing of the blind man in Mark 8:22-25. Jesus spits on the man’s eyes and puts his hands on him, asking, “Do you see anything?” When the man replies that he can see trees but not faces, Jesus asks, “Who do you see?” When he answers with confidence, Jesus replies, “Your faith has saved you.”

This story begs the question—why was the healing in two touches the man’s eyes again, and his sight is fully restored.

8:22-25. Jesus spits on the man’s eyes and puts his hands on him, asking, “Do you see anything?” When the man replies that he can see trees but not faces, Jesus asks, “Who do you see?” When he answers with confidence, Jesus replies, “Your faith has saved you.”

Jesus our ministry was for love of you. The satisfactions of life, the allure of power, the challenge of trial, can all too easily blur our vision. Help us to model our lives and teach our children that you are our greatest desire. 

Thank you, Jesus, for opening our eyes, restoring sight, and helping our world see the possibility of new beginnings. Help us to model our lives and teach our children that you are our greatest desire.

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