

Scripture: Mark 8:22-26.

Topic: Again and Again.

Text: Mark 8:25 -- "Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly."

Proposition: Again and again each individual needs the help, forgiveness and assurances of Jesus, and Jesus will give them when the individual seeks and asks them.

Dates written: Feb. 21-24, 1972.

Dates and places used:

Feb. 27, 1972 - Oakland Park, Fla.

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Date written: Feb. 21-22, 1907.

Date and place used:

1-25-27, 1907 - Portland, Maine

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### Introduction:

1. Most of you are familiar with the state law and practice of automobile inspections. You can approach the necessity of having your car inspected for safety by the state in either of two ways. You can take your vehicle to a (friendly) garage and have them check it over first and fix whatever they say they find, then take it to the inspection station. Or you can take it to the station first, and then if they reject it and give you a rejection slip you can take it to the garage for the required corrections. Even if you take it to the garage first you may find some slight thing or things do not pass the check, and you have to take it back. Whichever route you take, you can go back for the checkup of tires, lights, horn, turn signals, brakes, steering mechanism, and so on, just as many times as may be necessary until the car passes the check and the sticker showing that is placed on the windshield. If the car is rejected the first time, or more than once, the inspector is saying that you need to get some work done on it, or maybe you can do it yourself, but you are free to come back for reinspection until the car is in proper

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shape.

2. This is an illustration of ~~the~~<sup>A</sup> fact about Jesus and his relationship to us which is raised or brought to view by the Scripture of today. That fact or relationship is what we want to discuss and commit ourselves to today.

I. The Scripture is an illustration of Jesus' repeatedly offering and giving his helpful ministry to a person who seeks and needs it.

1. Sometimes people do not recognize their needs, nor seek help for them when they do know their weak points. There is a story about a man who was an efficiency expert for a large company. His wife's friend asked her "what does an efficiency expert do?"

The lady gave it some thought, and then said, "Well, I'm not sure I can describe it exactly, but when I do it, he calls it nagging." An efficiency

expert <sup>OR A WIFE</sup> ~~or a wife~~ may have to nag a bit to get a person who doesn't recognize his need to take good action to solve the problem. ~~But though~~ Jesus

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stands ready to help, <sup>BUT</sup> he will not nag a person. He gives his help when the needy one recognizes his <sup>own</sup> need and seeks the help.

2. That is the way it was in the incident which today's Scripture describes. At the town of Bethsaida some people brought a blind man to Jesus, and begged him to touch him. The Scripture does not say so, but it would seem obvious that the man was willing to come, did not have to be forced to try any ~~home~~ <sup>way</sup> to get his sight. The people obviously figured that if Jesus would touch the man he would see again, or perhaps for the first time if he had been born blind. Jesus led the man out of the village, spit on his eyes, laid his hands on the man and asked him if he saw anything. ~~Remember that~~ In those days spit so used was considered of medicinal value, though to us <sup>TODAY</sup> it seems crude and unsanitary. ~~today~~ Jesus made use of a technique in which the people of his time had trust. The blind man looked up and said, "I see men; but they look like trees, walking." These words would indicate that the man had not been blind from birth but at one time had been able to see, because he could describe somewhat how things look.

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We read that Jesus then again laid his hands upon the eyes of the man; and that the man then looked intently, ~~and~~ was restored, and saw everything clearly. Jesus had offered and given his help according to the man's wishes and need, more than once, until the need was met. It is likewise true today, we believe, that

II. In the arena of daily living, people, you and I, need Jesus' helpful ministry again and again.

1. The idea that mankind, people, are sinners, that the individual does wrong naturally and inevitably, is an old idea which is embodied in many religions. The Old Testament is full of accounts of mankind turning away from God and sinning, later being brought to ~~being sorry~~ <sup>sorrow</sup>, to repentance, and then turning again to God for forgiveness and a new start. In most of the Old Testament accounts of this type of repetitive cycle of sin and good, <sup>of</sup> and sin and repentance again and again, the sinner had to make costly sacrifices, or to prove himself <sup>worthy</sup> by doing certain humble and hard functions, before the forgiveness of God was granted. The history of the Hebrews is not the only

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ancient religion which records man's kind's religious natural bent toward doing wrong. Most religions have some of sacrifice and punishment and duty to give the sinner a chance to pay for his wrong-doing and to turn thereby to better performance.

2. It is still true, if you are honest about it, that you and I, that people today, are sinners, wrong-doers, not perfect, repeatedly choosing to do things which we know to be harmful or not in harmony with God's will. Those of us who are Christian, however, can in faith believe that we have a non-venerable deity, a God who does not demand that we be punished and pay a heavy price for our wrong doings. We believe that in Jesus Christ the one and only God has demonstrated that the only condition he puts on granting his forgiveness for past wrongs is the individual's awareness of his sin, his repentance, sorrow, and admission of it, followed by the request for forgiveness through Jesus. We believe that this is because God demonstrated through Jesus that the punishment and price for all wrong doings was once and for all paid by Jesus' death upon the cross. We have a great substitute for any

sacrifice that is demanded of us, and that is the death of Jesus on Calvary. You can interpret that as a symbolic act of sacrificial and ultimate love, or as an actual bloody sacrifice which somehow is paid each time we repent and are ~~punished~~ <sup>FORGIVEN</sup>. However your interpretation, the point is that we can and will find forgiveness when in faith we go to God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

3. Some people think that once a person has had this experience of repentance and forgiveness, once he is "saved" as we often put it, that he is saved forevermore, that he can never lose his salvation, that it is a benefit which can never be lost. Others think that because mankind has not the ability to be perfect, he repeatedly falls away from his better moments of grateful performance of Christlike living, and repeatedly needs to experience the relief which comes through repentance, faith and Christ, <sup>we need</sup> and the assurance <sup>AND REASSURANCE</sup> of forgiveness. We of Methodist background historically are of the group that thinks you really can "backslide" from any state of ~~grace~~ grace which you experience, and that we repeatedly need to return to Jesus for

and sacrifice that is demanded of us, and that is the death of Jesus on Calvary. You can interpret that as a symbolic act of sacrifice and ultimate love, or as an actual bloody sacrifice which somehow is paid each time we repent and are forgiven. However your interpretation, the point is that we can and will find forgiveness when in faith we go to God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

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purification and redemption.

4. As far as I am concerned, and if I see you rightly, it is true that no matter what religious experiences we have had, all of us again and again do need to change our way of living, to refocus on Jesus Christ. The beautiful thing about it is that such Scripture as that of today, and many other passages, assure us that we can do so. The assurance is strong that

### III. Jesus still gives us his help, again and again.

1. There is a somewhat-irreverent story out of the football world about a Texas coach who before one of his team's big games followed his usual custom and called upon his team to kneel for a moment of silent prayer. Shortly thereafter, the opposing team took the kick-off and started advancing steadily toward the goal. The coach called time out and gathered his players around him and said, "Men, somebody didn't pray."

We sort of doubt that this is a good use of prayers, for what if the other team is likewise committed to prayer? Prayers that you be allowed to play the

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best game possible might be all right, but to view ~~a~~ subsequent defeat as ~~being~~ <sup>of</sup> unoffered or unanswered prayer isn't logical or right. But the coach's action along this line did illustrate one truth, that the help of Jesus is available again and again to us as we may need and seek it.

2. In the Scriptural incident Jesus did not stop working with the blind man until his need was completely met. When we are willing to commit ourselves completely, or as completely as we can, to Jesus' attitudes and guidance and principles, we can feel improvement and satisfaction, healing, help, no matter what the specific outcome of a given situation. His help is available and usable again and again, to make us happier persons, right up to the moment our old bodies give out and we are transmuted through death to our eternal shapes.

3. A golfing story states that a man had taken his wife, <sup>WHO WAS</sup> not every familiar with the game, to the links with him. He stepped up to the tee and drove off. The ball sailed down the fairway, leaped onto the green, and rolled into the hole. The golfer threw

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his club in the air with excitement when he saw that he had made a hole in one. "What have you suddenly gone crazy about?", asked his wife.

"Why I just did a hole in one," yelled the golfer, a wild gleam of delight in his eyes.

"Did you?" asked his wife calmly.

"Do it again, dear. I didn't see you."

There are some things which we just can't repeat: like reliving a day, growing younger again, having a chance to make the exact same trip before an accident that took a life, and so on. Life is non-repeatable. We may repent of what has happened, of what we've done, and try to make right some of the wrong we may have committed, but we can never take back that which we've done. Even this golfer could not have done exactly the same shot again, if he had been good enough to make another hole in one on demand, which his excitement indicated he could not do.

4. Life does inflict constant wound on our ego. Purposely we do go on and do things we know are wrong, again and again. You do. I do. But there is still available some help for the situation, no matter how often we've used it before.

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Conclusion:

1. The Scripture of today points out that help. In the words which we would use as our text, Mark 8:25, the illustration is given: "Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly." Jesus stayed with the blind man and together they tried until the needed action at that time took place.

2. Again and again you and I need help too. That help may be in giving us self-confidence. It may be in the need to be forgiven of deep guilt. It may be in matters of physical restoration of some lost ability. The one place where we can be assured we always will find a sympathetic ear and constant help on each recurring occasion is in the presence of Jesus Christ, when we turn to him in faith. Don't despair when you slip up next time. Jesus will help you. Don't give up now, if you have a problem too deep and big for you. Go to him in prayer and thought, and he will help. His help is ours for the taking, again and again, but you and I must make the effort to ask and seek his help.

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