

Unveiling Mercy

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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We are starting a new series today called *Journey with Jesus*. All summer long, we are going to walk His way. We are going to see what He is all about. Through our readings, we are going to follow, especially the Gospel of Mark. There are four Gospels, which are the first four books in the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, four different ways to tell the exact same story, the story of how Jesus was born, what He did here on earth, that He died for us and rose again, and the mission that He gave to His followers, not just His followers at that time, but His followers like us today.

This week we focus on *how Jesus unveils mercy for us*. And this is a pretty specific metaphor that we are talking about. So, I want you to do something with me: take your hands, put your fingers together, and put them over your eyes, completely cover your eyes so that you cannot see anything. Now, what can you see? You. You see your hand. You see yourself, and you see darkness.

Now go ahead and split your fingers open just a little bit. What can you see now? There is a little bit of light coming through. You can see a few other people. You can see a little bit. Now go ahead and take your hands off.

When your hands are covering your eyes, it is like a veil. It is like you and your sights are covered. And at that moment, how did you feel? How did you feel when you had your eyes totally covered? Was it a little bit unsettling because you are sitting in a new place, and you could see anything? Or were you okay with it?

Today we are going to see how this idea of not being able to see, of having a veil over us, is really what Jesus knows that this world is like for us.

You see, the way that we go about our lives, the things that we see and experience each and every day, the things that we busy ourselves with, our goals, our wants, our needs, sometimes act like a veil. What do I mean by that? It means that sometimes those things become so important and so big in our lives and so all-encompassing that that is all that we can see.

In our gospel reading today, in this episode of *Journey with Jesus*, we are going to see the people around Him. We are just like this. His mother and His brothers and the religious leaders of the day, they were all like this.

And so, they wanted something of Jesus that He could not give them. Instead, what He asks them to do is to kind of peek through that veil to see a little bit of light coming through. He is encouraging them to see that there is more than what they can see. So, let us see how that happens. It happens in three different ways.

One of the things about Mark that we are going to talk about all summer long is that Mark has a secret. The way He tells the Jesus story is that there is something secretive going on. When Jesus heals someone, Jesus tells the person who was healed to go and tell nobody. That seems strange, right? If you were healed, if something happened to you, it would be so amazing and miraculous, and you would want to tell everyone. When He would cast out demons, He would tell the people and the demons to go and tell nobody. It seems so strange. One of the biggest things we know we are called to do as followers of Jesus is to go and tell all the world about the good news of Jesus. And yet in Mark, they are not allowed to do that yet.

There is a secret building. And we are going to see how that comes across here. The first thing that happens is Jesus' family comes to Him. And when they saw that people were crowding around Him, coming to Him to be healed, see what this person was doing—this new rabbi who was teaching amazing things and doing incredible miracles—His family comes to Him and what do they think? Do you see that there? They think He is out of His mind! Did you know this? Have you heard this story before? It is kind

of different. You do not think about Mary, His mother, and Jesus' brothers—you do not think of them in that way. You think of them knowing Jesus and seeing Him, that they recognize, "This is absolutely the Son of God. This is amazing." But at this point in time, that veil was still there. They could not see; they did not understand.

This happens too with the people who were in charge of the day, the teachers of religious law, the ones who had come from Jerusalem, which means that these were the important teachers. These were the big ones, the big people, the important people. They come; They see what Jesus is doing and say, "This is not of God. This is of Satan. He is possessed by Satan. This is where He gets all of His power." Again, this veil that is not being able to see. I have only been able to see what I want. Seeing what I need, seeing the world my way, we often get stuck in that way. That veil sometimes is comforting, but Jesus calls us to see that there is more to life than that and just what we see in that veil. So, Jesus is trying to help us and remind us that, yes, it is possible to go about this world, go about this life, and live it as though you cannot see Him, to live in your own kingdom, to live for yourself. And yet Jesus calls out to each and every person, each and every one of the people that He saw, and to you today, saying, "There is something bigger happening. The kingdom of God is right here—A kingdom that brings peace and joy and all these things that your heart, and your mind, and all of you yearn for." This is what the kingdom of God brings. But you have to trust that Jesus brings it. It is all about Him and not about us.

Jesus is even very kind to the religious leaders. He tries to help them understand their own logic. When we get this famous phrase, *a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand* and He is telling them, "If I'm casting out demons, how can I be a part of Satan's kingdom? Why would Satan ever cast out demons and make them ineffectual? It does not make sense. He would want more demons. He would want more of that. You guys, you are only seeing what you want to see. Open your eyes to see what I am doing. Open your eyes to see the kingdom of God at work right now

among you. In the kingdom of God, the broken are healed. In the kingdom of God, those who are suffering find peace. And that brings great joy. This is the kingdom of God. Open your eyes, drop the veil.” This is what the kingdom of God is all about.

He tries in the end to explain to them that all of these things, all these ways that we pull ourselves away from God can absolutely be forgiven. There is a reason why at the beginning of church service every week we confess our sins. And what do we get to hear? That God forgives us of everything. There is no sin that He does not forgive. So why does Jesus say this? How can something never be forgiven? He is not talking in those terms about there is a specific sin that cannot be forgiven. That is not what He is saying. What He is saying is, “If you continue to think that this veil is all that there is, that you are all that there is, and that your kingdom is all that there is, your eyes will never be open to see the goodness of the kingdom of God.” This is what He is saying. He is trying to help them drop this veil, trying to help them open their eyes to see that in Him, there is everything that they know that God does and brings.

But it is in this strange thing, this person, this real person who is walking around healing people, teaching with authority that is not His own and promising that He will die for the sins of the world and that He will rise again, like nobody else has ever done to bring freedom to all of creation. This is what Jesus is trying to help us to do.

So back comes His mother and brothers. They think He is a little bit crazy. They cannot quite see. Jesus is sitting with a whole bunch of people. There is a crowd sitting around Him. He is teaching them, and people say your mother and brothers are outside asking for you and notice what they are saying. They are sending word for Jesus to come out to them. Now, where is the kingdom of God? It is where Jesus is. What they are asking is for their kingdom—the mother and brothers’, the veiled kingdom—to take priority. So, what Jesus says next is not harsh. He is not disowning His mother and His brothers. He is trying to teach them. He is trying to say, “Where I am, there the kingdom is. So be close to me. I invite you to please

come in, join the crowd, be part of this group, this congregation, and be part of these people who see that the kingdom of God is real. And it is at hand, and it is right here.” He wants them to see who He is clearly.

And this is the same for us today. What are these things that cause us to be veiled? What are these things that cause us to see only ourselves and the things that we want, the things that we are working towards, the things that we desire that maybe are not aligned with us, with what God really wants for us, are we chasing after ourselves or are we following Jesus?

Today, I hope that you can see what Jesus is calling each of us to do is to say, “Let go of those things that used to be, that veil that used to be, maybe what you chased after, and instead, follow me;” Jesus says, “Instead, follow me.” He says this, He looks to all the people around Him and says, “Look, all of this is my family. Anyone who does God’s Will is my brother and sister and mother. Anybody who is walking this journey with me is my family.” He was not saying this to exclude His mother and brothers; He is inviting them to come along, and we know that they did. We know that one of his brothers became an incredible leader in the church after Jesus’ ascension. We know that His mother kept testifying about the goodness of God’s Grace to her and to Jesus and to all the world through Jesus. But at this moment, it was taught. At this moment, the veil was still there. At this moment, they could not clearly see what their next step was. So, Jesus calls out to each one of them and each one of us today, and says, “Look to me. Where I am, there the kingdom of God is, and you will find peace; you will find clarity; and you will find joy . . . in me.

Let’s put our hands back up. Let’s try this one more time. Let’s put this veil up. Let’s put these hands closed on our eyes. How does it feel? I cannot do this without wanting to spread my fingers apart. It is really hard. Spread those fingers apart. Open up. Let that veil go and know that you today see clearly. Jesus did die for you. He was raised from the dead. Jesus has risen just for you. He gives you freedom. He gives you joy. Do not let that veil be there anymore. He has come for you. He loves you, and He leads you. Let us close with a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for being with us today. We thank you for your presence with us. We ask, Lord, that you would allow us to set aside the things that would cause us to veer away from your path, to lift up that veil again, to see only ourselves, our own needs, our own desires and wants.

And instead, let us see you. Let us listen to your calling on our lives. Let us listen to the path that you have set out for us. Let us walk that one next step that you give us clarity to see, trusting in your mercy for us, trusting your goodness for us, trusting that you have this all under control, and let us do this together as a family here at Our Savior's Way, as people who are all walking together, focused on you.

We pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.