

What Does it Mean to See Jesus?

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Date: 01 November 2020

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, and may I extend the welcome to everybody this morning who's here and those who are watching online. My name's Robin Silson. I'm a member of the congregation, and we've got a great passage to look at this morning together as we continue this series in Luke's Gospel.

So why don't I pray for us, and then we can look at the passage together. Father God, we thank you so much for the Bible, and we thank you that you speak to us through it.

We pray now, Lord, that you would have mercy upon us and that you'd help us to see what you're saying to us, Lord. We pray that you'd help us to fixate our eyes upon Jesus, and we pray that you'd be with us and help us, Lord.

Lord, we thank you so much that we get together this morning and hear your word and pray for your blessing now. In Jesus' name, amen. Lots of us may have heard of the author H.G. Wells.

He was famous for his works of science fiction in the late 19th century and early 20th century.

Books that were made into films like *The War of the Worlds* were really, really popular.

[1 : 13] But one of his lesser sort of well-known stories is called *The Country of the Blind*. And it tells the story of a mountaineer called Nunes.

On his descent from a snowy climb, he enters a valley and stumbles upon a very unusual community. And he notices that all the homes in the village, they don't have any windows. He discovers that the reason that every single one of the villagers is blind. The book is all about his relationship with them.

He tries to explain what it's like to see, but it's all in vain. They have no understanding of what it would be like to have their sight. And in fact, they deny that it exists and think blindness is a gift. And there's a famous-ish quote from Nunes. He says, In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.

[2 : 19] It turns out he's wrong, because the village think his sight is a form of madness. And the interesting observation is that until Nunes arrives at the village, the villagers have no idea that they're blind.

The villagers have no idea that they're blind. This passage we've got today is about sight and blindness, both physical and spiritual.

And that how we see spiritually is connected to what relationship we have with Jesus. Spiritual blindness is just like the villagers in the story.

They can't see that they're blind. And so the big question we're asking today is, what does it mean to see spiritually? What does it mean to see Jesus?

And we're going to be looking at that in three points. The means of the impossible, the disciples can't see it. The second point is the king who gives mercy, the blind man can see him.

[3 : 35] And the third point, the transformed life, the man follows Jesus. So the first point we're going to look at, the means of the impossible, the disciples can't see it.

But before we get into that, let's just remind ourselves of where we've got to in Luke's gospel. You might remember from last week, that impossible situation that we're sort of left with, of the rich ruler from last week.

Just look back in maybe the passage that we looked at last week in verse 24. It says, Jesus looked at him, that's the rich ruler, and he said, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God. Those who heard this asked, who then can be saved?

Jesus replied, what is impossible with man is possible with God. And the question that's left hanging, it's not really answered, is how?

[4 : 45] How is it made possible? Jesus tells us that it's possible with God, that the rich can enter, but how? Peter follows Jesus, talking about what the disciples have done.

That they have left everything, and Jesus tells them that they'll receive eternal life. Eternal life. But still the crucial bit of information we're looking for isn't there. How does God make the impossible possible?

If it's really hard for the rich, which Jack explained wonderfully for us last week, if it's that hard, which it is, giving away everything, too hard for us to do, and you might have even said, I couldn't do that.

Then how? Because actually, doing all these things, it still isn't actually enough. A bit of a detour. You just think of Judas. He's the perfect example of that, right? When Peter talks about those who've left everything, at verse 20, at that point, Peter would have included Judas in that group.

[5 : 49] And we all know what happened to him. He loved money more than God. Saw Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. It's still not enough. That's one of the points, isn't it?

The ruler thinks he's done enough. But even if he'd given away everything, that alone, in and of itself, would not have been enough. And the question still remains, how does God make the impossible possible?

That's where things are sort of left last week. Well, let's look together from verse 31. Jesus took the 12 aside and told them, we're going up to Jerusalem.

And everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, and spit on him.

They will flog him and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again. This is the means by which the impossible becomes possible with God.

[6 : 57] The Son of Man, that's Jesus, he's talking about himself, must go through this. He must die, and he must rise. He must suffer. It's always been God's plan.

And look what Jesus tells us. It's written in the prophets. We could go to Psalm 53, the suffering servant. Psalm 22, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Psalm 16, he will not let his Holy One see corruption. It was always the plan. He must die and suffer and rise. I mean, I don't know about you, but this series we've had in Luke, it's really challenged me over the last few weeks.

Maybe you're like me and thought, actually, when I think about myself, I live at times like I am the rich ruler, like I'm totally self-sufficient.

And if it's not last week's passage, I mean, what about the Pharisee in that parable we had a few weeks before? I'm just like him as well, acting, thinking, that you're cut above the rest, doing stuff for your own church, rating of approval.

[8 : 02] Let me just say, it is impossible for any of us to enter the kingdom of God on our own merit. So let's just get this right. Let's put a marker in the sand.

The debt you owe to God is impossible for you to pay. It's impossible. You can't pay it. This is what Jesus, he's telling them, I'm going to make it possible.

How? By handing over my life. By handing over my life. And in rising, I'm going to defeat death and sin. The curse will be lifted. The things that made it impossible for you to enter, Jesus is going to pay for.

And it struck me afresh this week that if you've put your trust in Jesus, just think about this. You don't owe God any payment for your sin.

You don't owe him anything. Nothing. Not a penny. Because that impossible payment has already been paid. By the blood of Jesus and he's risen. Defeating death.

[9 : 06] Announcing, declaring, proclaiming in fact that you stand approved before God. You enter the kingdom of God with a big fat approval stamp.

It is staggeringly good news. Staggering. There is another point here. And it is quite surprising. When Jesus tells this to his disciples, they don't get it. They don't understand how it works. They don't see how it fits together.

And it's probably worth mentioning, it's not the first time Jesus has told them either about his death and resurrection. I count this as the sixth time. And you do wonder, how have they missed it?

How have they missed it? They've spent so much time with Jesus. Is it that they don't appreciate or think about what he says the way they used to?

[10:11] Have they become a little blasé perhaps about the truth? Is it hidden from them? Because and for the sixth time, they think they've worked it all out before.

They can't see what Jesus is saying. I don't know what your favorite meal is, but one of mine is fillet steak. I don't eat it every day, but if I did, I can imagine that after a month of eating fillet steak, I wouldn't want it anymore.

I'd want something else. The very thing that I loved eating, looked forward to eating, delighted in, would become normal, a little bit fed up with fillet steak. I'd want something else.

Let me ask you a question, if I may. Has the simple gospel of Jesus Christ crucified to pay for your sin become too familiar? Yeah, I know all this.

I've had it since I was in Sunday school. Can't you tell me something I don't know? What a danger to be in that position.

[11:21] So familiar with truth, we can't see the significance of a saviour. Might we be missing out what Jesus wants us to see like the disciples?

But right after that, we're introduced to this blind man on the road. this blind man on the road. We move to our second point. The king who gives mercy, the blind man can see him.

The king who gives mercy, the blind man can see him. What comes next in this section of Luke's gospel is two real encounters of people with Jesus.

The first one, as I've said, that we're going to look at this morning is between Jesus and the blind man. And the one which follows is that familiar story when Zacchaeus climbs the tree to see Jesus. What both stories have in common is seeing Jesus. Zacchaeus can't see Jesus because he's too small. The blind beggar can't see Jesus either.

[12:27] Or can he? It's back to the first question. What does it mean to see Jesus? Jesus. But before we answer that, a little bit of context as to what it means to be, or meant to be, physically blind in those days.

Now, you might remember from last week that being wealthy or rich or prosperous in that day and age, it was seen that the individual was blessed by God and must have done something good for God to bless them in their life.

But in contrast, the opposite view was taken if life had not been kind, if you had any physical infirmity or disability or poverty. It was seen in the opposite light.

Like you were cursed. Something must have happened in your life or family history that meant you deserved your love. And therefore, to be blind, it was much like being a leper, that you were responsible for the position you were in.

On the peripheries of society, you were an outcast. And so, in fact, if you were born in that position, the guy's life could have been mapped out.

[13:44] People knew that you ended up destitute, scrambling around, overlooked by everyone. The common view serves him right. He must have done something to deserve it.

That's the situation of this blind man, the blind beggar. Verse 35, we see him. He's sitting by the roadside begging, doing what he's done probably every day of his life, day in, day out, maybe even sat in the same place.

And all he's told is Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. We don't know what else he knows about Jesus, but he knows enough.

Because it's on that basis alone that he calls out. Verse 38, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. He's met with a rebuke, but you can probably imagine it.

Stupid blind beggar, shut up man. But it has the opposite effect. Makes him shout louder. Verse 39, he shouts all the more, son of David, have mercy on me.

[15:00] The answer he gives shows us that he can see Jesus better than anyone else on the road. This nameless blind beggar and nobody who's shunned.

He sees two things. Who Jesus is, the son of David, and why he's come to show mercy. Now, the son of David, that's no ordinary title.

It's a title for the king, the Messiah, the Christ, the one who comes in the line of King David, whose kingdom will be everlasting. The blind beggar sees that, that Jesus is the fulfillment of Nathan's prophecy to King David in 2 Samuel 7.

The blind beggar knows that this king has come to show mercy. He's not like other kings or leaders who want that position of power and fame and everyone looking at them.

But he uses his power to serve the marginalized, the vulnerable, the outcast. Just think of the contrast we see here. The contrast with the rich ruler.

[16:11] The contrast with the disciples who spent all their time with Jesus but can't see what he's saying. But this blind beggar sees exactly who he is. He knows who he's calling to and that mercy is on offer.

Isn't this the type of childlike dependence Jesus was talking about in verse 17? Just look back with me.

What did he say? He said, Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. This guy is just like a little child.

The dependence we see. He knows he needs mercy and that the king is the only place to go. Like a little baby who knows to cry for milk from his mother, this man knows he needs to call to his king. And what a wonderful king we get presented with. What a wonderful king we have. Let's just remember he's on the road to the cross.

[17:17] That's where he's traveling. He knows where he's going. He knows what lies ahead of him. But he still has time for this nobody. He's not a nobody to Jesus.

He doesn't look at his social status. He looks straight at his heart. He knows that this blind beggar can see him with the eyes of faith.

And he restores his physical sight. Verse 42, Receive your sight. Your faith has healed you. What does it mean to see Jesus?

The physical sight is not the important thing, is it? It is about what your heart sees. Seeing Jesus with the eyes of faith as your personal king.

Knowing, trusting like a child, that he is the king you need for all of us. Let me ask you a question. Is that you today?

[18:25] When you hear this story, can you say in your heart of hearts, can you join in with the blind man and say, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me?

Not somebody else's king, but can you say my king? Have mercy on me.

We're going to move on to our third point and see what happens to the blind man. We moved on to our third point. The transformed life, the man follows Jesus.

As we look what happened. What we see is this man's life is transformed. The label we have for him at the beginning of the passage is defunct, isn't it?

He's called a blind man. He's not blind anymore. His physical sight has sort of matched up with his spiritual insight. And his life now demonstrates that.

[19:28] His whole life was directed by his physical blindness, but that has gone. What's more, it doesn't say, it doesn't say in verse 43, verse 43, sorry, and immediately he received his sight and he sat back down on the roadside and carried on begging all his days.

It doesn't say that, does it? His life is transformed. He walks on the road. He keeps his restored eyes on God himself, who he could see with his heart.

He sees his saviour, his king. Verse 43, immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. And he kept following him. It's quite amusing how the people have changed their tune as well.

When all the people saw it, they also praised God. His life will never be the same. The very thing that had made his life a misery, Jesus has removed.

The very thing that brought shame on him, Jesus has removed. The very thing that made him an outcast, Jesus has removed. His whole life is transformed.

[20:41] Acknowledging Jesus as king and asking for mercy will transform, does transform. Not might, but will transform.

We talked a little bit at the beginning about how, or I mentioned, how challenging this series in Luke has been. And like for many of us, it may have been for some of the things that have been mentioned in a very sort of real, obvious way, it's brought into your attention how you don't measure up to God's standards.

And we think about our attitudes with money and our own, and the pride that we have in our hearts. And maybe you've realized that you do need his mercy. You do need his life to pay the debt you owe.

But as we look at what happens to this guy afterwards, let me just say one thing here. The gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified, it isn't only about how you enter into the kingdom, but it's about how

you live in it too.

this man enters, but then he follows. He's not left how he was found. And Jesus doesn't leave any of us as he finds us, he transforms us.

[22 : 07] Now, I remember, I can't remember when this was, it was the other year, I was walking in one of the parks with Heidi, and we found a conker and I showed her the tree that it came from and explained that like you do, you know, if you planted it, this conker in the ground, it would grow up to be a tree just like the one in front of her.

And you should have seen the look she gave me. She took hold of the conker and looked at it. She looked at the tree and then looked at me and shook her head and went, silly dad.

It is pretty amazing if you think of it. It's pretty unbelievable when you first get told that that a conker grows to be a tree. Being a follower of Jesus is being a bit like a conker that's been planted.

Each day you acknowledge Jesus as king and ask for mercy, he's transforming you. And you're watered by his spirit, by his word.

You're watered by his spirit. You're watered by applying the gospel to your own life every day.

Doing that is following him. Now, you don't become a tree overnight.

[23 : 28] Of course, there's that moment when you're planted in the ground and watered for the first time. But the transformation is that day by day, it's a lifetime. It's full of winters and summers.

But Jesus transforms you as you follow him. As you grow glorifying God. And so this morning, we've thought about spiritual sight, haven't we?

That it's nothing to do with physical sight. We thought to begin with about how Jesus has made the impossible possible. How his death on the cross is the only way that our debt can be paid.

We thought about that sometimes maybe we have become overly familiar with it and we've stopped thinking about the wonder of it every day. And maybe if we've done that, like the disciples, we can miss out on what Jesus has for us.

Maybe if we realise that this morning, that might be an area in itself where you could say, Jesus, have mercy on me. Help me to see that today. And then we saw the spiritual sight of the blind man who knew who Jesus was and why he came, looking to him with that childlike faith, knowing that the king is the only place to find mercy.

[24 : 48] And then it doesn't end there. The blind man was transformed. In fact, the people who saw the miracle were transformed in their attitude. Jesus, our king, the one who sits on the throne, has transformed and is transforming.

He doesn't leave you how he found you. What does it mean to see Jesus? It means seeing him as your king and knowing that he offers you mercy today.

You have to, but just ask, just go to him and ask for it. Son of David, King Jesus, have mercy on me. Let me pray for us. Father God, we thank you so much for your son.

We thank you for the king that he is. We thank you that you reign and you rule that you sit on the throne. We thank you that you're a king that's like no other.

We thank you that you're a king that you come to give us mercy and I pray that you would show mercy to us, Lord. I pray that you'd be with us and I pray, Lord, that you'd help us to fixate our eyes upon Jesus each day and that you would do that wonderful, transformative work in each of us every day.

[26 : 18] we know there's times and there's ups and downs that we go through and we need your help. Help us not to rely on ourselves but to rely on you as our king.

So we pray that you'd bless us now and pray that this word that we've heard would, you'd apply it to our hearts each and every day. We ask for this in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.