

Luke 18:31-43

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[0 : 0 0] Thanks a lot, Katrina, for reading. If you keep your Bibles open, that would really help me. Page 105.2 there. And as always, there's an outline inside the notice sheet if you find that helpful.

Now, we've given out these glasses. We're going 3D today. All will be revealed. But if you've got spares, have people got spares? Is there a pile of spares anywhere? No.

So if you haven't got one, we might need to pass them down to people on your row if you haven't got one. But hopefully there are enough. Great. More important than all of that, of course, is that over the next half hour or so, we hear God speak to us as we open up the Bible, the sword of the Spirit.

So let's ask for God's help as we turn to his word. Let's pray together. Father God, we thank you for this account of Jesus' life. Many of us here will have already recognized Jesus as our Savior and King.

For others here, perhaps the real Jesus seems very distant, obscure, uncertain. So we pray that for all of us, you will give us sight to see the real Jesus more clearly and that you will help us respond rightly to him.

[1 : 1 7] Amen. We ask this for Jesus' name's sake. Amen. So as a church family, we're starting a new series today. In the buildup to Easter, we're going to look at Easter through the eyes of Dr. Luke.

This is Luke's account of Jesus' life. He wrote it in the first century. Within the lifetime of the eyewitnesses who were around, he says at the beginning, he carefully investigated everything to write this account so that we would know with certainty what happened.

And by the time we get to chapter 18 of Luke's gospel, Jesus has had this astonishing impact. He teaches like nobody has ever taught before. He loves with a fearless love, whatever the cost.

He loves everyone. People are flocking to him. Crowds are becoming followers of him. And yet the heat is being turned up on him because the religious authorities don't like him.

They want to kill him. And in verse 31, he tells his disciples, we're on our way to Jerusalem. And they know what might happen there. So there's this climactic final week that we're heading into.

[2 : 1 9] And just before we get there, we get this incredible miracle. So let's dive in and look at this. We're going to think about it in three parts. Part three is much longer, just to warn you. Our first part is the blind man's wonderful example.

The first thing to acknowledge about this great example that the blind man sets is the most obvious thing. It's that he knows that he can't see. He recognizes that he's got a problem. And we all know, don't we, today, that if you can't see, it's a problem.

Here's a recent advert for Specsavers that I enjoyed. I didn't come around and install me a new bathroom. It wasn't exactly what I had in mind.

Yeah, it's a poor plumber. Have we got visuals on that? I didn't install me a new bathroom. No? Okay. It wasn't exactly what I had in mind. Okay. Okay. It was just an advert, just a funny example of, you know, someone should have gone to Specsavers.

And we make light of that. But it's the kind of idea that, you know, we need to be able to see. So these, we're kind of used to that. But obviously there's the much more serious thing of real blindness.

[3 : 28] It's a really sad thing. About four years ago, I had to have brain surgery. And one of the risks of my brain surgery was that I would go blind because of where they were messing about near the optic nerves.

And so I had to sort of go into surgery facing the very real prospect that the next day I might never see again. And it was very striking to have to think like that.

To think, what will I most miss about the world that I won't be able to see anymore? It might be worth just taking a moment to think that for yourself. What would you most miss if you were blind? So this blind man knows he needs help.

So the next thing he does, it's a small thing, but just notice what he asks. He asks about what's going on. Verse 36. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening.

So he's inquisitive. Just think, what's he seeing? He's seeing a crowd of Jesus followers. It's a bit like he's walked into church. And he sees this crowd of people.

[4 : 32] He doesn't understand quite what they're up to, but he's willing to inquire. And maybe you'd be like that this morning. You're someone who is at St. Silas, but you wouldn't yet call yourself a Christian.

You wonder what the crowd all believe. But will you have the courage, like he did, to want to know more and to ask what's going on? Then next, he petitions Jesus as king.

Look at verse 38. He called out, Well, that is a really remarkable thing to say. The blind man has understood what loads of people so far in Luke's gospel have failed to realize.

He calls Jesus the son of David. That means descendant of David. And centuries earlier, David had been this great king of Israel, appointed by God. And God had promised David that someone would come in his line who would be king forever.

God's chosen king forever. And he would rescue God's people. The blind man has realized this is him, the son of David. Notice as well that he realizes that he can offer nothing to Jesus.

[5 : 44] He doesn't say, Jesus, can you help me see because I'm a really good bloke? Help me to see because I'd be really useful on your team. No, he just says, have mercy on me.

And lastly, notice how persistent he is. He's eager, verse 39. Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted all the more, son of David, have mercy on me.

So he's got very strong faith so that nothing will get in his way. And the blind man is here as a model for us of how to come to Jesus yourself. You recognize that you need help.

You know you don't have anything to offer. However, you acknowledge him as the king who can help you. And you ask him for mercy. And you don't get put off by other people.

You're persistent. That's our first point. The blind man is a wonderful example for us. Secondly, we've got the king's shocking response. Have a look with me again at verse 40.

[6 : 45] Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. He stops. I don't know whether you've experienced this. But I find that in life, the more authority that I'm given, the busier I am.

And the harder it is to stop for anyone. And if you think of a sort of an extreme example of that, I saw last week in the paper that Barack Obama was being pictured coming out of a gallery in America.

You know, he'd just been out at an art gallery. And I remember watching him a couple of years ago on the TV when he went on a walk with Bear Grylls. And he was talking about just the sheer relentless busyness of being the president.

And it's the same, I guess, for David Cameron. You know, he stepped down from being prime minister in this country. And, you know, suddenly, after years of just unrelenting busyness, he's got time on his hands to do the things that he presumably enjoys doing.

So those are examples of people in power. Jesus is the king of the universe. At this point, he is on a mission to save the world. And everyone is clamoring for his attention.

[7 : 53] And he stops for this one blind man, this beggar. There's a personal touch there, isn't there? And if you're someone who's never before asked Jesus for mercy, he will stop and listen to you if you talk to him.

Then the question, verse 41, he asks the man, what do you want me to do for you? Lord, I want to see, he replied.

Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Can you imagine what that must have been like to observe? That suddenly this man, he doesn't have to be brought into an operating theater. Jesus doesn't even seem to touch him, as far as we know.

He can just speak, and a man who can't see, can see again. It would have been emotionally extraordinary to witness that. You might have seen recently, there were examples of adults who get cochlear implants.

[9 : 01] And for the first time, they've been deaf their whole lives. And for the first time, they can hear. And you see these examples of how powerful that is. I'm going to take the risk now that I've got a couple of videos of it. But judging by the last one, we might see nothing.

Let's see if we can watch one of these. Okay, we'll stop.

But it's very powerful when you see these people who've never heard anything before. And suddenly they can hear. And the new sense kind of overwhelms them. And they're in floods of tears at what's happened.

And it's a beautiful thing to see what happens. And that's what it would have been like for this guy. He couldn't see. And then suddenly he's overwhelmed with the senses of being able to see again.

Crowds are everywhere. A blind man sitting by the road, utterly helpless. Thousands of people walk past him every day. In fact, his existence as a beggar is actually a testimony to the failure of Israel to be God's people.

[10 : 01] Why is he having to beg? Why is he being ignored? Jesus calls him over. He restores his sight. What happens next? The blind man receives his sight and follows Jesus.

And I don't know who you most want to follow. We all kind of have role models, don't we? People we want to follow. But surely if you're ever going to trust a man and build your life on him and follow him, surely this is him.

And this miracle is much more relevant to us than all of that even. That's our third point, the miracle's deeper meaning. You see, we talk about blindness and we might mean someone's physically blind.

But of course we often use the term blindness in a different way. Because we might say, I can't see. And what we mean is, I don't understand that. Or I don't agree with that yet.

I can't see it for myself. And by this stage in Luke's gospel, it's become clear that the people around Jesus, they've got a massive blindness problem. That's why Luke chooses to put the blind man miracle at exactly this point.

[11 : 06] So to help us see what they're supposed to be seeing, that's why we've got these 3D glasses. Everyone should have been given one. So we're going to put them on now. If everyone does it, then you don't have to be embarrassed, you see.

You can even wear them out in public if you like. But I wouldn't advise it. So these are old school. This is what 3D glasses used to be like. And they were for pictures like that one.

I don't know whether you can see the T-Rex jumping out at you. But we're not going to use them for that. So we're going to see how sometimes you can see something, but actually you're not interpreting it right because of your understanding, because of the way you kind of interpret what you're seeing.

And I've got four questions that Jesus is answering for us today as he heals the blind man. The first one is, who is Jesus? So if you just close your left eye and watch through your right eye, or basically you're looking through the blue lens, if you can only see through one eye, look through the blue lens.

If you were in the crowd that day, what might you have seen? You might have seen Jesus is a great miracle worker and been wowed by that miracle.

[12 : 15] But if that's all you'd seen, you'd have missed what Jesus wanted you to see. So if you swap eyes and close your right eye and open your left eye, what you're seeing as Jesus performs his miracle is Jesus is God's promised rescuing king.

The blind man could see it. Son of David, have mercy on me, and we should see it too. See, already in Luke's gospel we've heard that as Jesus said about on his ministry, he went into a synagogue, and just like in church today when Katrina read, Jesus read the Bible reading from Isaiah.

It was a promise from 700 BC about what God's promised rescuing king would do, the Christ, the Messiah. And Jesus read it and he said, The spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. And then he rolls up the scroll and he sits down and everyone looks at him and he says, Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

He is the one that Isaiah had promised. So when we see a man born in David's line, giving sight to the blind, what he's proving is God's promises are true today.

[13 : 33] This is the rescuer. He's arrived. I wonder if that just helps us with another problem that you might be feeling today as we look at Luke's gospel, especially if you're a guest here, which is you might be thinking, I don't believe in miracles.

That might be understandable if you're thinking, Well, I've never seen a miracle, so I don't believe that they're possible. But it's worth saying that the whole point about Jesus' miracles is that they were unique. If we refuse to accept them because we've never seen a miracle ourselves, then we've missed the point that this was a unique moment in human history and God had promised it for thousands of years.

Now we can't prove or disprove that there's a God in a kind of scientific experiment kind of way. So we shouldn't rule out miracles as impossible. They're only impossible if there is no God and we can't be certain of that.

Now if there is a God and he wanted at a point in history to make himself known to us, we'd expect him to signpost that, to show us that this was a unique moment as he was stepping into our world.

And the message of the Bible is that that's what he's done. What we see here is two signposts to Jesus. The first is that for hundreds of years God had given messages to prophets predicting very specifically where God's promised rescuing king would be born, what he would do, what his ministry would be like, that he would die and rise again.

[14 : 55] All these things were predicted. And the second signpost that God put in history was that Jesus could attest that he was God in the flesh by doing things that only God could do.

And he did them in front of eyewitnesses so that we would have their testimony to signpost us back to this unique moment. The disciples weren't particularly gullible people, they were hardy people, but they were in a storm on a boat, terrified, and they saw Jesus speak, and it went calm.

They're on this dusty road near Jericho, they just see a blind man spoken to, and he can see. So we're not being asked to believe something out of the blue. These were the marks they'd been told to watch for for hundreds of years.

That's what God's promised king will do. Who is Jesus? The next question is, why does it matter? Again, let's just switch eyes, have a look through the right eye, the blue lens at the screen.

And what you could conclude if you see Jesus doing this is, Jesus can heal people of physical blindness. And that's historically interesting, isn't it?

[16 : 07] That a guy could cure people of physical blindness. It's historically interesting. But so what? And yet, use your other eye. Some of you will have jumped ahead, I know. But if you switch eyes, what we're meant to see here is Jesus can heal you and me of our spiritual blindness.

The most serious problem that we all have has been made very clear by now in Luke's gospel. It's that we're not good enough for God. And in chapter 18, this very chapter, he told a story to illustrate that.

He described, if I'll just read from verse 9, you might take your glasses off and look down. Verse 9 of chapter 18. To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.

And he tells the story of a man who goes in, he's a very religious man, he's devout, and he goes into the synagogue, sorry, into the temple, and he says, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers.

And he goes through his good deeds, as though because of those good deeds, God will accept me. And the problem is, the shock is, Jesus says, that man was not justified before God.

[17 : 19] He wasn't right with God. Because all of us have turned our backs on God. None of us meets his standards, even the most devoutly religious person. But the problem is, our rejection of God is so serious, it blinds us.

It blinds us to the real problem. We can't see ourselves accurately, and we can't clearly see who Jesus is. And the question for us is, are we humble enough to recognize that might be possible for us?

See, the best thing the blind man had going for him that day was he knew he was blind. So he said to Jesus, I want to see. And that's what we all have to do as well.

And so often, people will think, well, I'll look into the Christian faith, and they might look at, they might look at evidence, historical evidence, for which there is a lot. They might look at experience, they might see the power of the transformed lives around them.

But are we willing to do that actually talking to God and saying, I can't see this. Will you help me see? Because the Bible says that our sin problem is so serious, we can't see on our own.

[18 : 34] By ourselves, we can't really know God, and we don't really know ourselves deep down. That's why it really matters that Jesus can cure blindness. Because we're spiritually blind.

Let's move on to our third question. Why has Jesus come? This is where the disciples are most blind at this point. They've seen Jesus as the Messiah. They've said, you're the Christ. They got that. What they haven't got is what kind of Messiah he is.

If you look through the right eye, what they're seeing is, Jesus came in glory to bring judgment on God's enemies. The Jewish nation is under Roman rule, and they can't wait for God's king to come and fix that and vindicate them and get rid of their enemies.

They're very aware of the sin of the nations around them, but they are blind to their own sin, their own need for forgiveness from God. So they've missed, if you look through the other eye, it's not Jesus came in glory to bring judgment on God's enemies.

It's Jesus came in humility to bear the judgment for our sins. He hasn't come to bring judgment. He's come to bear judgment.

[19 : 41] Why? Because if he come first time to bring judgment, he will do that. He is going to come in judgment. But if he done that first time, there'd be none of us left. If you just look back at, in Luke's gospel, we see that very clearly in chapter 18.

That's the big message going on. You see, in verse 18, a certain ruler asked Jesus, good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And the big mistake he's made, of course, is he said, I, what must I do?

And then he thinks that he's kept all the commandments. And Jesus tells him in verse 22, sell everything you have and give it to the poor. And then you'll have treasure in heaven. And he goes away sad.

And the disciples are astonished. And in verse 26, they say, who then can be saved? Because they see that this man, who was such a pious man, can't do it on his own.

But just before that, we were introduced to a group of people who were very good at receiving gifts. The little children. Verse 15, people bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them.

[20 : 47] Jesus says, let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never receive it.

And then, just before this healing of the blind man, we hear that Jesus predicted his death in verses 31 and 32. And then in verse 34, the disciples did not understand any of this.

Its meaning was hidden from them and they did not know what he was talking about. You see, they don't get it. They don't get that on their own they can't be made right with God so they need someone to come and die for them.

And what they needed to see was that by Jesus heading into Jerusalem, he was going to die in their place and take away the penalty for everything they've done wrong. He come to bear God's judgment so that they could be forgiven.

So that brings us to our last question of the morning. Who is heaven for? Glasses back on for the last slide. If you'd been there that day, you might have been someone thinking heaven is for the religious do-gooders.

[21 : 57] And if that was the case, Jesus wouldn't have to die because religion would save you on its own. Keeping the rules, going to church, saying your prayers. It's what lots of people think all over Glasgow that the Christian faith teaches.

And it's a disaster. They think Christianity is be good and you'll get to heaven. What we all desperately need to see is through the other lens. It's heaven is for anyone who trusts in Jesus.

Because he's going to die in our place for us. And he really means anyone. That's why it's a blind man. See, earlier in Luke's gospel, Jesus told a parable about heaven. And he described it as a great banquet.

And he described how the great and the good are all invited. And they don't want to come. And so the banquet holder, who is God in the story, says, go out and find the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame and get them to come to my banquet.

You see, when Jesus heals the blind man, it's not just to show that he's powerful, though it is. It's not just to show that he can make the blind see, though he can, and we're blind. It's also to say, God is interested in anyone, no matter how insignificant society thinks they are.

[23 : 05] Even a blind man. And the same offer is open today. We just have to let go of our self-righteousness, let go of whatever good deeds we might think we can offer God.

Instead, come to the cross and ask for mercy. So will we learn this morning from the blind beggar? Can we be humble enough to accept that we need Jesus to open our eyes spiritually?

That's an ongoing process for us, whether or not we're Christians. Can we see that we're not the people we ought to be so that Jesus' mission was to come and die for us? And can we see that we're so loved by God that he gladly came to die for us?

So that when Jesus said to the blind man, what do you want me to do for you? He knew as he asked that question, the blind man couldn't ask for anything more than Jesus knew he was already doing.

As he headed into Jerusalem to be bullied and tortured and butchered to die in our place, what do you want me to do for you? And the blind man says to Jesus personally, Lord, I want to see.

[24 : 13] So however long you've been a Christian, whether or not you're a Christian, could you make that your prayer? Perhaps pray it every day. Lord, help me to see you. I want to see you. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we praise you that you have the power to give sight to the blind. We praise you that you came to die on the cross for us, a people who are blind even to our own sin, to our own need to be saved.

We thank you for opening our eyes to see that you are God's promised rescuing king. Thank you that when we see the blind man healed, we see the deeper meaning because you have opened our eyes.

And so we pray, however much of that we've seen already today, we ask that for each one of us, you will help us to see you more clearly. Lord, we want to see.

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