

Open the Eyes of My Heart

Luke 18: 31 – 43

- Could a blind beggar sitting on the side of the road see Jesus more clearly than Jesus' disciples did, or than you and I do?
 - o We would often assume that wouldn't be the case, but throughout Luke's Gospel, Jesus continually turns human assumptions upside down.
 - In the accounts leading up to our passage, Luke gives us a series of striking reversals: a tax collector finds mercy and righteousness, while a self-righteous Pharisee goes home empty handed. Helpless infants receive the kingdom of God, while the wealthy, moral, self-sufficient ruler walks away grieved and empty-handed.
- Now, in Luke 18:31–43, Luke presents another startling contrast: an unnamed blind beggar outside Jericho who sees who Jesus truly is far more clearly than the Twelve disciples who walked beside Him for three years.^{K1}
 - o Though the disciples witnessed every miracle and sermon, their expectation of a Messiah who would overthrow Rome blinded them to Jesus' clear teaching about His suffering and the cross. The truth stood before them, yet they could not see it—and the same often happens to us.
 - The darkness in the hearts of Jesus' own disciples illustrates precisely what Helen Keller meant when she observed: "Better to be blind and see with your heart, than to have two good eyes and see nothing." It is a tragic condition to have two fully functioning eyes and yet remain spiritually blind to the glory of God in Jesus Christ.^{K2}
- When you have been in church as long as I have, it is easy to assume you have seen all there is to see of Jesus. With heads full of theology and hearts filled with moral self-righteousness, we stop being amazed by grace.
 - o But rather than thinking you've seen it all, what if the eyes of your hearts were open to behold more and more of Jesus' glory and grace each day?
 - o Think of the power that would have to change your life.

1 John 3:2 we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

- o The more we behold Jesus as He truly is, the more the Spirit transforms us into His likeness. That is the goal and joy of the Christian life.
 - When you sit in church pews for years, the danger is not that we outwardly reject Jesus, but that we become numbly familiar with Him.

Luke 18:31–43 Taking the twelve, he said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. **32** For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. **33** And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise.” **34** But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. **35** As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. **36** And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. **37** They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” **38** And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” **39** And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” **40** And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. When he came near, he asked him, **41** “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” **42** And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” **43** Immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

- Let’s remind ourselves of the context that these verses fit into. In

Luke 9:51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

- o From that moment forward, Jesus leaves behind His Galilean ministry and embarks on a steady, deliberate pilgrimage toward a final Passover and the cross. For the third time, Jesus gathers the Twelve to prepare them for what awaits Him in Jerusalem (vv. 31–34).
 - He explicitly roots His coming ordeal in the sacred witness of the Old Testament: “everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished” (v. 31). Jesus points His disciples directly to Isaiah’s Suffering Servant who is crushed for our iniquities (Isa 50:6; 53:5), and to the prophetic laments of Psalm 22, which look ahead to the Messiah’s suffering on the cross.

Psalm 22: 1 – 18 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?...⁷ All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads....¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint....¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd...you lay

me in the dust of death.¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

- o Yet, verse 34 gives us a startling diagnosis of the disciples' hearts: "they understood none of these things..., and they did not grasp what was said." The Twelve, despite their physical proximity to Jesus and three years of direct doctrinal instruction, walk in complete incomprehension.
 - They are hindered by thick spiritual cataracts. They can readily see the glory of God in the bright light of Christ's miracles, but that glory is entirely obscured to their eyes when Jesus speaks of His suffering, rejection, and death. Their spiritual sight remains veiled—and will stay veiled until after the cross and resurrection, when the risen Christ opens the Scriptures on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:25–32).^{K3}
- Immediately following the spiritual blindness of the Twelve, the narrative shifts to the roadside outside Jericho (vv. 35–43), and a physically blind beggar.
 - o The connection in the narrative is profound: the physical condition of this roadside outcast mirrors the inner spiritual condition of the disciples.
 - While the Twelve stumble in the dark concerning Jesus' mission, this blind beggar perceives what the insiders have missed. Hearing that Jesus of Nazareth is passing by, he cries out relentlessly: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (v. 38).
 - o His cry to Jesus is rooted in mercy. He knows Jesus owes him nothing.
 - In his blindness he sees the truth of who Jesus is better than Jesus' disciples do. He recognizes Jesus as the long-awaited Davidic King, the one who fulfills the Messianic promises of Isaiah: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped."^{K4}
 - o When Jesus stops and asks him, "What do you want me to do for you?" the man answers simply: "Lord, let me recover my sight" (v. 41). On an earthly level, it is an understandable request.
 - If the Lord were to stand before us today and ask what we want, our immediate instinct is often to present our surface crises: relief from financial strain, stability in our careers, or healing in our bodies.

- But our deepest crisis is not circumstantial—it is the condition of our soul. Left to ourselves, we stand spiritually blind, naked, destitute before a holy God. What we need is the restoration of our sight to see our own sin and the gracious gift of Christ's forgiveness and righteousness, without which we can never enter His kingdom.
- o Jesus grants the man his request, declaring: “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well” (v. 42). The original language reveals the full redemptive weight of Christ's work: Jesus does not use the Greek word, to me iaomai merely say the man is physically healed; He uses the word sōzō to declare, “your faith has saved you.” ^{K5}
 - Luke intentionally uses the exact same word, size, spoken to the weeping woman who washed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:50) and the grateful Samaritan leper (Luke 17:19).
- o The opening of the blind man's physical eyes is the outward sign of a complete spiritual deliverance. This beggar is rescued from darkness, justified by grace, and brought into joyful discipleship along the way.
- So spiritual sight is not an intellectual achievement, an earned reward, or a moral merit badge. **It is an unmerited gift of sovereign mercy from the God who stoops to give sight to those living in darkness.**
- But now think of the contrast that is painted for us in this text.
- The tragedy is this drama isn't the blind man it is the twelve disciples, as Jesus tells them in plain, unmistakable language what lies ahead. He is going to be delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, flogged, killed, and on the third day rise again. The roadmap of redemption could not be stated more clearly.
- o Yet notice Luke's astonishing assessment: "They understood none of these things...., and they did not grasp what was said" (Luke 18:34).
- o The disciples possessed perfect twenty-twenty physical vision, but the eyes of their heart were blind. Why?
 - Their theology of glory fixed their hearts on an earthly kingdom—power, prestige, and a king who would defeat Rome—not a suffering servant crucified by Rome. Thus, they could not grasp the cross.

- o The crowd has the same blindness. When the beggar cries for mercy, they rebuke him, blind to divine mercy walking among them to seek the broken.
- It is tempting to look at how blind the disciples were and how uncaring the crowd was, but we suffer from the very same lack of spiritual sight.
 - o When we look at our lives, we routinely focus on a problem and treat Jesus as a cosmic consultant or a circumstantial handyman.
 - When Jesus asks us what we would like him to do for us, we come to Him with a catalog of grievances: stressful jobs, difficult marriages, rebellious kids, financial headaches, or difficult bosses.
 - We live in a persistent fantasy world that assumes everybody else is the issue, and if Jesus would just fix *them*, our lives would finally be grand. We view Jesus as someone who exists to manage our circumstances rather than someone who came to redeem our souls.
 - We are functionally blind to the real diagnosis: the problem is not outside of us; the problem is inside of us. The disease of self runs through our own blood. We do not merely need a life adjustment, a few tips on anger management, or a circumstantial tune-up. We need a comprehensive salvation. But because we are so blind to our true condition, we are unable to see Jesus for all that He came to be.
- The root cause of our tragic blindness is the same as the disciples, our pride.^{K6}
 - o We want Jesus on our terms. So, we often sit in the director's chair telling the King of Glory how to handle our problems. When you worship Control, your life is marked by chronic anxiety and irritability whenever circumstances slip from your grasp or people refuse to follow your script.
 - o In our pride, we don't want to cry out for mercy because we don't want people to see the truth about how much grace we need. So rather than admitting that we are the problem we are instead constantly defensive, and terrified that someone will pull back the curtain and see our flaws.
 - **Pride blinds us to our need, cutting us off from spiritual sight.**
- Look at the blind beggar by contrast. He had no image left to protect and was completely immune to the idol of reputation. Everyone knew

he was sitting in the dirt, which gave him total freedom to cry out at the top of his lungs, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" His desperation shattered the very pride that kept everyone else in the dark.^{K7}

- o As long as we demand that Jesus conform to our personal agenda, disillusionment is inevitable.
- o Look again at the disciples. Because the eyes of their hearts were blind regarding Christ's suffering, they became crippled with despair that overwhelmed them when Jesus was nailed to a Roman cross. Rather than pulling up chairs outside the tomb on Easter Sunday morning in confident expectation of the resurrection He promised, where were they? They were huddled behind locked doors, cowering in terror and disillusionment.
- o The same tragedy unfolds in our lives today. When you refuse to trust Jesus as the Sovereign King who has absolute authority to expose and heal what is truly wrong with you, fear takes the wheel. You spend your life walking on eggshells, terrified of what others might think or do to you. Sin continues to exercise its tyrannical mastery over your heart, precisely because your pride refuses to ask Jesus to take mastery over you.
 - Without the humble vulnerability to pray the words of Psalm 139:23–24—"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"—the eyes of our hearts remain in darkness.
- If you never see the desperate depth of your sin, you will never see the radiant greatness of your Savior. And without beholding the glory of that Savior, you cannot be transformed into His likeness.^{K8}
 - o Nothing will change in our lives until we see the truth of our own sinfulness. But left to ourselves, it is entirely impossible to see the truth about our own condition.

Jeremiah 17: 9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

- Imagine having an aggressive spot of skin cancer dead in the center of your back. Would you ever be able to see it on your own? Never. You have a physical blind spot. And even if you caught a glimpse of it in a mirror, and even if you happened to be a world-renowned dermatologist, could you perform the surgical excision on your own.

- That is the reality of our sin. We are plagued by blind spots; powerless to operate on our own deceitful hearts. Until the Spirit of God gives us the spiritual sight to see that we are the problem, and gives us humility to cry out for mercy, we remain helpless in the dark.
- Because we cannot see the truth about ourselves, we stand in desperate need of rescue. Left to our own resources, we are trapped in the pervasive darkness of self-deception and spiritual blindness.
- And that is where Jesus comes to our rescue.
 - o In verse 40, Luke records a simple sentence that ought to stop our breath: "And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him."
 - o Think about what is happening in those words. The sovereign King of glory is walking resolutely toward Jerusalem. He is on a cosmic mission to accomplish eternal redemption, marching consciously toward the cross.^{K9}
 - The weight of the world is on His shoulders. Yet, as the commotion of the Passover pilgrims surges around Him, Jesus stops. Why? Because through the noise of the crowd, He hears the desperate cry of a blind outcast sitting in the dirt. The sovereign King pauses His journey to grant an impoverished beggar mercy, eternal salvation, and true spiritual sight. And He does the very same thing for you and me.
- Consider the depth of what Christ is revealing here about His kingdom. Jesus is the true and greater Son of David.
 - o Centuries earlier, when King David conquered Jerusalem to establish his royal capital, a proverb arose among the people: "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house" (2 Samuel 5:8). Under the old order, the broken, the blemished, and the blind were barred from the courts of the royal palace. They were excluded from the presence of the king.
 - o When the blind beggar cries out in Jericho, the crowd acts according to that old instinct: they silence him, telling him he has no business interrupting important people. But Jesus, David's greater Son, shatters that exclusion. He does not shut the blind out of the palace; He stops on the dusty highway, commands the outcast to be brought into His presence, and restores him to the royal household of God.

- How can Jesus do this? How can a holy God welcome spiritually blind rebels into His royal presence? It is not by overlooking our rebellion or waving away our condition. It is through the profound reality of substitutionary atonement.
 - o Look at how Jesus describes what awaits Him in Jerusalem in verses 31 through 33: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."
 - o Jesus is not describing a tragic political accident or an unforeseen martyr's death. He is describing the deliberate, voluntary sacrifice of the sinless Substitute. He is taking your place and my place.
 - o We are the ones who deserved to be handed over to judgment. It is our persistent lawbreaking and proud self-reliance that deserved the scourging. Because we closed our eyes to God's holiness and chose the darkness of our own autonomy, we are the ones who deserved to be permanently cut off and cast into the outer darkness of divine judgment.
 - o But at the cross, instead of us being cutoff and cast out, the sinless Son of Man stepped into the prisoner's dock for you. He willingly surrendered His body to absorb the mockery, the spit, the whip, and the curse due to your blind rebellion. When Jesus hung upon the cross at Calvary, a terrifying, supernatural darkness covered the land at midday. In that darkness, the Father poured out the judgment our sins deserved upon His beloved Son.
- Jesus took your blindness, your guilt, and your judgment upon Himself so that you could receive His righteousness, and acceptance.^{K10} The darkness swallowed Him whole so that the light of divine mercy could dawn upon you forever.
- The Gospel dismantles our self-righteousness by revealing the plain truth: we are all spiritually blind beggars, entirely helpless to open our own eyes.
 - o No amount of theological information, moral refinement, or religious heritage can cure the cataract of the human heart. It is only when we cast aside our pride and cry out for undeserved mercy that Christ freely gives us His illumination. Because of this, the cross levels the playing field.

- The Twelve had walked with Jesus for three years yet remained blind to the cross. Meanwhile, a destitute blind beggar cries out for mercy that only the cross can give, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
- o At the foot of the cross, the ground is completely level. The devoted apostle and the roadside beggar stand on the exact same footing. Both must receive spiritual sight as an unearned gift of sovereign grace.^{K11}
- The King who stopped on the Jericho road has taken your darkness, suffered your penalty, and freely opened your eyes to behold the unsearchable riches of His grace and love.
- Rather than assuming you have already seen all there is to see of Jesus, what if you were enabled to behold more and more of His glory and grace each day?
- o You can but think of what will be involved in seeing more of Jesus’ grace. You first have to see your need for grace, which means the eyes of your heart have to be opened to see more of your sin.
 - In heaven, as we gather around the throne of Jesus, the eyes of our hearts will be fully opened and each of us will see first how great a sinner we truly are, and how great a savior we truly have. As we see that, we will join everyone else in unreserved worship the Lamb of God slain for our sin. To see more of Jesus’ grace and glory in this life, ask Jesus to open the eyes of your heart to see the depths of your sin.
 - So often, we treat our sin like a minor cosmetic blemish—a small mole on an otherwise healthy soul that we can conceal with good manners and moral effort. Rather than minimizing our brokenness, what if we were willing to see the truth? That our spiritual condition outside of Christ is not a superficial flaw, but a fatal blindness that is only cured by the grace of Christ.
- That is the opportunity before us. When we stop pretending that we are not the problem, and instead, acknowledge that we are blind beggars sitting in the dust, our hearts are prepared to receive true spiritual sight.
- o Look at the transformation recorded in Luke 18:43: *“And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.”*
 - Notice the man’s response the moment Jesus opens his eyes. He does not turn around and begin bargaining with Jesus. He

does not grumble down the road out of a heavy sense of religious obligation, sighing, *"Well, Jesus healed me, so now I am stuck following Him."*

- Oh no, as he looks full into the wonderful face of Jesus his soul is utterly captivated by the beauty, kindness, and mercy of the Son of David. His following is the spontaneous, joyful overflow of a beggar who has been completely delivered.^{K12}
- Because he has received spiritual sight to behold the Savior, following Jesus isn't a burden. His life becomes a living hymn of praise that turns the heads of the crowd, prompting everyone around him to give glory to God.
- What does having the eyes of our hearts look like in the ordinary rhythms of our lives? Because we are beholding more and more of Jesus and his grace in our own lives, we become a conduit of that grace in the way we walk through marriage, parenting, the workplace, and everyday relationships.
 - o Consider how we typically respond to relational friction. In the Old Way of the flesh, we are blind to our own self-righteousness. We instinctively treat our spouse, our children, or our coworkers as the entire problem. We immediately assume the role of the judge, going to God in prayer only to instruct Him on how He ought to fix everyone else.
 - o In view of God's grace, the Holy Spirit empowers us to walk in a radically New Way. Because our standing and justification are already secure in Christ, which enables us to lay down our weapons and release our defensiveness. We no longer need to protect our record or blame-shift to survive, because Christ is our defense.
 - o Instead of managing everyone else's flaws, we can come to Jesus and pray: *"Lord, open my eyes to see my own hidden pride. Show me where I have been blind to my harshness and self-will, so that I may receive fresh mercy and extend that very same patience to others."* Coming as a forgiven beggar transforms our relationships from defensive battlegrounds into displays of redeeming grace.
- When we come to Him with empty hands, resting in His finished work, Jesus gives us spiritual sight to behold His beauty—freeing us to follow Him with joy.
 - o Helen Keller was right: it is far better to be blind and see with your heart than to have two good eyes and see nothing. Listen to

how the Apostle Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus. This is my prayer for each of us.

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

- o As we come to the Lord's Table, that true spiritual sight comes into sharp, breathtaking focus. In the broken bread and the poured-out cup, we behold both the staggering weight of our sin and the astonishing love of God in offering His own Son.
- o As the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see our sin and the glory and sacrifice of Jesus, we are changed. Again, listen to what Paul writes in:

2 Corinthians 3:18 beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- When your sin brings you to the cross and you look into the face of Jesus, who loved you and gave his life for you, you are bit by bit more and more transformed into his glorious image.
- This Table reveals to our hearts the astonishing truth of the great exchange: Jesus embraced the ultimate darkness of the cross so that we could be brought into His marvelous light. Because He was stripped, spit upon, and delivered over to judgment, we are clothed in His righteousness, welcomed into the Father's house, and granted sight.
- Through faith alone, we have received this unmerited deliverance. In view of such love, we now get to rise and follow Jesus along the way. Our lives become a joyful, ongoing sacrifice of praise that points a watching world to the fullness of His lavish grace.
- This morning, that same grace is held out for you. Whether you have sat in church pews for fifty years or you are here today wondering if God even notices you, this gift is for you. Do not let pride keep you sitting in the dust on the side of the road, pretending you have your own way forward.
- Turn your eyes upon Jesus and behold daily the great salvation that saves great sinners.