

Luke 18:31-43

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[0 : 00] Indeed, thanks be to God for the reading and the hearing of his word, and may we be responsive to what God says.

Father, we love you and we thank you for this morning where we can be in the midst of your people and for your presence with us. Blessed be your name. May our ears, our hearts, our eyes be open that we might see beholding wonderful things from your law.

Blessed be your name. Amen. It was six men of Indistan to learning much inclined who went to see the elephant, though all of them were blind.

That each by observation might satisfy his mind. The first approached the elephant and happening to fall against his broad and sturdy side at once began to bawl.

God bless me, but the elephant is very like a wall. The second feeling the tusk cried, Oh, what have we here?

[1 : 18] So very round and smooth and sharp to me, it is mighty clear that this wonder of an elephant is very like a spear.

The third approached the animal and happening to take the squirming trunk within his hands, thus boldly up and spake. I see, quote, he the elephant is very like a snake.

The fourth reached out his eager hand and felt about the knee. What most this wondrous beast is like is mighty plain, quote he. It is clear enough the elephant is very like a tree.

The fifth who chanced to touch the ear said, Even the blind man, the blindest man, can tell what this resembles most. Most deny the fact who can. This marvel of an elephant is very like a fan.

The six no sooner had begun about the beast to grope than seizing on the swinging tail that felt within his scope. I see, quote he, the elephant is very like a rope.

[2 : 31] And so these men of Indistan disputed loud and long, each in his own opinion exceeding stiff and strong, though each was partly in the right, and all of them were wrong.

From the six blind men of Indistan of yesteryear, we come to twelve blind men on the road to Jerusalem.

Twelve men who were still not sure what to make of Jesus. That was their condition.

That was their situation. There they are. We see them, don't we, in verses 31 through 34. The first of two scenes within our text today.

The header for these verses, twelve men in darkness on the road to Jerusalem. Is that Jesus was calling a team huddle.

[3 : 46] He's meeting the twelve men who are the closest to him. His handpicked leadership team, if you will. They had heard his words.

They had seen his works. They shared his ministry. And here we have them in private. Once again, he is giving them inside information.

You see that there? He takes the twelve. And notice what he tells them. See, we're going up to Jerusalem. And everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

That's what he shares with them. Their destination, where they're going. They're going to Jerusalem. And at a literary level, we've seen that this trajectory has been established beginning in chapter 9 and verse 51.

And guess what, friends? They are almost there. Not very far from Jerusalem, where Jesus will meet his preordained fate, designed and ordained by God himself.

[4 : 54] Not only did Jesus rehearse where they were going, that is, to Jerusalem. He let them know what would take place once they got there.

Notice, everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. Last part of verse 31.

Here's the deal. Prophetic writings had recorded the destiny of this unique God-appointed servant who would serve God's purposes on behalf of his people and ultimately on behalf of the world.

Jesus saw himself as that God-appointed person. And he referred to himself as the Son of Man. If you look in the Synoptic Gospels, you would see that that particular term, it was a self-designation of Jesus used between 80 and 90 times in a reference for himself.

This connected him to his earthly ministry and mission. His mission to serve the purposes of God. The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost.

[6 : 08] Chapter 19 and verse 10. It connected him to his suffering, but it also connected him to his future glory. And Jesus spoke of the very harsh treatment and pain that was in store for him.

Mistreatment at the hands of the dominant Gentile power of that day. Mistreatment that included shame and ridicule and excruciating pain and ultimately death and then resurrection.

These things had been recorded in the prophetic writings of Scripture. We say, well, Pastor, what might some of those passages have been?

We don't have time to turn to them, but take a note of some of them. Psalm 2. Psalm 2 spoke of the plotting and the raging of worldly rulers against the Lord and his Christ.

Why did the heathen rage? The people imagined a vain thing. They lifted up their voices and their wills against the Lord and against his Christ.

[7 : 19] Listen to what Isaiah 50 and verse 6 says. I give my back to those who strike and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard.

I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. Prophetic writings told about the destiny, the fate of the Son of Man.

And of course, as we look in Isaiah, those great servant passages beginning in chapter 42. But then in chapter 52, verse 12 through chapter 53, verse 52, 13 to 53, 12, it speaks of this one known as the suffering servant.

That particularly is what is in view. One who would be mistreated, who would be an object of shame and ridicule and cruelty.

But friends, this was not for deeds that he himself had done. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.

[8 : 25] The chastisement of our peace was upon him. And with his stripes, with his wounds, friends, we are healed. And of course, there's Psalm 16, verse 10, that speaks of one not being left to the corruption of the grave.

Friends, the cross was not accidental. It was purposeful and it was a part of God's eternal plan. And as Jesus here for the third major time in this gospel, he's sharing with them, we're going to Jerusalem.

And this is what's going to happen once we get there. They were meant to prepare them for the inevitable.

But guess what? They were not there yet. Couldn't grasp it. Though again, the third time it was mentioned, they did not grasp, did not understand what he was saying.

Twelve blind men on the road to Jerusalem. They couldn't make sense. Listen, friends. They were hearing with their ears.

[9 : 42] Huh? But hearing with the ears and being able to distinguish words, even with the intellect, is no guarantee that we're going to understand those things in our hearts.

The disciples clearly demonstrate that. And they would remain in the dark all the way through the crucifixion and through the resurrection until Jesus opened their minds, Luke chapter 24, that they might understand the scriptures about him.

Huh? Huh? doesn't what we see here sober us? We don't want to be disciples, followers of Christ, who remain in some way in the dark.

Were the disciples, 12 of them, and the nation as a whole looking for a blaze of kingdom glory that in some way would reverse their national fortunes?

Such blind notions had them rather blind to the kingdom realities that were actually before their very eyes. The kingdom of God, Jesus has said, is in your midst, it's calm, it's near, in the person and in the work of the king himself.

[11 : 08] The experience of the disciples that we see in the text should prompt our prayers. Lord, don't let me miss what you're saying and what you're doing.

Lord, help me to listen to you well and beyond my listening. Help me not with my preconceived ideas and preferred notions.

Don't let them get in the way of my seeing you. Help me not to be blinded by my desires, my dreams, and my visions.

Help me not to misinterpret or reinterpret your words. Oh, I love William Cooper. Blind belief is sure to err and scan his work in vain.

God is his own interpreter. And he will make it plain. Isn't it amazing the hiddenness of the gospel?

[12 : 13] How the Lord has chosen to rescue his people? The deliverer, Jesus, would be delivered over. The one who had lifted others from shame would himself be shamed.

The one who raised others from death himself would die. Humanly speaking, friends, it doesn't compute.

They could not grasp the meaning of this. And Mark noted in his gospel that Peter even rebuked him. Rebuked Jesus when he was told of these things.

And Jesus had a word for him, too. Didn't he? Get behind me, Satan. You're not concerning yourself with the things of God. You're concerned with the things of men.

Oh, how strange are his ways. But the others were similarly disposed. They couldn't see it.

[13 : 20] The blindness of these 12 men in the gospel at this juncture. It mirrored the blindness of the nation. The nation, their blindness to the scriptures.

Their blindness to understanding what God had actually said that would indeed happen. And here it was in living color in the person and the work of Jesus.

And they still missed it. Even those who were closest to him were still in the midst of darkness.

We leave verse 34 with a measure of unresolved tension. Look at there. They understood none of these things.

The saying was hidden from them. And they did not grasp what was said. Oh, three things, isn't it?

[14 : 19] They didn't understand. Things were hidden. They couldn't grasp hold of what was being said. Tension when we leave the verse, but yet the journey to Jerusalem continued.

Two scenes in the text. Twelve seeing men in spiritual darkness. And now we shift to one blind man who had 20-20 spiritual vision, if you will.

Can I ask you this morning? How's your vision? I know some of us have glasses that we can see. And some of y'all got those, what do you call those things?

Those lenses? Contacts. Yeah. Some of y'all, you can't see very well, but nobody knows it, huh?

You can tell. Oh, my son came in my home with a friend on yesterday.

And I know this young man. I was on the treadmill. And I was wondering, who's this coming in? I don't have my glasses. I saw him. But I didn't see him. How's your vision?

[15 : 34] Are you seeing? But are you really, really seeing? Are you grasping? Are you understanding?

Is your seeing Jesus sort of like the six men of understand? He feels like this, this. No, no, it's clear. Scripture lets us know who he is.

And it has to come together. Huh? Who do men say that I am? Was the question. Ah, Lord, some say you're this.

Some say you're that. Some's the other. Oh, but who do you say? Oh, and in a moment of clear vision by the Holy Spirit. And that's how clear vision comes.

Peter says, you're the Christ of God. Huh? Oh, but Jesus went on to explain what that meant. And the same one that says you're the Christ began to rebuke him.

[16 : 32] Huh? Well, I guess momentary vision is good. Better than none at all. Huh? Huh? Seen one, 12 men in darkness on the road to Jerusalem.

Seen two, one blind man seeing on the road to Jericho. Huh? Look at verse 35, if you will. And as he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside.

And he's begging. Hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. Huh? We go from one situation of blindness to another, don't we not?

Huh? Jesus and his disciples, they're on the way to Jerusalem. Jerusalem. They're traveling south. And they're getting close to Jericho. About 15 or so miles from Jericho to Jerusalem.

And there he sat. Hmm? Physically, the man cannot see. He is sightless. Huh? But yet he sits.

[17 : 36] Huh? Huh? Maybe someone that on that very day had brought him to his regular place. Well, he would go and seek support for his livelihood.

Huh? People recognize him. And Mark, he calls him Bartimaeus. He's the son of Timaeus. Huh? People recognized him, no doubt, just like we recognize some of the people that we see.

Like the man that sits at Plymouth and Jackson. As you go eastward on Jackson, he's on the side of the street. He's right there by Garrett's Popcorn.

Recognize him. And he sits and he maintains himself on the kindnesses of those who will give him. Or the man, and some of you have seen him. 57th and Lakeshore Drive.

Huh? You see him, you know him. And perhaps this man in our text had this spot where he sat. Seeking the support of generous people.

[18 : 44] Begging is how the blind man sustained himself. He lived off of the merciful almsgiving of the people of that day. Huh?

But verse 36 says something, doesn't it? Though this man could not see, hearing was not a problem with him. Huh? Because on that particular day, he's heard some excess foot traffic moving in the area.

Huh? Nothing's wrong with this hearing. Huh? His ears told him, hey, there's something happening here that is unusual. What's going on was his question.

And the answer came back, didn't it? Notice what he says. Verse 4 said, they told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

Jesus, the Nazarene. Huh? He's passing by. Huh? Oh, Jesus? Jesus? The one, the prophet who's mighty in word and deed?

[19 : 47] Yeah. That's him. Huh? Jesus, the one who hangs out with those who are considered throwaway people? Yeah. That's him. Huh?

The one who has a reputation for ministering to the marginalized? Yeah. That's him. Huh? The one who challenges the religious status quo? Yeah.

Same one. Huh? The one who, according to Luke chapter 4, verse 18, has been anointed by the Spirit to proclaim good news to the poor?

To proclaim liberty to captives? And guess what else? The recovering of sight to the blind. Same word. Luke 4, 18, that we see here.

Recovering of sight. Yeah, that's him. And he was passing by. Ah. Huh. Huh. There he goes. He's here. And when Jesus is in the neighborhood, it's a good deal, isn't it?

[20 : 49] Huh? Jesus, son of David. Have mercy on me. Have pity on me. Have compassion on me. Ah, here he is. Notice. Did you notice how he called him or addressed him?

The blind man was using a messianic title for the one that they were looking to restore the glory of yesteryear.

Someone who would rule justly. Someone who would rule fairly. Someone who would rule powerfully from the throne of David. Huh? He would be a descendant of the greatest Israelite king of all.

Under whose reign the nation experienced a level of national grandeur that went on into the realm of David's son Solomon.

The golden years. And through the use of this particular title, the one who uttered it expressed faith in the one. Who was a restorer.

[21 : 53] Huh? Faith in the one who was a restorer. Huh? Faith in the one who would be a redeemer. Huh? One who fit the profile of David's descendant.

Huh? Huh? Oh, but something was different. David would come in with blazing glory. Huh? He was mighty.

He was a man of war. Oh, but here you have one who was a man of sorrows. What a name. Huh? Here was one through humiliation would ultimately conquer through giving himself over to death.

Oh, but still he bore the name and the title. Here indeed was the greater son of David. The person of Jesus Christ. And no doubt the blind man had heard of the ministry and the might of the king.

How this one was a healer. One who was sensitive to the oppressed. One who met people at the point of their needs. One who was known for both might and mercy.

[23 : 01] And he was in the neighborhood. He was passing by that day. So how could he not lift up his voice and call him?

And seek him for what he had a reputation for. That included opening the eyes of the blind. Luke recorded this in Luke chapter 7 verses 21 through 23.

And in that hour Jesus healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirit. And on many who were blind. He bestowed sight.

And so Jesus answered them. Hey, go tell John. What you've seen and heard. And here it is again. The blind receive the sight.

The lame walk. Lepers are cleansed. And the deaf hear. The deaf are raised. The poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who doesn't stumble over me.

[23 : 58] Who's not offended in me. Huh? And even today. Are you offended because Jesus doesn't jump or dance by your music or think your thoughts?

Isaiah 55 says that his thoughts are higher than your thoughts. His ways are higher than our ways. How do you see him?

Scripture's profile of Jesus is the one that we, you and I, need to embrace. What, Jesus, are you embracing here today?

The leaders. Did you notice Jesus is passing by? Ah, the man is calling. But those in front of the pack, they had something else in mind.

Those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. And thus he cried out all the more, son of David. Have mercy on me. This man would not be silenced.

[25 : 04] Called him a second time. And if need be, probably would have called him a third time. Son of David, have mercy. So Jesus, he got Jesus' attention. Notice what Jesus does. Wow.

He stops. Verse 40, commands him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, what do you want me to do for you?

Jesus stops, gives him his attention. Huh? I want to see again. Huh? I want to recover my sight. Huh? His request. And listen to me. Was one for one of. Recovery. Yeah.

One of recovery. In particular, yes, recovery of sight, according to the word that's used. But what is implied in recovery is that something has been, at one time, this man was able to see.

[26 : 10] But here he wasn't, huh? No longer the case. A major loss. A major loss in life. A major loss in life. A major loss in life. Whether it's sight or other kinds of situations can mean the trajectory, a change of trajectory for one's entire life.

It can never be the same again. Huh? His request to Jesus was for recovery. So you say, what's needed for recovery?

First of all, the admission that something was lost. Huh? So I asked her this morning. What needs recovery in your life? Huh? If it were a blank that were there, how would you feel that in?

Huh? Have you lost your way? Huh? Or your respect? Or your purity?

Huh? Or a broken relationship? Or maybe you've just sort of lost your reputation. Huh? Few bad decisions that you've made along the way.

[27 : 22] Listen, friends. Jesus is in the recovery business. And recovery can begin for you today with a simple request.

What would you ask him for? Huh? And the Lord granted his request and added the great words that we find at the end of verse 42. You see them there? Recover your sight.

Your faith has made you well. Huh? Your faith, huh? Has saved you is another way of putting it. Huh? Huh? It's another way to render that particular sentence.

Your faith in Jesus prompted you to call. Your belief in him as the son of David prompted you to believe. Huh?

And to receive. Huh? Just what a scripture said that God would do. Huh? Here's one of the God to the rescue passages in scripture.

[28 : 21] Say to those who are anxious, heart, be strong and fear not. Behold, your God will come. Huh? He will come with vengeance, with recompense of God. He will come and save you.

Huh? The eyes of the blind shall be open and the ears of the deaf unstop. Isaiah 35, 4 and 5. What follows, friends, is noteworthy.

And I'm about through. His sight is recovered. He follows Jesus and gives God the praise. You see that there? Huh? Immediately he recovered his sight and followed him glorifying God, who was ultimately at work in and through his son.

And all the people, when they saw it, give praise to God. Huh? God gets the praise. And the people get in on it, recognizing the hand of God in the matter and give him the praise.

Huh? Ah, here we have it. Listen to this. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to face the challenge of his life.

[29 : 30] But he had time to stop and hear a cry of mercy from one who needed him, met him at the point of his need. We see the prominence of faith in all of this.

So I ask you again today, how's your vision? How clearly do you see him and understand him? Following Jesus fully requires that you and I see him as he is revealed in Scripture. Following Jesus fully requires, demands that you and I see him as he is revealed in Scripture.

If you want 20-20 spiritual vision, it demands that we see Jesus as he is revealed. What scene do you most identify with?

Verses 31-34 or verses 35-43? How's your vision? Jesus specializes in the recovery of sight.

[30 : 40] Recognize him here. He's in the recovery business. Huh? And your faith in him will make you well, will make you whole. Two scenes.

Twelve men in the dark. One man in the light. Those who see are those who place their faith in Jesus. Some of us need sight.

Some need total restoration. Others need a brand new prescription here today. Regardless of what particular way that you need him as far as vision.

If you're in the dark. Why don't you crowd to him for clarity of sight? If you're in the dark. If you're in the dark. Cloudy in your perception of him.

He can help you to see through the pages of Scripture. If you have eyes to see, then you can allow your lips to sing. Like we're going to do in a few minutes.

[31 : 40] Of what God has done. We can praise him because eyes are open. Are there continually being open? Huh? Each of us has room to growth in our sight and our understanding of him.

May God give that to each and every one of us today. Is my prayer. So, Father, we worship you.

And we give you praise. And thanksgiving.

For this text and it sings. Do open the eyes of our heart as we've prayed already today. Help us, Lord, to see more clearly.

You know, those who need recovery. In various ways, shapes, and forms. My prayer this morning. Is that that would begin.

Or that would continue. Even today. I commend us, ourselves, to you. All of us. We come to you.

[32 : 42] Blessed be your name. Amen.