

John: The Word Became Flesh - John 12:36-50

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[0 : 00] I have been blessed with a gift of poor eyesight, where corrective lenses are very much required. The staff gets a good kick when I have to read something up close, and if I were to take my glasses off, the paper would have to be this close to see anything.

And one time my wife and I were snorkeling, and there was a reef and some pretty fish and beautiful colors as you would imagine, and the difficulty is I don't have corrective lenses as far as contacts.

And so, glasses would let water into the eyes from the goggles, and so, and the goggles that I was wearing were not prescription, and so I could basically see nothing.

Just a big blur of some color and dark in blue. That's about the extent of which I could see. So, I just went for a swim in the ocean while everyone else enjoyed all that they could see, and that was my snorkeling experience.

But today we're going to look at the person of Christ, and Jesus has been portraying an accurate picture of God the Father and who he is as the Messiah the whole time, but people couldn't see him.

[1 : 19] It's as if they needed corrective lenses to see. They could not see him clearly for who he is, no matter what he did. And just a few chapters ago, if you're new with this, we've been walking through the Gospel of John, and today we're going to look at John chapter 12.

We're going to look at verse 36b specifically. We're going to start there, so if you have a copy of your scripture, you can turn there. But I want us to bring us up to this point. Just two chapters earlier, Jesus was the crown jewel of all of his miracles as he raised Lazarus from the dead. But people did not embrace him, did not believe in him as who he is. But there are few who do. Mary anoints Jesus' feet with her hair and this pure gnar that she anoints Jesus with this lavish gift. And then later we see there's Jesus rides into Jerusalem for the very last time, this triumphal entry. Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. But they're looking for a cultural and political revolution.

Some are, and they're disbelieving that this is indeed the Messiah. So we're going to look today at an interesting passage because today's passage in the Gospel of John is the last message, last words that he has to say to the Jews, to the Greek, to the outside unbelieving world who have not yet embraced him as Messiah, as the Christ, as the one who will die for sin.

[2 : 59] They have not believed in him in that way. After this are concluding verses of today's message. After chapter 12, verse 13 opens and now he's going to spend the rest of the time speaking to his disciples.

But this is his last message to the world. These are his last words that are recorded in the Gospel of John. From this point forward he's going to spend time with his disciples.

And he's going to share with them what they need to see him clearly. And they're going to need three things we're going to find today. They're going to need eyes to see him.

They're going to need light and they're going to need life. Eyes to see. They're going to need light and they're going to lead life. So let's look at the eyes to see that they need.

If you want to read with me the text for today, we're going to read verses 36b and 4 through 41. This is what the word of the Lord says. While 36b, when Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them, though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him.

[4 : 17] So that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. Lord, who has believed what he heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

Therefore they could not believe. And Isaiah said, He has blinded the eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart, and turn and I will heal them. Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. In verses, there's an implicit question in the text that we just read.

And the implicit question is, why did the Jews not believe in Jesus? And using passages in Isaiah, verses 38 and verse 40, Isaiah is asked this question in the midst of one of the greatest passages on Christ's suffering, found in Isaiah 53.

And I believe we'll have it on the screen if you want to read this with me. He's asking this question, why did the Jews not believe in Jesus? And Isaiah is going to give us the account that Isaiah writes of the sacrifice and the salvation of God through the person of Christ, performed on the cross, the suffering service, the substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

[5 : 51] And if we want to read Isaiah 53, verse 1 is what John is quoting in verse 38. So let's read Isaiah 53, verse 1 is what John is quoting in our text today in verse 38.

So let's read Isaiah 53 together, starting in verse 1. Who has believed what he has heard from us and whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed, for he grew up before him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no form or majesty that we should look at him and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, and as one from whom men hide their face, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our grief and he carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, and upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace.

And with his wounds we are healed, and all we like sheep have gone astray, and we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord has laid upon him the iniquity of us all.

[7 : 08] This beautiful passage begins with the question, who has believed what he has heard from us? Who has understood this message of a suffering Messiah who was pierced for sin and crushed for iniquities?

Who has understood the display of the power of God? And sadly the answer is a rhetorical one, it's no one. The people Isaiah was writing to had rejected the Messiah, they had despised him, they would consider him cursed, for he did not have eyes to see.

The people of Israel did not have the eyes to see a suffering Messiah. And this is precisely what we see throughout John's Gospel as we have walked out this year.

They wanted a Messiah with some flash, they wanted a Messiah that would feed them whenever they were hungry, they wanted a Messiah that would be king immediately, the kind of Messiah that would bend to their will.

One who would bring about a cultural and political revolution, send Rome packing and reclaim the land that God had given them. They could not accept a Savior who talked about suffering and dying.

[8 : 24] What kind of a Savior is that? They could not perceive that this is how one would receive glory, is to suffer and to die. The unbelief of the Jews did not take God by surprise any more than your unbelief takes God by surprise.

Jesus was not taking inventory at the end of his life. He was not taking inventory thinking, oh, you know, if I had just performed a few more miracles up in Galilee, that they would have believed.

He was not taking inventory thinking, oh, if I just had preached a few shorter sermons. Then folks would recognize me for who I am. No, he was not surprised when people were rejecting him.

Isaiah prophesied such that people would reject Christ, and so they did. They did not have eyes to see what Isaiah saw.

They did not have sight, the kind that only God can give, that Isaiah had, and he saw the glories of Jesus, and he spoke about him.

[9 : 30] John further writes in Isaiah, he quotes from Isaiah 6. And Isaiah 6 is given this amazing vision of God's glory, and there is perhaps no more sublime portrait of the exalted Christ than is found in Isaiah 6.

Isaiah 6 reads this, if you want to follow along, I think it's on the screen. In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon the throne high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple.

Above him stood Seraphim, each had six wings, and two they covered his face, and two they covered their feet, and with two he flew. And the other called, and the one called to the other and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.

And the foundations and the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke, and I said, woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of the people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

And here in Isaiah 41, we find why Isaiah wrote these things. He says, Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and he spoke of him.

[10:54] He saw his glory and Isaiah spoke of him. And when Isaiah saw this exalted view of Christ, the same exalted, sublime, mouth wide open awe of the exalted Christ in Isaiah 6, the same glory that is displayed here in John of the suffering of the despised and rejected Messiah.

I perceive that most of us know glory when we see it. I'm a little bit of a gym rat. I grew up playing sports, and so I like a full arena or a full gym when an underdog team defeats the favored team and the slimmest of margins, and the gym is just electric.

I love that, and there is a glory to that. And it's like when a healthy baby is born to a long-expecting mother. Oh, and couple that are, there's a glory to that.

And then when you smash your sales quota over your other corporate rivals, there's a, there's a, there's a glory to that. When you ace an exam that you studied hard for, oh, there's a glory for that. Securing a coveted role and a play, oh, there's a glory to that. We know glory when we see it. And if not careful, we may impose this illegitimate form of glory and understanding of glory on the, as the only category for glory.

[12:33] Strong, invincible, untouchable, unapproachable would be the words, but according to Isaiah, we see Jesus clearly. We need to see what Isaiah saw, this awesome, unapproachable glory of God, and it was displayed in the humiliation and the agony of Christ on the cross.

Oh, the glory therein lies. If we want to see the glory of Jesus, we must first see it there, or we will never see it at all.

Do you have eyes to see the glory of Christ displayed on the cross, seeing Him crucified, later risen for sin?

On the cross, what do you see? For the Jews, they all saw Jesus and it was shameful and embarrassing that He was be crucified. For the Greeks and the Romans, they saw it was offensive to their intellect and to their reason.

For you, what do you see when you see Christ crucified? A failure of someone who got over their head and whose life ended poorly. Some noble sacrifice, who were a stirring example of courage.

[13:51] And in the end, perhaps it was quite quixotic or idealistic. Frederick Nietzsche, what he saw as he reflected on Christ crucified, he thought it was despicable and weak and something to be avoided at all costs, this 19th century Greek philosopher.

What do you see when you see Christ crucified? Friend, if you do not see the power and wisdom of God, the very glory of God poured out on behalf of all sinners, I encourage you today to see Christ crucified as glorious.

And for those who do not believe, I ask you, I would ask God to give you sight to see that kind of glory. I used to see death conquered through the one who did not have to die.

I used to see sin forgiven as the wrath of God exhausted itself against sinless man in the person of Christ. I used to see love displayed as never witnessed before, nor will ever be seen again.

Ask God to give you sight to see the glory of Jesus Christ and in him crucified. Do not delay in making this request. And you say, well, why, Scott? Why not delay?

[15:20] I've got tomorrow, perhaps, to consider these things. Let us look at our text one more time. I want you to see in verse 37, the verb changes from in verse 37 to verse 39.

In verse 37, we see that the verse concludes with, or the verse reads, though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not, or the word could be translated word, could not believe in him, or I'm sorry, would not believe him.

So they did not or would not believe in him. And then verse 39, if you go down, therefore they could not believe in him. They first would not, and now they could not.

What is happening here? C.S. Lewis wrote a book called *The Magician's Nephew*. And in this book, we have Aslan, who is a personification of Christ and Narnia, and we have this character whose name is Uncle Andrew.

And Aslan there and Narnia, he is creating, and Aslan is creating as he sings, and there's this beautiful song, and as Aslan sings, there's stars start to appear, and plants begin to grow, and birds begin to fly, and animals begin to roam, and sea life begins to, all this creation just is so beautiful, and the song is so beautiful, but Uncle Andrew begins to not like the song that he hears.

[16:54] Uncle Andrew doesn't like the song because it makes, how it makes him think about himself. It makes him, how it makes him feel inside, he feels ashamed now.

He would rather not hear the song, and he begins to convince himself that it's not really a song or a voice anymore that he's hearing from Aslan.

So then Uncle Andrew's nephews and niece approach Aslan and just say, Aslan have a conversation with Uncle Andrew, like he doesn't hear the song anymore, and Aslan replies to the niece and the nephew, if I were to speak to him, all he would hear me is roar and judgment.

Uncle Andrew moved from he would not hear to could not hear, and this is the way of unbelief. We decide not to believe, and then we find out we cannot believe, and I want to make something very clear, God is not in the business, he does not prevent people who want to believe from believing. Secondly, God does not prevent people who want to be saved from being saved. He is communicating a terrifying, active, personal judgment of God against unbelief, for God does and will punish unbelief, and even thus we see the glory of God.

[18:19] We have a hard time matching up the crime and the punishment often, especially if you have children, you're familiar with this. Sometimes we think we might be too harsh at times, or sometimes we think, well, maybe I'm getting too lenient.

But God does not have this problem. When God judges and when he punishes, God's punishment is always and perfectly, and with terrible irony, it always fits the crime.

So we see here those who would not see the glories of a suffering Messiah for sin, and by God's active judgment they move from a place where they could not see his glory, and now they begin with would not believe to a place of God's active judgment where they can no longer believe.

And this is true for the Jews in which John was reading in their day. There was no more opportunity for salvation, and today is a day of salvation.

Please do not harden your heart. We always think we can put off believing, but this is not true according to Scripture.

[19:32] Do not put the Lord to a test. Respond to the gospel today. The good news that Jesus Christ died for sin, for yours and for mine, and for all who believe may have eternal life.

So what do we need to see Jesus clearly? We need eyes to see. We need sight. The second thing we need is we need light. Look with me in verses 42 through 46.

Nevertheless, many, even of the authorities believed in him, but for the fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue.

For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glories that comes from God. And Jesus cried out and said, Whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in him who sent me.

For whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

[20:39] Jesus here calls himself light. He brings people out of darkness. I pray that you have had a good teacher in your history, in your history past.

I have been grateful that throughout my learning years I've been educated and taught by many great teachers. And what do teachers do in principle? If you will, they throw open the curtains and let light in on a subject that you have a hard time understanding and they illuminate it in some way where they shed light on a subject and you think, Oh, now I understand the rules of grammar.

For those listening to me, you say, Ah, you still have some more learning to do. Okay. Or mathematics or whatever the subject is. You learn something from a good teacher that illumines it in some way that throws open the curtain.

Well, Jesus is not claiming to be a teacher. He is claiming to be the very light itself. He says, I am the light. Jesus is claiming to be light itself.

The very revelation of truth itself, the very revelation of God. For it is, for it is what God is, He is light.

[21:54] What does that mean? He is light. He is morally pure. Sometimes we often speak of God's moral perfections. He is completely holy. In Him there is no darkness found.

God's motives are always perfect and unchallengeable, as well as His ways are always right. God does not lie. His ends do not need to justify the means because both are impeccable.

God is constant. God is never changing. And so consequently, He is utterly trustworthy. God being light not only speaks to who He is, but what He does.

Light shows things for what they are. Light reveals what is hidden. Light exposes. It judges. Light is a source of life and joy and gladness.

This is who Jesus is. He says in verse 46, I have come into the world as light. He came to reveal God to us, so we no longer have to sit in darkness.

[23 : 03] And Jesus cries out in verse 45, whoever believes in me, believes not in me, but in Him who sent me. Jesus is saying, you believe in me, you believe in God, for I have come to reveal the Father.

If you see me, you see God. Jesus is the revelation of God Himself. This is one of the purposes for which He came, that we might see God, that we might know God.

If you still have trouble with my last point in the previous point number one, that those who would not believe, by God's active judgment, could not believe, this principle is the counterweight to this truth.

That God and Christ took initiative to come into this world of darkness. He did not come into a morally neutral world. No, He came into a dark world, a sin-torn world, a world exhibiting tomb-like darkness of death.

He came into a world with people like you and me, who love darkness and hate light, because light exposes our deeds, and our deeds are wicked. And you say, I'm not wicked, yes you are, and so am I.

[24 : 19] We are wicked when we envy the success of our neighbor. We are wicked when we coddle ourselves and neglect the needs of others. We are wicked when we indulge in lustful thinking.

We are wicked when we, in our petty jealousies, we are wicked in our pompous attitudes. We are wicked in our silent hatreds. We are wicked in our selfish friendships, friendships when we do not extend ourselves to others.

We are wicked. And it is in our wickedness that made this world such a dark place. And it is in this world of our sinful making that Jesus took the initiative to come.

He came as light, the very revelation of God. That whoever believes does not just sit in darkness anymore. And this is incredible news. This is incredible news.

For those who have believed in Christ, you are no longer in darkness. Yes, you still sin, you still will sin, and until the Lord returns or takes you home, you will sin.

[25 : 24] That is true. But while that is true, you are no longer a child of darkness. You are a child of light, and we need to define ourselves in this way.

You are no longer an adulterer or a fornicator, though you may have been one. You are no longer a liar, though you may have been one. You are no longer an alcoholic, though that may have gripped you.

You are no longer a swindler, a cheat, or a covetous person. You are no longer homosexual, though you may have been one. As the Apostle Paul reminds the Corinth, these things you once were.

But if you are a Christian, you have come out of darkness, you are a child of light, you live into a new identity. And whatever sin remains in you and me, be committed to continue to bring that sin out into the light, for God will judge it one day.

And this is the beauty of living in community. I'm grateful for our men's huddles and women's studies and different small groups, youth group, young adult group, where by the church and our discipleship hour, where we have broken down the large crowd into smaller entities, where we can know one another better to bring our sin into the light to another brother or sister, it's called confess your sins to one another.

[26 : 55] I'm grateful for these because when we bring our sin into the light, oh, it is painful, oh, it is painful to expose it.

And it is sure to be embarrassing. But oh, it is so liberating. It is so good. And this is what is important to live in community.

Paul writes this way in Romans 8, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing to the glory that were revealed to us.

For the creation awaits eagerly longing to be revealed as the sons of God. And we are not alone for that day. Christian, that is you as a child of light.

Let us be active and encouraging each other to live into the light. May we cultivate a culture here at fourth that does not allow us to hide in shadows.

[27 : 56] And if you are not a Christian, I ask you this question. What is your light? What is it that you live by? The light of reason, like in the enlightenment where we were able to reason ourselves out of anything and everything.

But in our postmodern world, there seems to have been holes that have been punched into that. Do you live into the light of your own feelings? Do your feelings govern your life?

Your feelings trump all things. And you are your own light. Do you live in the light of a noble cause, protecting the environment, saving the planet, saving people from human trafficking?

But whatever light of life that you live by, let me ask this question. Can that light rescue you from your own moral failings?

The answer to that is no. And you know it. But there is a light who is then the person of Christ who can and who did believe in him.

[29 : 01] Lastly, in order to see Jesus clearly, you need sight. You need light. And last, you need life. Look with me in verses 47 through 50 and we'll close.

If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge.

The word that I have spoken will judge him on that last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has given me a commandment, what to say and what to speak.

And I know that his commandment is eternal life, what I say therefore I say as the Father has told me. Jesus turns, remember, these are his last words to those who have followed him and have not believed in him.

He has had a public ministry for three and a half years and he is pleading with them, believe. You need life.

[30 : 16] And in verse 47, it kind of begins in a troubling way. He says, I do not judge you and we can think, has Jesus lost his nerve here? No, he's simply saying the reason why the Father has sent him.

It isn't for the purpose for which he came was to judge this time. This time he came to be born, to live and die and to proclaim life, not death.

He came for salvation, not judgment. Members of fourth, I pray that we understand that this is our mission as well. A mission to proclaim life, not death.

A mission to proclaim salvation, not judgment. Do people who spend time with us at fourth understand this? Do people respond to us as they did to Jesus?

Do we at fourth make religious people uncomfortable in their self-assurance and make big sinners? Two things, feel strangely convicted on one hand and yet oddly welcomed and invited on the other to the glories of Christ.

[31 : 22] I pray it be so. If you think, hey, okay, Scott, well then we should just live and let live. We should just let people live.

The next word is clear things up. There is a judgment that is coming. Verse 48, the one who rejects me does not receive my words as it has a judge.

The word that I have spoken will judge him on that day. Jesus warns them judgment is coming. On those last days, those who have rejected the gospel reject Jesus's words of salvation will be condemned for eternity.

Not only for their wicked deeds, but also for refusing to believe in Jesus's words. Jesus came with a message that one can have peace with God and believing in his Son, who came to offer life, to die a substitutionary death for sin, to offer salvation.

This is his message. And the good news is dead men and women can have a life with God according to God's provision for sin and believing in Jesus.

[32 : 32] And God vindicating Jesus's message by raising him from the dead. What do you need to see Jesus clearly? You need sight.

You need light. And you need life. And that's what you need to see Jesus clearly. And these are Jesus's last words and last appeal to the lost world that had been familiar with him for the three and a half years, and yet still did not believe.

And I pray that today, if you have never believed in Christ, you would hear these words and you would trust Jesus for the forgiveness of your sin.

If you'd like to talk to someone afterward, I'll be down here. I'd love to visit with you as well. But let's pray. Lord, I thank you for this day.

Lord, thank you for your goodness, your kindness in our life. We thank you for your sacrifice for sin.

[33 : 40] You're beautiful, Lord. Thank you for dying a substitutionary death. Thank you for not coming the first time to judge but to offer salvation.

Thank you, Lord. You're too kind. Thank you for your moral perfections. Lord, I pray that we who do believe in this room, Lord, I pray that we would marvel at your glories, not necessarily when you performed great miracles or on the mound of transfiguration, but we would also see the glory of the cross.

When you died a death, you did not have to die. You received the wrath of God on our behalf. You exhausted the wrath of God in yourself.

Lord, there's a beauty, there's a glory to that that is like none other. Lord, thank you. As we consider these things, you give us motivation to live.

Thank you for offering us life. And may we live lives pleasing in your sight. And it's in your beautiful name, Jesus, amen.