

Seeing Jesus

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Preacher: Canon David Short

- [0 : 0 0] Let's bow our heads and pray as we stand. Heavenly Father, we pray now as we open your word that you would shine the light of your spirit into our hearts.
- Help us to see Jesus and to see things in the way that he does. For we ask it in his name. Amen. Well now, if you're new with us, this is the time we put our bulletins down.
- We take up the Bible and turn back to the passage Zoltan read for us in Matthew chapter 9. Welcome. Great to have you. Thanksgiving turkey ham fabulous.
- This is a great day for us as families. As you're turning to this passage on page 814, I'll just tell you that we have two sets of eyes.
- We have outward eyes with which we see physical things, visible things. And the Bible says we have an inward set of eyes, as it were, by which we see spiritual things. We see God.
- [1 : 0 8] And our outward eyes are incredibly precious to us. There are charities that work around the world, bringing sight to blind people when there's an easy surgical intervention.
- I watched a video clip this week of a group called the 2020-20 charity, which is working in India with children who are blind.
- And there's a simple surgery that takes 15 minutes and costs \$300. And then you watch the video as this happens and you try not to cry because you see this little boy gets his sight and he sees his mother and he reaches out his hands and he starts dancing, calling out, I can see, I can see.
- Oh, it's fantastic stuff. But if our outward sight is very precious, our inward sight is infinitely and eternally more precious.
- You know, with our inward eyes, we're able to see who we really are, why we're here and who made us. We're able to see God. We're able to see Jesus with spiritual sight.
- [2 : 1 9] And when we look at him and when we look to him, we see the glory of God in his face. And we look to him and he becomes a hope and a life within us.
- And when we say, I can see Christ, I can see Christ, there is a joy within us the Bible describes as inexpressible. We see God's face. And we see the one who's able to heal our spiritual blindness and to save us forever.
- So physical blindness is a terrible thing. And spiritual blindness is worse. Because with spiritual blindness, you cannot see the light of God's face in Jesus Christ.
- We don't naturally see the beauty of God. We can't see our own hypocrisy and pride. And we're unable to really experience the love of God in the good news of the gospel.
- And while most of us have been born with working physical sight, the Bible says that we're all born without spiritual sight until God shines his light into our hearts and we're able to see Christ.
- [3 : 3 5] So as we come to this group of miracles, this little group of three miracles, at the end of these astonishing miracles in chapter 8 and 9, what binds our section together is the language of seeing, sight and looking.

Ten times Matthew uses this language of seeing and three times, three of those, Matthew speaks this little word of command which is translated, Behold.

I wish we had a different way of translating it. Behold is like, you see it in a pantomime on stage. Behold the bad guy. You know, behold this.

And we have it in Christmas plays. Behold a star rose in the east. But the word is used by Matthew to mean this. He says, Look. Look deeper.

When he uses the word behold, he says, Don't just look on the outside. Try and look with your spiritual eyes. Open your spiritual eyes to what's really happening beyond this astonishing event.

[4 : 43] Matthew wants to help us open our spiritual eyes. By looking at these miracles of Jesus, he's saying, God can flood our hearts with light so that we can see ourselves and see him and see one another and see his love.

He's writing this so that we would see Jesus Christ. God can see us today. That we'd see our need for him. And of course, that doesn't happen automatically.

It is possible to witness the miracles of Jesus. You can be there. You can get into a time machine and go back and watch the miracles at the hands of Jesus and still close your eyes to who he really is.

And that's part of the tragedy of this passage. Part of what happens here. Matthew helps us as we go right from the start. If you look at the beginning of verse 18, he wants to take us deeper.

Matthew says, While Jesus was saying these things to them, behold. First command. Look deeper here.

[5 : 47] While he was saying these things, what was he saying? Well, last week, if you were here in the paragraph before, the followers of John the Baptist had come to Jesus. They had their doubts about Jesus, frankly.

Jesus was just a little bit too happy to be a Messiah. You know, having parties and eating a lot of food. They couldn't see it. And Jesus' response is, he claims to be the bridegroom.

The Old Testament picture of God. He says, I am God. And then he says in verse 17, I'm bringing something new beyond your human capacity. He says, New wine is not put into old wineskins.

If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. New wine is put into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved while he was saying these things, behold. See?

So, what is just about to happen now, is an illustration of the newness that Christ brings. And this word, newness, it's something entirely new. It's not just the old thing made a little bit better.

[6 : 46] It's fresh. It's a different thing altogether. So, I've got two points this morning, and the first one is this. Look at Jesus. Very simple point.

And it's verses 18 to 26. These two very familiar miracles, which are wrapped together as a sandwich. And they show us that Jesus has come to bring new life, and new cleansing, which only God can give.

So, Matthew reports this double miracle, which is a picture of what he does. And he says, verse 18, look, look, look deeper. And we meet two women in extreme need.

Two daughters. There's this lovely word used in the Greek to describe them. One has died, a little girl, and one is bleeding to death. And both of them are so socially, culturally, in reality, beyond human help.

And I want you to see with the tenderness with which Jesus deals with these two women. In verse 18, we immediately, after we're told to look, we immediately meet a ruler.

[7 : 55] And he comes and he kneels before Jesus. We don't know anything else about this person. We don't know if he believes Jesus is the son of David who can raise the dead. But he kneels in agony.

He has suffered every parent's worst nightmare. He says, my young daughter has just died. Come lay your hand on her and she will live.

He doesn't ask for healing. His daughter has gone beyond that. In deep distress, he asks Jesus to bring her back from beyond death, to give her another chance, to give her more years in this life so that she might grow up and become a woman and maybe even start her own family.

And without a word, Jesus goes with her. And our sympathies race ahead with Jesus to the house to see what he's going to do. And in verse 20, the whole action is interrupted as he's going.

And we're told for a second time in verse 20, behold, look, look more deeply. And this time it is a woman who's suffering something which in that culture would have been humiliating and isolating and gradually have taken her life.

[9 : 07] She's suffering a discharge of blood. And under the Old Testament law, that meant she was excluded from worship. It meant that if anyone touched her or if anyone touched something she had touched, they would be unclean for at least a week.

She was certainly unable to have children. And she has a kind of a superstitious view that if she touches Jesus, somehow something's going to make her well.

It's a quasi-magical view that if she marches up, if she somehow touches him, she'll suck the power up from him and she'll be made well. And so she sneaks up behind him and touches him.

Just look at verse 22. The way Jesus deals with her is so kind. Jesus turned and seeing her, he said, take heart, daughter.

Your faith has made you well. And instantly the woman was made well. This is, let me, literally it's, be strong and brave, my precious daughter.

[10 : 12] It's not just daughter. It's a word that's got more tenderness and affection in it. He says, be strong, my precious daughter. Your faith has saved you.

And instantly she was saved. And now if you were here two weeks ago, you'll remember that this is almost an exact mirror of what Jesus said to the young man who was paralyzed, let down before him.

You remember in verse two, he says, be brave, my son. And the word there is not just child, male child. It's like, be brave, my darling, he says.

Your sins are forgiven. It's fantastic. In both cases, he says to them, be brave, take courage. Both of them have a kind of faith, mixed with superstition and all sorts of other things.

And in both cases, Jesus uses the tenderest word he can possibly use. And in both cases, he strengthens and straightens their faith. And in both cases, he gives them something they don't ask for.

[11 : 18] He gives them something that you can see on the outside and something that you can only see with your spiritual eyes. For the young man, outwardly, he gives him back his legs. He jumps up and he runs home.

But inwardly, he gives him the forgiveness of sins. And for this woman, outwardly, he cures her and he gives her precious sight, this spiritual sight to see more deeply.

That's why he focuses on her faith. And this word, your faith has made you well, has cured you. It's the only time in Matthew's gospel that the word save is used for physical wellness.

And Matthew is wanting us to see that Jesus means your faith saves you. It does more than just give you curing here. You know, this is so encouraging.

Because her faith was full of superstitious misunderstanding. But Jesus loves it. He receives it and he strengthens it. It's the same with us.

[12 : 18] He loves it. And he accepts our faith, even when it's weak and wobbly and full of misunderstanding. You don't have to get things right to please Jesus in this sense, so long as your faith is in him.

You don't have to have perfect faith to please him. Any movements in our heart toward him, he sees. Any attempt to trust him and to love him, even if it's mixed with selfish and impure motives, he just delights to receive it.

And he cleanses it with his kindness, and he makes it stronger, and he makes it straighter, so that we'll see that by faith in him we're saved. Isn't that great? But now he needs to hurry.

The ruler's daughter has already died, and in those days the principle was, 24 hours, body needs to be in the ground. So when he arrives, the funeral's underway, verse 24, he says to all the mourners, professional mourners, which you can still hire today, in the Middle East, he says to them, go away, the girl is not dead, but sleeping.

And they laughed at him. This is a pretty confident thing to say, with a dead body upstairs. Now why does Jesus say this? He doesn't mean that the girl is in a coma, and the family are mistaken in their diagnosis.

[13 : 38] He wants us to understand, that he sees death, in a completely different way. And he wants us to look at death, through his eyes.

And he deliberately draws a comparison, between sleep and death. Because sleep is temporary. It's not final. You wake from sleep.

And with Jesus, death is temporary. It's not final. See what he's saying? He's not just the healer. Jesus has come, as the resurrection, and the life.

He's come to bring newness of life. And when he brings, that newness of life into us, it is like a spring of water, and it bubbles up, to eternal life. And then Matthew tells us, that he raised the girl, from death.

He touches a hand, takes her by the hand, and the little girl arose. And it's told, with just the most, minimum of detail. I mean, you know, we don't get to see, the reaction of the family, or the crowd.

[14 : 42] All we see, is the newness of life, that Jesus has come to bring. Matthew says, look at Jesus. Here he is, in a context, of tremendous distress, and suffering.

And he comes, as we know, from the last couple of weeks, he comes with forgiveness, of sins in his hands, a new life. And what he promises for us, is not just to raise us, back into this life, to give us a few more years, in this life, so that we'll die again, like this daughter obviously did.

But to raise us, to a new life, a new life, that will go forever. A new life, that lasts through death, and moves on, to the other side. And I wonder, if you see that.

I wonder, if you look to Jesus, and you can see this life, and you can see, what he is doing. I wonder if you see, how he loves your faith, and wants to strengthen it. And do you know what it is, to have this new life, as a gift from him?

That's what it comes from, looking at Jesus. And let's move to the second point, more quickly. And I've called this second point, seeing and not seeing. And this is verses 27 to 34, the whole of the rest of the story.

[15 : 55] These are the concluding miracles, of this matchless power and authority, in chapters 8 and 9. And as Matthew wants us to see Jesus, with our inward eyes, in these verses, we have a terrible contrast.

You might have picked it up, as it was read for us. We have two men, who are physically blind, but whose spiritual sight, is 20-20 clear. And we have two groups, whose physical sight is 20-20, but who are completely spiritually blind.

And we're meant to ask the question, which one are we? First, we're told about the two blind men, who follow Jesus, verse 27, crying out loudly, have mercy on us, son of David.

And what that means is, that they, while they're blind externally, and they are physically unable to see, with their spiritual eyes, somehow a miracle has happened, because they call Jesus, son of David.

Son of David. Now, what is so significant about calling Jesus, son of David? Haven't we heard in the last couple of miracles, Jesus is the son of God, and the son of man.

[17 : 12] Why is this so important? Just keep your hand in chapter 9, and turn back to chapter 1 for a moment. The first verse in Matthew, please. Matthew starts.

The book of the genealogy, or Genesis, the book of the Genesis of Jesus Christ, what's the first thing Matthew wants us to know? The son of David.

Now, that may not mean a lot to you now, to us now, but to anyone familiar with the Old Testament, this was very big.

Because the son of David is the royal king, who's promised in the Old Testament, who will come and establish, the eternal throne of God. He will gather up all the poor, and the needy, and he will make a new creation.

And the one miracle, above every other miracle, that the prophets single out, this new son of David will do, is, he will bring sight to the blind.

[18 : 21] So in the prophet Isaiah, we read, when he comes, then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Again, Isaiah, God speaking through, the son of David says, I will lead the blind in a way, they do not know.

In paths they have not known, I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them, into light, and rough places into level ground. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.

I had a friend in Australia, who went blind, lost his sight due to diabetes. I used to visit him at work, and he loved to tease me, about his blindness. I don't know if any of you, have got blind friends who do this.

I found it very unsettling. He would use phrases, deliberately use phrases, with sight in them. So I'd walk in, and he would say something like, I've been watching you.

I've seen everything you do. I've got my eye on you. And, I asked him about it one day, and he told me, it was his way of dealing with the fact, that it was impossible for him, to regain his sight.

[19 : 30] And that is the usual way it is, if you lose your sight in this way. This miracle, of giving sight to the blind, has never before happened in the scriptures.

This is the first time in the Bible, the blind are given their sight. It is like, the God of creation, saying, let there be light. They cannot see, with their physical eyes, they have no light, but their hearts are on fire, and flooded with light, because they're looking to Jesus, they see him as God's promised one, and all their hope is in him.

And it's interesting, Jesus doesn't give them an answer, he doesn't heal them. They walk along the street, two blind men, and Jesus doesn't answer them, but he gets them to follow them, into the house, and the reason is, because inside the house, he wants to give them, more than just their physical sight.

And once inside, he says to them, verse 28, do you believe, that I am able to do this? It's the only time, in the gospel, Jesus calls for faith, before he does, the miracles.

It's very important. He's concerned both, that they articulate their faith, and their faith is in him, not just in the power, to do something. And when they answer positively, we read verse 29, he touched their eyes, saying, according to your faith, be it done for you, and their eyes were opened.

[20 : 59] And it's a bit hard to translate, but according to your faith, let there be a Genesis, he says, like the first words, God spoke in the Bible, let there be light, and there was light.

And now, light and colour, physical light, and physical colour, flood their eyes, for the first time. And they experience outwardly, what they've been experiencing, inwardly. And they know for a certain, that Jesus Christ, is the light of the world, God's royal ruler.

That the kingdom of heaven, has come. And that the new life, is one of seeing things, you've never seen before. And he says to them, don't spread the news about this, but they don't obey.

I think, we should completely change, our evangelistic plan, at St. John's. We should say to each other, don't tell anyone about Jesus. See how that goes. No, I think he says it here, because he doesn't want, to reveal publicly, that he's God's eternal king.

Because when that becomes clearer, the authorities crucify him. And that brings us, to the final miracle. And this is a seeing, blindness miracle too, in a way.

[22 : 14] But it's told, very strangely. See verse 32? So they are going away, behold, look, a demon oppressed man, who was mute, was brought to him.

And when the demon, had been cast out, the mute spoke. And then we have, two very different reactions. Now, what's interesting about this, is that, there's no mention of Jesus.

Jesus is suddenly, put in the background. Even the miracle, is put in the background. And Matthew does this, deliberately, so that we'll be focused, on the two different, kinds of response. And what are the two responses?

Verse 33? There's the response, of the crowd. They marvel. Look at the end, of verse 33, saying, never was anything like this, seen in Israel.

They're seeing it, with their physical eyes. And it's a reaction, of wonder, and they bring attention, to the fact, that they've seen it, with their very eyes. But it's not faith, in Jesus.

[23 : 17] I mean, admiration, for Jesus, is not trusting Jesus, for the forgiveness, of sins, and new life. You know, admiring Jesus, and saying, believing nice things, about him, is not the same thing, as committing yourself to him.

I mean, even seeing him, do things only God, can do, and marveling, and believing that he did them, is not the same thing, as casting yourself on him, or taking him, as your only hope, and your only Lord, in life and death.

And then there is, a second reaction, this time from the Pharisees, verse 34. And they say, he casts out demons, by the prince of demons.

Such a strange reaction, from these devout men. I mean, they'd been following Jesus closely, they had witnessed, and watched, what he had done. And I don't know where, I don't know where they come up, with this answer, but, wherever they came up from, with it from, they stick with it.

And in chapter 12, they come back to this, despite the evidence, that continues. And in chapter 12, they say this to Jesus himself. These are deeply religious men, and I think they're probably, more committed, to their moral, ethical, religious system, than they are, to hearing the news, that God was saying.

[24 : 37] Because there is a way, of being religious, that blinds us, to the miracle of life, new life in Christ. When it's more about me, than it is about Jesus. When I'm more focused, on the externals, and my obedience, than I am on, grace, and mercy, and forgiveness.

And one of the ways, you can test this, is you become brittle, when the externals, are challenged. And you find it, very difficult to accept, when there's hypocrisy in you.

And the words of Jesus, they're not fire, and life, they're interesting, but they're not, you know, they don't go, to your desires. The mark, of spiritual sight, is that our faith, is directed to Jesus.

That when we look to him, we do see, the glory of God, in his face. And we begin, to see others, as he does. And we want to cling to him, and we want to get close to him, and we want to hope in him, and we want to love him, above all else.

I think the great irony, in the Pharisees words here, is that they affirm, the truth of the miracles, even when they deny the source. There in no doubt, he's done these amazing things.

[25 : 51] They were there, they saw with their own eyes, but they've closed, their spiritual eyes tight shut. And they refuse, to go the next step. Because you can even see, Jesus' miracles, in the flesh, and just become darker, and darker, in spiritual things.

And they utterly repudiate, any connection, between Jesus and God, and what is good. And they say, his power comes from Satan. And it is an unrepairable, breach, which leads ultimately, to his death.

And what is Jesus' response? Well, we'll have a look at this, next week. But let me give you a trailer, from next week's sermon. Can I do that? Next week, we'll just look at the last three verses, of the chapter.

And you'll see in verse 36, when Jesus sees the crowds, what does he, how does he respond? He has compassion, on them. And he continues, to offer his grace, and forgiveness, and his grace, and forgiveness.

But you'll have to come back, next week for that. Thank you. Thank you.