

# Luke 18:31-43 "Of Blindness and Sight"

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[ 0 : 00 ] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

It's better to be blind and see with your heart than to have two good eyes and see nothing. You know who said that? If you were here for the meditation, you would know who said that. We put it up there earlier. It's one of the most famous Alabamians ever, but not a football coach. It's someone who is blind and deaf from the age of one.

When she was asked how hard it must be to be blind, Helen Keller said, It's better to be blind and see with your heart than to have two good eyes and see nothing.

She said a lot of other very wise things, but that one I think will help us as we think about our next passage in Luke this morning. Luke 18. We're going to start reading in verse 31.

[ 1 : 12 ] Look out early for the blindness of people with two good eyes. Then we're going to notice a blind man who sees with his heart.

And finally see where Jesus fits in. This is God's holy word. As Ron and the rest of you well know, this is the bedrock of what we're built on.

It's God's word given to us that we might know him. Our creator, our redeemer, our father. And that as we know him, we might know ourselves more.

Isn't that exciting? We're going to read starting at verse 31 of Luke 18. Taking the twelve, Jesus said to them, See, we're going up to Jerusalem, and everything that's 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.

[ 2 : 14 ] But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said. As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. And he cried out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

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. And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him.

And when he came near, he asked him, What do you want me to do for you? He said, Lord, let me recover my sight. Jesus said to him, Recover your sight.

Your faith has made you well. And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

[ 3 : 18 ] Let's pray. Father, for your word, for your Son, we give you great thanks. Would you teach us of him this morning by your Spirit?

That we might rest in him. That we might rejoice in him. Even more than when we walked in these doors this morning. Speak to us.

May we hear you. In Jesus' name. Amen. At the beginning of this passage, Jesus explains yet again his laser focus on Jerusalem and the cross.

And we talked last week about how glorious it is that he knows what he's headed towards there. The suffering and shame. And yet he goes willingly because he loves us.

But maybe surprisingly, the disciples don't get it. Look at verse 34 again. They understood none of these things.

[ 4 : 27 ] The saying was hidden from them. They did not grasp what was said. Luke's being very clear. They didn't get it at all. Which is remarkable considering they're the closest people to Jesus, aren't they?

Nearly three years now they've been with him. This is the most important thing Jesus is telling them. He's told them at least three times in Luke to this point. And still they don't grasp what he's saying. He's telling them about the very reason he's there. The very essence of his mission. Dying. And then rising to new life.

And they don't get it. I don't think they're the only ones who've ever been blind to what God was doing in their lives. Confused.

Missing the point. Especially missing the part about down before up. Death before life. My whole last year of grad school I was looking for a job.

[ 5 : 36 ] Which is a good thing. Especially because we had a baby at the beginning of that last year. So I had a growing family to provide for.

You know, of course God would want me to do that. So if I just looked around enough I'd find the right church soon. After all I was newly 25 myself.

A lot to offer people. Well it didn't seem to go that way. As I had conversation after conversation. I began to do something I still do.

And I'm still bad at doing. Figuring out what God was going to do next. Oh I see. You'll protect me from this.

You'll teach me that. Oh I see. You're going to open a door there. Yet wrong. Virtually every time. And so we got close to graduation.

[ 6 : 35 ] And it narrowed down to one church. A really prestigious church. In our denomination. And an interview set up. And so sure enough this seemed to be where God was taking us. And Christy and I went down and interviewed.

And we looked at each other. And no. God is not calling us here. We both knew that.

But I just knew God wanted me to have a job at graduation. You know. Not only to provide for my family. But also to look good to my friends.

Classmates were all talking about where they were going. At that point. I realized in that moment. Something I hadn't really considered. Graduating. Unwanted. Useless it seemed.

[ 7 : 34 ] Unattractive it felt. It was in those couple months of summer. That God began again in my life. A lifelong process.

A lifelong process that I still often resist. Of dying. To how wonderful and successful I was. The end of the summer was a church named Southwood.

I guess y'all heard about that. And we're very grateful for that. But along the way. That summer was a lot of time on my hands.

A lot of God opening my eyes to his greatness. Being better than my greatness. I had to confess that I was blind. Because I didn't want to see that reality.

I didn't like it that way. Maybe you've experienced the season or situation of blindness like that. Maybe for you it was when you got married.

[ 8 : 37 ] And you thought it was supposed to be easy and make you feel good. And you had to have your eyes open to the sacrifice and struggle involved. Maybe you thought going to church as a family meant that your kids would never struggle with any of the big things.

And you had to learn that wasn't true. Maybe you thought you could follow Jesus and not actually do any of the suffering and dying part.

The disciples had a hard time with that part. They often missed that that was part of the reality. Peter could declare Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And in the next breath say, but don't do that cross thing. That's not okay. No, Jesus, no, there's a different way. Don't die. It's not the successful life we envision for ourselves, is it?

Maybe your spiritual blindness comes from seeking to ignore Jesus your whole life any way you could. Maybe the pursuit of wealth or success has blinded your eyes from anything else.

[ 9 : 48 ] Maybe you love control. And when you can't explain what's going on in your life, you just can't see anything clearly. The darkness of pain and suffering and brokenness has come into your life and you're honestly still waiting for God to explain himself before you'll trust him.

All sorts of blindness in our hearts. Walk with Jesus this morning. He wants to heal your blindness and give you sight.

But before we get to that, one other thing we need to see about our blindness. In the midst of it, we often miss Jesus' heart.

His heart for others. It happens here as Jesus and his followers approach Jericho in this blind beggar. And when he cries out for Jesus' attention, what happens? The leaders of the group shush him. The group traveling with Jesus, they hear this guy crying and they rebuke him. Verse 39.

[10:56] Telling him to be silent. They want to keep him away from Jesus, don't they? He's a distraction from the important place we're headed. He's not worthy of the Master's time.

Interestingly, that word rebuke is the same word used when the disciples rebuke those bringing little children to Jesus earlier in this chapter. O for two.

Jesus stops and engages this man too, doesn't he? But we see again those right near Jesus actually hindering people from coming to Jesus.

I want us to stop and ask briefly, how might we be doing that? Most of us could apologize to some child for snapping or glaring at them during a worship service for, of all things, being children.

We think about this blind beggar. We have to ask ourselves if we have ever made someone feel like you don't look a certain way, succeed at a certain level, or act in a certain decorum.

[12:13] You can't really be a part of Jesus' company. But I want to turn the question around to not just the negative, how have we hindered people, kept them from Jesus, but what's the positive side of that?

Jesus with the little children says, don't hinder them here. He actually says, bring him to me. If we're not hindering people, we are bringing them to Jesus, praying for them, sharing the good news in your story with them, inviting them into Jesus' community to hear his word.

We have a long list of excuses. That's inconvenient. I don't have the time. It's too hard.

I don't have the answers. They wouldn't fit. He's not really the kind of guy who would be open to spiritual things.

But God has placed people in your path so that you can bring them to Jesus. That's all. Just point them to him.

[13:26] Some of you sit in the offices of CEOs and generals, and you're one of few people who's seen them actually despair. And in those moments, the temptation is to butter them up and tell them how wonderful they are and they're great.

Don't do that. Tell them there's hope in Jesus. Others, if you walk with people through broken relationships and situations, don't try to explain their pain.

Tell them there's hope in Jesus. There's all sorts of people in your life that God's put you there to point them to Jesus.

Y'all, this is why God has you in your family. In your neighborhood, in your office, in your school. He's put you there so that you can point others to him.

That you might bring people to Jesus. That you might reflect his heart for them. Don't miss his heart. No matter who they are or what it costs, show them Jesus.

[14:34] The blindness of those near Jesus is evident here as it all too often is for us.

Two good eyes, but not seeing the sacrificial mission required. Or the benevolent heart of Jesus. But there's a man whose heart sees clearly, isn't there?

Let's walk with Jesus as he shows his disciples some things they must see. Verse 35. As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. And he cried out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. 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. Can you hear him? This blind man clearly sees his need, doesn't he?

[15:44] He's crying out. He's desperate. Even when they shush him and they try to put him off, he cries out all the more. And for what?

Mercy. Mercy. Later he says, let me see. I don't know how long he'd been there begging. But needless to say, he felt the weight of his desperate situation.

And he also had time to consider the things he'd heard about this Jesus of Nazareth. And he saw clearly who Jesus was.

The solution to his situation, right? Son of David. A title. Identifying Jesus as the promised Messiah King.

The rescuer of God's people. The one announced in Luke 4 from the prophet Isaiah. Would proclaim recovery of sight for the blind. Would preach the good news to the poor.

[16:45] Would proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. This is that guy. Don't miss the divine healing miracle here, right? Where Jesus speaks and immediately the blind man sees, doesn't he?

All the people know. Only God works like this. See what Jesus is doing? As he's stopped to talk to this guy. He's pulling back the curtain for his disciples.

He's saying, you're struggling with who I am and where I'm headed. Look at who I am. It's important for you to hear it from the blind man. Listen to him.

He'll tell you who I am. How people should respond to that. I am the divine Messiah, Jesus says.

The blind man sees who is here.

Jesus, son of David. I know you're full of mercy. Don't leave without blessing me. It doesn't matter what they might do to me.

[17:48] You're my only hope. Save me. See, these two things, seeing our need and seeing Jesus, go together, don't they?

I love the way Roy and Revel Hessian say it. It's a bit long, but really helpful. To see Jesus is to apprehend him as the supply of our present needs and believingly to lay hold on him as such.

The Lord Jesus is always seen through the eye of need. He is presented to us in the scriptures not for our academic contemplation and delight, but for our desperate need as sinners and weaklings.

The acknowledgement of need and confession of sin, therefore, is always the first step in seeing Jesus. Then, where there is acknowledged need, the Holy Spirit delights to show to the heart the Lord Jesus as the supply of just that need.

The blind man sees his need and sees Jesus as the supply of that need. What the blind man shows here, what the Hessians call seeing Jesus through the eye of need, what Helen Keller calls seeing with your heart, it's a beautiful image of faith.

[19:13] Faith, as Jesus calls it in verse 42. Faith is how you respond when you see your need and you see Jesus.

It's not complicated. You simply receive and rest on Jesus, as we said earlier. But let me give you a picture of faith.

When my family went deep into Mammoth Cave in Kentucky last year, we got to that spot. Many of you have been to places like this in caves before, where all the lights go out.

Where you can't see anything. You can't even wave your hand in front of your face. You don't know it's there. It's the closest I've ever felt to being blind. We knew it was coming at some point, so I was holding our five-year-old.

But they didn't tell us exactly when, and so when all of the sudden the lights went out, I felt two things very quickly. The first was an absolute death squeeze on my upper body.

[20:17] The second was a death squeeze on my leg. Christy was terrified. No, no, no, no. We have two other girls. And I felt both of those in that same moment.

That clinging to dad is faith. Why did they do that? Well, simply because they felt their need in that moment.

Hopeless on their own. And they had learned that I was safe to trust to care for them. They didn't have everything analyzed or figured out.

They didn't know exactly why they couldn't see all of a sudden. They didn't know exactly what my skills in navigating through darkness were. They certainly didn't know that.

But they clung to me. That's faith. We all have faith in something. Very simply, it's what you cling to when the lights go out and your life is on the line.

[21:26] What do you cling to then? Your own intellectual prowess? Your success? Someone else's stability?

Universal karma? Huh? The question is, the object of your faith, will it really hold?

Will it come through? Will it save you? Jesus says this, if he is the object of your faith, yes, he will.

In fact, he doesn't just say that.

He shows it, doesn't he? He shows the blind man. He heals him. Your faith has made you well. It's a word for holistic healing for both physical and spiritual healing.

And I was thinking this week, did the blind man understand all that lay ahead? When as an exercise of his faith, he followed Jesus to Jerusalem?

[ 22 : 28 ] I doubt it. Did you know why he'd been blind all those years? And what God was doing in his life? I doubt it.

He knew Jesus was the safe one to cling to, to rest in, to shape his life around. There was no one else for him to follow.

His heart saw that clearly. Not all the answers and explanations, but the one that he could trust. That's where this passage takes us.

From the blindness of seeing people, to the sight of the blind man, and finally to the one who cures all blindness.

To Jesus himself. To Jesus himself. Jesus, with a word, heals the blind man. It's a picture, again, we've seen it over and over in Luke, of the restoration that Jesus is bringing to all of creation.

[ 23 : 38 ] It's remarkable. Healing a blind man. But notice briefly just a couple remarkable details in this story.

This man cries out in desperation, but ignoring him, Jesus continues steadfastly toward Jerusalem as he just reminded his disciples that he must do and that's where he must go.

No. No. Verse 40. Jesus stopped.

He hasn't been doing that on the way to Jerusalem, has he? Jesus stopped. His magnificent mission is never so grand.

He's never so grand. That it overlooks the least. Jesus is never rushing by you. He's never, he's never looking past you.

[ 24 : 45 ] Even on his way to the cross, he's not losing sight of you. You're on his heart.

He stops. He stops. He stops. And then he asks this remarkable question. What do you want me to do for you?

He dignifies this man by allowing him to express his need, but what a question. The divine Messiah says, what do you want me to do for you?

Save me. Rescue me. Remove the blindness of my eyes or perhaps today of my heart.

The point of seeing who Jesus is here is that he heals.

[ 25 : 52 ] His kingdom breaks in and reverses the brokenness of the world, lifting up the lowest, giving yet another proof that he is the one who can heal whatever the blindness or the brokenness is.

In other words, if you're here this morning and you see any of your spiritual blindness, then Jesus, the promised solution to your problem is stopping for you.

Jesus is showing you. Jesus is showing you that you can trust him, that you can cling to him. And your confusion, your darkness, your doubts are safe with him.

He wants us all to see him. That's why he's walking with us. That's why he's asking us to come along with him as he heals this blind man and talks to him about who he is.

Today, Jesus is asking, what do you want me to do for you? And he's already got the answer for you too. He's already gone to the cross.

[ 27 : 08 ] Jesus, willingly entered into your darkness and purchased your healing. He is restoring this whole broken world.

He alone can heal what ails you. And he stops today to offer you hope in your despair.

To offer you help in your need. As I was reading this story this week, one thing that the Holy Spirit really impressed on my heart was the urgency that this blind man felt in his situation.

And I say this, I want to be very careful. I say this not to manipulate you, but rather to encourage you to consider seriously what Jesus asks and offers to you today.

The blind man cries out to Jesus and can't be silenced. Why do you think that is? He heard who this was and he knows well that Jesus is not coming to hang out for a few weeks outside the gates of Jericho.

[ 28 : 28 ] Jesus is passing by, isn't he? The blind man, this is a guy he's heard about and never encountered. And this is now his one chance.

The Savior is here asking him, what do you want me to do for you? And none of us knows if we will hear him ask us that again.

None of us is guaranteed our next breath, are we? We don't control that. Our hope for eternity is walking by this morning.

And we don't know if we'll have an opportunity to have him walk by us like this again. He's asking, what can I do for you?

Maybe you've been hanging around Jesus a long time and you've been blind to his heart. Or maybe this is the first time you've ever come face to face with Jesus and really considered who he is.

[ 29 : 35 ] If you've never seen him for who he truly is. If you've never thrown yourself upon him and clung to him desperately as the Savior and Lord that you can't live without.

Then don't leave here this morning without crying out to him. Have mercy on me. Don't leave here today without saying, Lord Jesus, I don't even know who you are, but I need you.

Help me. Come and talk to a friend next to you. Come to the prayer room after the service. Talk with one of our elders. Come grab me.

You can cry out to him on your own. Talk to him right where you are. But don't leave today. Don't leave today. Don't leave today. Don't leave today. Without meeting with Jesus who's here by his spirit through his word saying to you, what do you want me to do for you?

And we need him. Say, Jesus, give me faith to trust you when I don't know. When I don't understand.

[ 30 : 47 ] When I want to give up. When I want to give up. Jesus, give me eyes to see. To see you.

Father, that is what we need. Would you by your spirit have scales fall from our eyes?

Jesus. We all need Jesus and we don't like being needy. Would you show us that this morning?

Would you show us how safe it is? To bring needs to you? Because Jesus meets all of our needs.

Come Holy Spirit. Show us Jesus in his glory and beauty. Give us faith. That we don't have on our own.

[ 31 : 56 ] Teach us to trust him. Teach us to rest. Teach us to cling to him when we don't understand. Because he's shown us that he is safe to trust.

Work in our hearts, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. For more information, visit us online at [southwood.org](http://southwood.org).

Peace. Peace. crews of timer física. Episode 3 People who have heard from the lips are high okay. Finally, give me the music to the mercy.

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Welcome to the guest.