

# Seeing With New Eyes

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[ 0 : 00 ] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

! And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. And when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, Do you see anything? And he looked up and he said, I see men, but they look like trees walking. Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again, and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything.

And he sent him to his home, saying, Do not even enter the village. Verse 27, And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi.

[ 1 : 22 ] And on the way, he asked his disciples, Who do people say that I am? They told him, John the Baptist.

And others say, Elijah. And others, One of the prophets. And he asked them famously, But who do you say that I am?

Peter answered him, You are the Christ. And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Jesus said, Heaven and earth will pass away.

My words will never pass away. And so we have the privilege of sitting under these words that remain forever. Have you ever been stuck? Have you ever been in a situation where no matter how hard you tried, you don't see any way out?

The iconic southern rock band, the Allman Brothers, play an old blues song about a man in just that type of situation. He was stuck in a room with no way out.

[ 2 : 32 ] Well, technically there was a way out, but that way, he said, he just can't go. The song begins, There ain't but one way out, baby. And I just can't go out that door.

It's a blues song, so he sings that a half dozen times. But there ain't no way out. There ain't but one way out, babe. And I just can't go out that door. But later, he tells us why this one door he can't exit out.

He says, I just can't go out because there's a man down there, and he might just be your man. I don't know.

So he's stuck. He's with a woman whose real man might be downstairs. So let's lay aside the man's moral problems for a moment. He's stuck.

And he ain't coming out for a while. Last week, when we left the disciples, they were similarly stuck.

[ 3 : 41 ] They've been following Jesus for over two years now. They've been with him by the sea and in the boat and on the mountain and among the tombs. They've seen him heal countless people. They've seen many people, many crowds come and turn and follow him, and yet they appear to be completely stuck in misunderstanding.

After feeding 5,000 people and then another 4,000, they still don't see who this guy is. They don't get it. Sure, they know he's a good man.

They know he must be a prophet. He must be a man of God. But they're unable to see anything more than that. They're like anyone who reads the stories about Jesus and doesn't see anything more than a good moral teacher.

They're like all of us who can learn a lot about Jesus but still not see who the real Jesus is unless Jesus opens our eyes. In a book about Scottish theology and history, Don McLeod writes, many in our churches have had no experience of the emotional and effective side of the Christian faith.

Having never faced the truth about themselves, they have no bad conscience and no fear of divine law to fill them with grief, fear, and shame. Conversely, they have never tasted the wonder of

forgiveness or been overwhelmed with a sense of the freshly discovered love of God or known the peace that passes all understanding.

[ 5 : 07 ] This could describe the disciples right there. Their hearts cannot sing, I once was blind, but now I see. Above all, they know nothing of such a love for Christ as fills them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

He continues there, parenthetically, our one great characteristic is complacency. Complacency in the church itself.

Dead branches, his lifeless members, what these people need is resurrection. That's what these disciples were, complacent.

What these disciples need is resurrection. So many ways. That's what all of us are, apart from God's intervention. That's why all of us need more than anything else. Resurrection, we need God to make us new.

We need God to unstick us by giving us a new heart. We need God to fill us with the Spirit, open our eyes. Otherwise, we're stuck in darkness. And this passage, wonderfully put together this morning, unveils the only way out.

[ 6 : 15 ] It includes this strange miracle followed by a breathtaking confession of who Jesus is. And both the miracle and the confession underline the only way out and the only way to see Jesus.

No one, in a word where we're going, no one can see Jesus unless their eyes are open to the glory of Christ. No one can truly see Jesus.

Who this Jesus of Nazareth is unless their eyes are open to the glory of the Christ. So we're going to break this out in three points.

First is the miracle. The opening five verses of our passage tell the story of Jesus healing a blind man. Martin Lloyd-Jones says, it is in many ways one of the most remarkable of all the miracles ever performed by our Lord and Savior.

What makes it remarkable, though, is the remarkable way. So it's not just remarkable that He heals this man. What makes it remarkable is the remarkable way He heals him.

[ 7 : 19 ] But let's not get too ahead of ourselves. We last saw Jesus when He was in the boat with His disciples, right? And He turned to them and He asked them these questions and they traveled across the Sea of Galilee again and up to the north end arriving in a town called Bethsaida.

Look at verse 22. They came to Bethsaida and some people brought a blind man. Bethsaida is a town known for fishing. Literally, the name means a house of the fisher.

And we know that some of the disciples were from here, so perhaps they went there as a place of refuge to see their family or something like that. But the first person they encounter is not a family member or an old friend or a fishing buddy, but a blind man.

Some people, we've seen this so many times, some people, verse 22, brought to Him a man, a blind man, and begged Him to touch Him.

This blind man, to use our word, is completely stuck. He's completely in the dark. Not metaphorically, but no light to show Him where to walk or to show Him what lies ahead.

[ 8 : 33 ] He's completely without sight. He's reduced to a life without sight, reduced to a life based on the other four senses of touch and hearing and smell and taste.

Perhaps more than anything else, he is without the help of the Jewish religion. This man is another one of those so-called suppliants.

So this is the second to last one. They show us this world of great need. They show us this world outside the gate. These individuals, under the shadow of death, of brokenness and blindness, a world the Jewish religion could not help.

But when his friends hear of him, they come to help him. Now if you know, or if you ever met a blind person, you know they're dependent upon others.

They're dependent on others or a service animal to guide them. And so otherwise, they'll run into things. And so they need help. They need a guiding hand. You know, I was reading a column the other day about guide runners in these Olympic-type events.

[ 9 : 42 ] And a runner runs alongside someone who's completely blind in a sprinting event. It's an amazing little illustration of what blind people need. So perhaps some of the folks in this story were friends.

Perhaps they were guides. Perhaps they had stopped in on average days of the week to take this guy out to the store or to the market or to the villages for something like that.

Perhaps they took shifts. Perhaps they took different days. Perhaps there was a crowd because they all rallied around him and took care of this man. But when Jesus draws near, it's not their kindness that stands out to me.

It's their faith. When they hear Jesus is near, they go to find him. They go to his house. They take him by his hand. They lead him right up to Jesus.

And just like we've seen numerous times, they beg Jesus to intervene and to heal this man's blindness. And I just got to pause for a minute. This is just a wonderful picture of Christian community done right.

[10:45] We need folks who will come and find us and lead us out to see more of Jesus. We need folks who will hunt us down in our brokenness and blindness and our bitterness so that we can see more of Jesus.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says it well that, and I quoted this yesterday in our class, but the Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother. All of us experience moments where Christ seems so distant and the truths of Christ seem so ungraspable.

That's when we need our brother to come, and so his friends come for him just like we should go and go for our friends and drag them to Jesus Christ. And the friends demonstrate great faith, but so too this man.

He goes with them. We don't know what the day looked like, but it took faith to believe Jesus could possibly do something with them.

Upon their request, Jesus takes him aside. So we see no reluctance in Jesus, not like the Syrophenician woman or something like that. They beg him to touch him. Verse 23, And Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village.

[12:00] Like the deaf man, Jesus takes him aside, outside of the public eye. Jesus takes him by the hand. I just love it. He takes him by the hand and leads him out of the village. He takes him on a walk.

A private walk. Reminds me of that old hymn in the garden when I walked alone with the Lord. But oh, don't you wonder, the little interaction. What's the small talk would Jesus look like?

And when they get somewhere quiet, Jesus begins to work again with his saliva. Verse 23, He let him out, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he said, Do you see anything?

He looked up and he said, I see men, but they look like trees walking. It's like the Lord of the Rings. It took a little bit for some of that, but the blind man can see. Not clearly.

[13:06] You know, interestingly, there's so much emphasis on his hands right here. Four times he references his hands. He lays his hand, he takes him by the hand, lays his hands on him. He lays his hands on his eyes.

He opens his eyes with his hands. Why so much emphasis? It's obviously to indicate the personal touch and personal encounter with our Lord Jesus Christ, but there's another reason, I believe, that's going on.

I think that's behind this. In the Old Testament, the main use of laying on a hand was to take something unholy and to dedicate it before it enters the presence of God.

So you would lay hands on the priests. Sons of Aaron, you'd lay hands on them to dedicate them to the Lord because they're unholy, but they're going into the holy presence of God. Or you would lay hands on an animal, not merely transferring your sin to that animal like the scapegoat, but you would lay hands on any sacrifice, dedicating it to the Lord, dedicating it clean from all his impurity, dedicating it to the Lord.

But in this story, it is not men that lay hands on something, but the Lord himself, the holy one who lays hands on the unholy and makes him able to approach the Lord.

[14:11] And so Jesus goes to work again with his hands. He laid his hands on his eyes again and he opened his eyes.

His sight restored and he saw everything clearly. Lays his hands, opens his eyes with his hands and the blind man can see.

Now the question we're all wanting to ask, right, is what in the world is going on here? Why does Jesus heal this man in two stages? It's the only example of a two-stage miracle in the Gospels.

Was it because this man was really blind and needed extra help? Surely not. Not for this God man, Jesus Christ.

Was it because the miracle was hard for Jesus? This one just took a double swing, you know, or something like that. Surely not. So why? I think there's two reasons. One is it seems that Jesus went as fast as this man's faith would allow.

[ 15 : 20 ] Scriptures say again and again, your faith has made you clean. Jesus heals in accordance with faith. So if you were born blind, would you immediately believe this guy could heal you with a touch or with a word?

Maybe. But maybe not. maybe you would believe but also struggle with unbelief.

I think it's a precious example of Jesus' compassion. He healed him gradually so that his faith would be completely built. But on the other hand, this miracle is a sign to the disciples.

Jesus is saying something loud and clear to those guys. Of course they knew that Jesus could heal someone physically. They knew, I mean, he could heal a man born blind. He's done all these other things. They didn't need a sign for that but Jesus is teaching them something deeper.

Martin Lloyd-Jones says it like this, it was due to our Lord's own determined plan to do the work in this given way in order that he might teach a lesson and give a certain message. So it's acted out dramatically before the audience of these disciples, the only people we're told that are there so they would see something.

[ 16 : 38 ] In other words, all of our Lord's miracles are more than events, they are in a sense parables. Now if you capture what's going on here while they're still in the boat, Jesus says, having eyes do you not see?

Having ears do you not hear? And the emphasis upon sight just threads right through this passage. The emphasis from sight is significant. We have a few words for sight here, seeing and looking but in these verses there's eight different Greek words for seeing right here.

So the emphasis is very clear. No one can see physically unless Jesus opens their eyes but the lesson he's trying to drive home these disciples is no one can see spiritually unless Jesus opens their eyes.

No one can see Jesus unless their eyes are open to the glory of Christ and so we're going to see how he breaks this, he helps them understand this and point two the confession. So the miracle and then the confession.

The next three verses of our text focus on Peter's confession. After healing the blind man Jesus and his disciples began to make their walk up the hill to Caesarea Philippi. In verse 27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi which would have been a full day's walk 25 miles north of Bethsaida.

[ 17 : 55 ] It was a Roman city obviously named for Caesar Augustus but it was primarily a Gentile city which is fascinating for what's about to happen. So Jesus along the way he asked them two questions similar to the healing of the blind man this one folds out in two stages so there's two stages of the blind man's healing but there's two questions here for our Lord and each of the commentators fascinatingly noted Jesus' psychological insight in these two questions that intensify.

They're asked in such a way general to specific impersonal to personal try to snuff out what these disciples really believe about Jesus.

So the first question look in verse 27b he says on the way he asked his disciples who do people say that I am? That's a simple question right?

All you got to do is share what people think and what people are saying all you got to give him is information. What are people saying about me? What do people believe about me? And if you remember their answers are just like the way the people around Herod answered back in chapter 6 they say some say you're John the Baptist that's what Herod believed he was so intimidated by this guy that he believed Jesus must be John the Baptist coming back from the dead to confront him about his marriage issues.

There's no other explanation but we know from Luke that John and Jesus are first cousins and John came to prepare the way. Others say you are Elijah.

[ 19 : 39 ] Now that makes a little bit more sense if you know your scriptures the very last book in the Old Testament and the very last chapter and the very last verses of the Old Testament in Malachi he tells about an Elijah who will come we have it for you in Malachi 4 5 he says behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes so he's not he's not saying a reincarnation or something like that but another one in the line of Elijah to stand out and so so they thought they were all the Jews were always looking for Elijah if they had a Passover feast they left a chair unoccupied at the table and that was for Elijah so they would always be ready

for him they were always looking for him they're always waiting for him and so they were looking for him but we know from the scriptures that Jesus is not Elijah because he said John was this Elijah that was so supposed to come so you're seeing a lot wraps up in John or maybe they would say some people say you're just one of the prophets and maybe we would think Jesus is okay being compared to John the Baptist or Moses or Elijah or Isaiah or something like that maybe Jesus would like that you're just one in this line you're just one like the rest of these guys but to put Jesus in the same category what we're about to find out with them is to show the great misunderstanding about who Jesus is and who these guys were

Elijah and John the Baptist all these are but grains of sand and Jesus is Everest all these are but road signs and Jesus is the destination he's what all of it has been pointing to and so they're zeroing in and discovering who this Jesus is and look in verse 29 he asks his second question but who do you say that I am Peter answered him you are the Christ much like the second stage of the healing of the blind man the disciples eyes are suddenly open and they say you're the Christ now Jesus Christ Christ is not his last name it became a personal name in the way we talk about it the way it's sometimes used in the New Testament but Christ was always a title Jesus' name would have been Jesus Bar Joseph Jesus son of Joseph or Jesus of Nazareth you see that in Mark 6 Christ was a title much like Joe Biden assumed a new title on January 20th a president Jesus is called by the title Messiah Christ means anointed one comes from the Hebrew word referring to the Messiah now we have to take a step back to get the full impact of what's going on here for thousands of years the people of Israel lived on a narrow little piece of land in the Middle East and they were pretty much the whipping boy of all the nations around there was a holocaust in Germany in 1940s but there were a lot of other holocausts for Jewish people in fact just 200 years before the coming of Jesus Antiochus IV won control of Palestine by defeating Egypt right there in Caesarea Philippi and began 20 years of cruelty for Jews he brought down harsh taxes he renamed the temple that they worshipped in in Jerusalem to Zeus he had a pig sacrificed on the altar now you know pigs were unclean animal he had pigs sacrificed on the altar desecrating it ordered sacrifices to be offered by unqualified men all throughout the land desecrating the most holy places to Jews but there was a time when when when history was good for these guys there was a time when David was king in this narrow or this small little pocket of time in the history of Israel David was king he brought peace and prosperity he brought respect before the surrounding nations more than that David was God's man he was the man after God's own heart and on this little sliver of land David ruled the world that's why 1st Samuel and 2nd Samuel would just read like a comic book I mean because David just smiting everybody left and right but he died and his kingdom fell apart eventually falling to Nebuchadnezzar in 15 or 586 but there was an expectation that another king was coming another king like David there were many prophecies that began to come in many expectations of this king he would be born of David's line he would rule with wisdom he would do what is just and right he would be strong and mighty doing wondrous works he would bring peace he would open wide the way to God one of the many prophecies about this coming one Isaiah 35 says it like this say to him who is anxious of heart be strong fear not for your God will come with vengeance with a recompense of God he will come and save you then the eyes of the blind shall be open the ears of the deaf unstopped then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy so suddenly they realize

Jesus is the one who was promised all along now how did these guys come to this I imagine they're walking along the road you know we might think there's a coffee table conversation that's a hiking conversation where questions asked and there's a lot of lingering I believe all the scenes began to come together who is this who commands the unclean spirits and they obey who is this who chases away fear and sickness and disease who is this who cleanses the lepers and calls the lame to rise and walk who is this who heals a withered hand who is this who calms the sea who is this who goes deep into demon territory to find a man whom everyone else has cast out a man harassed by a legion who is it who's stronger than the legion that inhabit this man who is it who calms the sea who is it that raises the dead who is it that feeds thousands and thousands with a few loaves of bread who is it who walks on water who is it who heals a gentile woman's daughter and opens a deaf man's ears who is it that opens the eyes of the blind and suddenly like Paul on the Damascus road the scales fall from their eyes this one is not another

[ 26 : 52 ] John the Baptist it's not another Elijah it's not another prophet this is the one this is the king this is God's anointed this is the Christ in a way that only Peter can do he just blurts out you are

the Christ after looking at him and watching him they finally see him we said at the beginning of this book Mark's not going to tell you who Jesus is he's going to show you and they finally saw it he opened their eyes to see the glory of the Christ in the winter of 1850 the young 15 year old

Charles Spurgeon was trudging through the snow on his way to church eventually though the blizzard became too much and he turned into a small church for worship and I quote Mr. Spurgeon recounts I sometimes think I might have been in darkness and despair now had it not been for the goodness of God and sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning when I was going to a place of worship when I could go no further I turned down a court and came to a little primitive Methodist chapel in that chapel there might be a dozen or 15 people the minister did not come that morning all snowed up I suppose a poor man a shoemaker a tailor or something of that sort went up to the pulpit to preach he was obliged to stick to his text for the simple reason that he had nothing else to say no preparation the text was look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth Isaiah 45 22 he didn't even pronounce the words rightly that didn't matter there was I thought a glimpse of hope for me in that text he began thus my dear friends this is a very simple text it just says look now that does not take a great deal of effort he continued it ain't lifting your foot or your finger it is just look well a man need not go to college to learn to look you may be the biggest fool and yet you can look a man need not be worth a thousand a year to look anyone can look a child can look but what this text says it says look unto me he continues many of you are looking to yourselves there's no use looking there you'll find never find comfort in yourselves then the good man followed his text

Mr. Spurgeon said look unto me I am sweating great drops of blood look unto me I'm hanging on the cross look unto me I am dead and buried look unto me I rise again look unto me I ascend I'm sitting at the father's right hand oh look unto me look unto me this poor man said Spurgeon continues when he had got about that length and managed to spend out ten minutes he was at the length of his tether that means he was exhausted and everything he could hope to say then he looked upon me under the gallery and I dare say with so few present he knew me to be a stranger he said young man you look very miserable well I did but I had not been accustomed to have remarks made on my personal appearance from the pulpit however it was a good blow struck he continued and you will always be miserable in life and in death if you do not obey my text but if you obey it this moment you'll be saved then he shouted as only a primitive

[ 31 : 31 ] Methodist can young man looked to Jesus Spurgeon concludes there and then the cloud was gone darkness rolled away and from that moment I saw the son I could have risen that moment and sung with the most enthusiastic of them of the precious blood of Jesus Christ that's what happened to disciples that's what happened to Mr.

Spurgeon the prince of preachers that's what happens to anybody who looks fully in the face of Jesus they stay looking their eyes will be open no one can truly see Jesus unless their eyes are open to the glory of the Christ I want to make two points by way of application and conclusion first is do not stop looking to Jesus until he opens your spiritual eyes to see the glory of Christ it kind of sounds like I'm saying the same thing over and over again but I think it will come out do not stop looking to Jesus until he opens your eyes to the glory of Christ one of the major examples of faith in this passage of that of the blind man I believe after the Lord lays his hands on him he says I see people right it look like trees walking but I see people he he's no longer blind like suddenly he begins to see like he's no longer blind he's in this actually this odd in between right there you know I see but don't see clearly so he's he's not blind but also not fully of sight and I just imagine what would have happened if he had stayed there he would not have been blind any longer because he sees yet he would not been able to see because he does not see clearly and it's so easy to stop at a little bit of Christianity after seeing just a little bit it's so easy to see a bit of Christianity and though you don't see it clearly to stop there Martin Lloyd John says it like this the most comfortable type of religion is always vague religion nebulous and uncertain cluttered with forms and ritual I'm not surprised that Roman Catholicism attracts certain people the more vague and indefinite your religion the more comfortable it is there's nothing so uncomfortable as clear cut biblical truths that demand decisions

I'm not saying you got to have everything tightened down but Jesus Christ draws clear lines it's so easy to settle for a vague religion it's so easy to settle historically if you think about it for a good that Jesus is just a good moral teacher if you read the gospel of Mark that is not allowed who is this has authority like that he can't be a good moral teacher it's so easy to settle for a Jesus who just agrees

with you but vague Christianity is not Christianity at all so don't stop looking to Jesus until he opens your eyes to see Matthew 16 says it like this after Peter made that big confession Matthew 16 Jesus responded to him said blessed are you Simon bar Jonah son of Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my father who is in heaven and so keep looking until your spiritual eyes are truly open and you see clearly who

Jesus is but after he heals the blind man and after Peter makes his confession he makes two similar statements to both of them don't tell anybody look verse 26 he says he sent them home do not even enter the village verse 30 he said I strictly charge them to tell no one about him and you are like what this is the crescendo of the whole book why do you tell no one about him the very first book verse in the gospel says the beginning of the gospel good news of Jesus Christ the son of God and he's saying to him you see some of me but you're going to see a lot more of me in the days ahead so don't go talking yet because this Christ before he reigns as king over all he must suffer and that's what it's going to wrap eyes to see the full glory of

[ 36 : 21 ] Jesus of Christ don't stop looking to Jesus until he opens your physical eyes to see the glory of Christ even though we see the glory of Christ we walk by faith isn't that what makes the Christian life so hard we wrestle with sickness sin darkness and death we walk in darkness but one day our eyes will see the glory of the Lord back in 1820 there was a little six week old baby who had inflammation of the eyes and the doctor applied some cold I mean hot compresses and burned the corneas of the little child blinding her for life when she was nine years old she wrote the line oh what a happy soul am I although I cannot see I'm resolved that in this world contented

I will be that little girl went on to write 8000 hymns that the church has sung her name is Fanny Crosby she tells a story of one well meaning preacher coming up to her one day and saying I guess it is a great pity that the master did not give you sight when he showered you with so many gifts that's a great comment you know don't you want to just knock that bozo but her comments even better she responded at once because she'd heard comments like these before do you know that if at birth I'd been able to make one petition it would have been that I was born blind because when I get to heaven the first face that shall gladden my sight will be that of my savior the fact is we're all walking by faith and walking through darkness but one day we'll see first

Corinthians 13 12 says that for now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face now I know in part and I shall know fully even as I have been fully known praise the Lord let us pray father in heaven thank you for the privilege of sitting under your word and thinking through these things we long to see more and more of the glory of Christ we praise you and worship you for all that we do know about him about his great love and about his compassion about his determination about his willingness to scorn even the shame of the cross for the joy set before him and we exalt in him this day Lord we pray that you would open our eyes more and more spiritually to see more and more about him even as we wait till physically you open our eyes once for all we thank you and we praise you in

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