

March 10, 2019

“Sight for the Blind”  
Matthew 20:29-34

FCF: The struggle to truly see

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Jesus alone gives sight to the blind.  
(magnet) We must look to Him that we might see.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

The use of camouflage in warfare is as old as warfare itself. Vegetius wrote in the 4th century of naval camouflage used during the Gallic Wars. Centuries later, the “Dazzle” approach was used in WWI - a concept invented to reduce the number of British merchant ships lost to German submarines. Knowing that such large objects could not be concealed, bold shapes and lines in contrasting colors would be painted onto a ship’s hull. This made it difficult for sub commanders to accurately assess a ship’s size, shape, course, and range. A fairly innovative idea.

The point of camouflage is, of course, to make things hidden and hard to truly see. Our text this morning shows us there is much more that is profoundly hidden and hard to truly see.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [Matthew 20:29-34](#)

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Blindness was common in the ancient world, often due to disease and infection. Some of the most vivid pictures of the Bible center on blindness - dim-eyed Isaac tricked by his own son, the gouging of Samson’s eyes, the blindness of Paul at his conversion. Figuratively, blindness stood for to an inability to see the truth or an unwillingness to face it. But whether physical or spiritual, blindness meant a state of terror and despair. And God alone could reverse it.

Here we see Jesus healing blindness. At this point in His ministry, Jesus and the disciples are heading south from Galilee to Jerusalem. That path would take you along the Jordan River and up into Jericho. The Jericho of this time was a wealthy city. The surrounding region was a producer of balsam - believed to be an aid to diseases of the eyes. So it was a draw to the blind.

Into this setting came Jesus, along with many more on their way to the Passover. And, as a witness of this, what Matthew wants to convey is that Jesus gives sight to the blind. Not just that but that Jesus *alone* gives sight to the blind. So we must look to Him that we might see.

What would that mean? Recognizing at least these three things. First, the reality of this miracle. Second, the necessity of this miracle. And then, third, the wonder of this miracle.

**I. THE REALITY OF THIS MIRACLE**

First, the reality of this miracle. That is, this was a real historical event that happened.

*A) According to the Scriptures*

Let’s talk about miracles for a moment. What do we mean when we speak of a miracle?

1. How we speak

We tend to be pretty loose with this. An unexpected outcome - a passing grade. A life-changing event - the birth of a child. Or even just in the world of sports - “The Music City Miracle.”

## 2. How the Bible speaks

The Bible speaks of miracles in a different way. Wonders and mighty works - events triggering awareness of God's presence and power. Signs - pointing to things beyond the event itself.

### B) *Engaging with the Arguments*

Obviously, not everyone believes such things could happen and would argue against this.

#### 1. An acknowledgement

To which we must acknowledge such things are not the norm for us. But they weren't for those folks either. The Bible notes many miracles but they are spread over centuries and in bursts.

#### 2. Our assumptions

So with the acknowledgment, we also need to talk about our assumptions. We all have them.

We all do. And they drive our conclusions. Listen to this quote from J. I. Packer ([READ quote](#)):

Belief in the miraculous is integral to Christianity. Theologians who discard all miracles, thus obliging themselves to deny Jesus' incarnation and resurrection, the two supreme miracles of Scripture, should not claim to be Christians: the claim is not valid. The rejection of miracles by yesterday's scientists sprang not from science but from the dogma of a universe of absolute uniformity that scientists brought to their scientific work. There is nothing irrational about believing that God who made the world can still intrude creatively into it. Christians should recognize that it is not faith in the biblical miracles, and in God's ability to work miracles today should he so wish, but doubt about these things, that is unreasonable.

That's a challenge worth our hearing. We need to strive to be open and let the evidence speak.

That's what it means to consider the reality, the time and space historicity, of this miracle.

### *Application:*

In terms of application, it's really quite simple. In a conversation, when this topic comes up and you sense pushback, it can help to probe along these very lines. And, if you are feeling resistance to this yourself even now, ask yourself, "Why? Why am I struggling with this? Is it intellectual? Do I need more facts? Or is it more the will and I'm scared of the implications?"

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## II. THE NECESSITY OF THIS MIRACLE

Moving from the reality of this miracle, we have the necessity. There are two levels of blindness here - physical and spiritual ([READ Matthew 20:33-34](#)). In v.33, the word for "eyes" is literal and physical. But in v.34, this is a word with a poetic sense, meaning "eyes of the soul."

### A) *Physical Blindness*

What's going on here? Let's think about those suffering from physical blindness.

#### 1. What they lived

Think of what these two men lived. This disability meant an inability to work and provide. That then meant destitution and dependency. In fact, the other Gospels speak of their being beggars.

#### 2. What they knew

That's what they lived. But what of what they knew? ([READ Matthew 20:30-32](#)) "Lord" - at least a term of respect. "Son of David" - more than a man but the Messiah. "Have mercy on us" - they knew He has the ability to heal. So the irony is that the blind see. And the seeing don't.

## *B) Spiritual Blindness*

Which then takes us to those suffering from something far worse, a spiritual blindness.

### 1. Opposition

Think of the opposition, the Jewish and Roman authorities (**READ Matthew 20:18-19**).

### 2. Confusion

So there's the opposition. Then the confusion. The crowds rebuke these men, much the same as the disciples had rebuked some parents wanting to bring their children to Jesus. "He has better things to do." Speaking of the disciples, haven't we already heard this question? Go back to the section just before (**READ Matthew 20:20-21**). They come to Jesus, looking for high positions.

All of which points to physical and spiritual blindness and the necessity of this miracle.

### *Application:*

This is a call to persistent prayer. How, after all, does anyone come to see? God can use logical arguments. He can. But a heart's persuasion does not hinge on them. So we need to be committed to prayer that people might see. Here is an example. There are sound points to be made for the pro-life cause. First, it's wrong to intentionally kill an innocent human being. Second, abortion is the intentional killing of an innocent human being. Thus, abortion is wrong.

Simple points clearly supported by the science of embryology. We are human from the start no matter how far along or where we may be. But suppose someone says, "Well, you just believe that because you're religious." To which you can say, "Hold on. I just gave my reasons. You didn't refute them. You just accused me of being religious." Or suppose someone says, "Why are you against a woman's right to choose?" To which you can say, "The right to choose what? There are all kinds of things on which we all should have the right to choose. But not the taking of an innocent human life." Or suppose someone says, "This is just a clump of cells." To which you can, again, appeal to and explore together the realities of science and embryology.

This can be extended to other arenas. The intelligent design of creation demands an Intelligent Designer. A universal moral law imbedded on the human heart demands a Moral Law Giver. My point? These are all sound and reasonable arguments. Yet they go ignored. Why? Because there are two kinds of blindness - the physical and spiritual. Which is a call to prayer.

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## **III. THE WONDER OF THIS MIRACLE**

That then takes us to this last point - the wonder of this miracle. Put yourself there.

### *A) What Jesus Did*

What do you see? Let's look at what Jesus did. Such astonishing power displayed here.

### 1. All other times

All other times, when healers in the Bible were at work, they were careful to say this was only by God's power. We see that with Moses, Elijah, Elisha, Peter, and Paul. Not here, not with Jesus.

2. No other time

And it is not until Jesus that we see the blind being healed. And, along with that, this is His most common miracle. How can this be? God alone gives sight to the blind. What does that tell us?

*B) How He Did It*

Pushing further, it's not just what Jesus did but how He did it (**READ Matthew 20:32-34**).

1. Stopped

He stopped. He had His face set to Jerusalem. And His ears tuned to their cries. So He stopped.

2. Asked

And asked. He was not just acting upon them but engaging with them, drawing them out more.

3. Touched

Then He touched. And what was the first thing they saw with their newfound sight? His face.

You see, it's not just the reality and the necessity of this miracle but the wonder of it as well. And we would do well to ask, "Which was greater, what Jesus did or how He did it?"

*Application:*

We need to take a step back in our study of this event and deal with the Person revealing Himself through this event. (**READ Matthew 20:32**) Let me ask if you believe it's possible that Jesus is asking you that same question now. How would that impact your view of God? What does that stir within you? What is He drawing out in you? What does Jesus want you to see?

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**CONCLUSION:**

Let me read you this excerpt from an article, "The Lighthouse that Wrecked More People Than It Saved." The region it's referring to is Jervis Bay in southern Australia (**READ quote**):

In 1857, the Colonial Architect Alexander Dawson and an assistant surveyor E.F. Millington, began looking for a site suitable for a lighthouse on Cape St George. Unfortunately, Dawson was more interested in the ease of construction rather than providing an efficient navigation aid. When the Pilots Board, which was the controlling authority, went to verify the location Dawson chose they found that the site was not visible from the required approaches. They also found the map prepared by Millington and Dawson suffered from "discrepancies of so grave a character that it is impossible to decide whether either position marked on the map really exists." The board also suspected that Dawson chose the site solely because it was situated closer to a quarry he planned to obtain stones from.

Despite the glaring deficiencies in the planning stage and disagreement by a majority of the board, for reasons not known, the chairman of the board authorized the construction of the lighthouse. For the next four decades the ill-sited lighthouse, which was visible neither from the northern approach to Jervis Bay, nor from the south, was responsible for some two dozen shipwrecks. Eventually in 1899, the lighthouse was replaced by the Point Perpendicular Light in Point Perpendicular, a much more suitable location for a lighthouse on this part of the coast.

Even after decommissioning, the lighthouse continued to cause navigational problems especially on moonlit nights when the golden sandstone tower glowed in the dark. So near the turn of the century, the tower was reduced to rubble to prevent any further disaster.

What does this have to do with our text? We need to recognize that it's not just that "Jesus gives sight to the blind" as though He is but one among many. It's that "Jesus *alone* gives sight to the blind." All others are, at best, partial and incomplete in the help they can give. Their input is flawed, like glasses with cracked lens. Or worse, fatal, like an ill-placed lighthouse by the sea.

Jesus gives us the truest deepest insight into our own hearts. He gives us the only steady lasting wisdom to be found as to where we come from, why we're here, and how we then should live. Jesus is the reality behind our incessant hunger, deepest questions, and yearning for more. How can this be? He is our Creator, Sustainer, and Savior. And so without Him we cannot see.

Jesus alone gives sight to the blind. Him alone. We must look to Him that we might see.

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