

COME AND SEE THE GLORY OF THE LORD!

John 1: 14, I John 1: 1-3, Matthew 2: 7-11, and Luke 2: 15-20, 25,26, 29-32

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This Christmas the Lord has placed on my heart and mind the importance of seeing Him. He has reminded me of so many passages in the Word of God where the vital mission at Christmas, that original birthday of the Lord Jesus, that vital mission was to go and see Jesus. Perhaps the reason we get so bogged down and depressed at times during the Christmas season relates to our failure to be able by faith to see Jesus through the fog of our commercialized Christmas. The fog of covetousness and Christmas trees and lights and sounds and expectations can leave us burdened and wondering if we can even go on to make it through to December 26th.

Back in 1952, a young lady swimmer, Florence Chadwick stepped into the waters of the Pacific Ocean off Catalina Island, determined to swim to the shore of mainland California. Already, Florence was the first woman to swim the English Channel both ways. The weather was foggy and chilly. Florence could hardly see the boats that were accompanying her. Yet Florence swam on for fifteen hours. Finally, she begged to be taken out of the water. Florence's mom in a nearby boat pulled alongside her to tell her she believed in her and that she could make it to the California mainland. But the die appeared to be cast. Florence was emotionally and physically exhausted. Finally she stopped swimming and a rescue boat pulled her out of the water. On the boat, Florence realized the shore was less than half a mile away. At the subsequent news conference the next day, Florence said, "All I could see was the fog...I think if I could have seen the shore, I would have made it."

We so often sing words suggesting that we need God's help to open our eyes, to open our spiritual eyes to Him. We sing songs like "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, (2X) I want to see you, (2X)" or "Open my eyes, Lord, I want to see Jesus, to reach out and touch Him and say that I love Him. Open my ears, Lord and help me to listen, Open my eyes, Lord, I want to see Jesus." What are those songs trying to say? Is it true that many of us are, at times, like Florence, swimming in the fog, and missing Jesus at this Christmas season? John M. Neale in 1966 took a Latin hymn from the 12th century, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," and translated it into English. Verse three states, "O Come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer our spirits with Thine advent here; O drive away the shades of night and pierce the clouds and bring us light." And old French carol in verse three, "Angels, We Have Heard On

High,” goes, “Come to Bethlehem an see, Him whose birth the angels sing, Come adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.”

It seems to be the universal response through the ages that we all need to see the Christ-child. We need to see Jesus. How do we see Jesus by faith? How do we see anyone or any place or anything we haven’t seen with our physical eyes before? For seeing Jesus, we need a sanctified perception, we need spiritual eyes that run on a Biblical track. Francis Schaeffer once said, “The Christian is the really free man—he is free to have imagination. This too is our heritage. The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars.” But Schaeffer went on to exhort, “Truth must fuel our imagination. Imagination should not fly away from the truth, but fly upon the truth.” When I recently went to Nigeria, I read up on Nigeria, all I could get my hands on. I learned a lot of facts, but until I saw Nigeria, all that I had was my imagination based on the facts I had read. Amazingly, many of my expectations were true. Granted, I missed some things, but I didn’t miss anything badly because I had read the facts.

Most of us have some kind of an image of God in our hearts and minds. Some of us relate to our favorite picture or depiction of Jesus. My favorite picture is a picture in the office of a pastor that I saw as a young college student when I played on the Trinity College Basketball Team. We were out on the Atlantic coast playing four teams. This one night, we stayed at a Free Church where I was told I could sleep in the Pastor’s Study. There in Pastor Lloyd Van Dixhorn’s study was a beautiful frame with a white interior. It was enclosed in glass and at the bottom were the words of I Peter 1: 8 and the reference, saying, “Whom having not seen, ye love.” Combined with Isaiah 53: 2, I love that I Peter 1: 8 picture. Isaiah says, “He hath no form nor comeliness or majesty that we should look at Him and no beauty that we should desire Him.” So you say, “Why do you like that empty picture of Jesus?” It isn’t empty, beloved. I know what a man looks like, and Jesus became a man. I have a feeling that I know what an average Israelite looks like. I have many Jewish friends and I’ve been to Israel. I know what it means for any man not to call attention to himself—just an average citizen. I can take it from there and realize my Lord and Savior came here to die for you and me in a body like mine, in a complexion darker than mine, and with a face more marred than that of any man—Isaiah 52: 14. That knowledge from the Word lets my sanctified imagination run on a track that helps me guess what He might have looked like. But I know that in His glorified body, there were nail-prints in His hands and feet and in His side. I’ll know Him in Glory. Thomas didn’t have to put his finger into

the nail-prints or into the pierced side of Jesus in His glorified body. But he did know how to go to his knees. Does the Bible say Thomas went to his knees? No, but my identity with Thomas is so deep for I have doubts at times. What I do know Thomas exclaimed when he saw the Lord was, "My Lord and my God!" And Jesus said, "Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Hebrews 11: 1 tells us, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." We learned last Wednesday night in our Bible study at church that when the children of Israel spoke against God and Moses in Numbers 21: 4-9, God sent fiery serpents among them and the serpents bit the people so that many people died. Moses prayed for the people and God told Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. If a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live. It was to be a look of faith in God's remedy. Jesus took the account of Moses with the bronze serpent and gave us a picture of what true faith is. In John 3: 14,15, Jesus declared, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life." Jesus compared believing in Him or having faith in Him with the Israelites physically looking to the bronze serpent and being healed. Beloved, what I am preaching about today is about seeing Jesus by faith. We cannot see Him incarnate here for He ascended to Glory. Soon we will see Him as He has promised to return to earth.

Zechariah tells us that the Jews who have denied their Messiah for over 2 millennia will soon recognize Him. Zechariah 12: 10 declares, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on Me, on Him whom they have pierced, they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over Him, as one weeps over a first-born." Soon the whole Jewish nation will know Him for they will look upon Him. I know all my conceptions of Jesus may not be totally correct, but I have biblical evidence for most of my imagining of Him. With John in I John 3: 2, I concur. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, God's children, and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Soon all our questions about Jesus' appearance will be settled as we see Him as He is. Today, for a few moments, I want to ponder the meaning of four Greek words that have surfaced as I have studied our texts. Each of them builds one upon another. Each of them call for a response of faith, of seeing faith, of vision faith, of gazing faith that looks deeply into the eyes of Jesus while we still are not able to see Him as the shepherds and the wise men and Simeon and Anna got to see Him. What does God want each

of us to see by faith this Christmas as we look by faith upon the Savior born for us in Bethlehem? I see four pictures of Jesus He wants us to start with by faith as we seek to see Him this Christmas.

JESUS WANTS US TO FIND HIM AND SEE FOR OURSELVES WHO HE IS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, AND HOPEFULLY FOR US, THE KING OF OUR HEARTS.

(I.) Turn to our Matthew passage in 2: 7-11. This word shows up twice in this passage—the Greek word is **leurisko**. Leurisko means to find and to see with intent the one whom you find. Herod actually introduces the word in verse 8 saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have leurisko--found Him, bring me word that I too may come and worship Him. For Herod, the wise men coming to Jerusalem seeking to find the One they had come all the way from Persia to find, meant for him that he would prove his words were a lie. He would not worship Jesus as he said he would. No, but he would seek to kill and destroy Jesus. (Matthew 2: 16-18) Beloved, do we come to find Jesus after a long search, with a holy intent, with honest hearts? Jeremiah 29: 13 is true. “You will seek Me and find Me, when you seek Me with all your heart. Leurisko is found again in verse 11, where we read, “And going into the house, they saw, leurisko—meaning they saw the One they had been seeking for and now found. They fell down and worshipped Him and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh. What do we do when we find the Lord? Do we fall down and worship the One we have sought and found and now whom we see through the eye of faith. When was the last time you have been driven to your knees before the Lord whom you have sought and found? When was the last time you have offered Jesus your very best, your gold, your frankincense and myrrh?

JESUS WANTS US TO KNOW HIM BY FAITH WHEN WE SEE HIM, THAT IS, TO PERCEIVE THAT WE ARE LOOKING UPON HIS FACE.

(II.) Turn with me to our Luke passages. Every time Luke speaks of seeing Jesus here, either by the shepherds or Simeon or Anna, every time he uses the Greek word **eido**. Eido means to see and know by perception. If we are think of heaven where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, we are left with many pictures, but still we come short of knowing all we long to see and know. As the song declares, “I can only imagine.” Yet, I believe God wants us to live our lives knowing by faith that we are seeing His face, and seeking His pleasure as we walk in obedience to Him. It is a seeing of Him that we can’t forget, a sight we want to testify of, a glory that we have looked upon Him. Luke 2: 15 tells us that then shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see—eido this thing that has

happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” They wanted to go view the incarnate Lord Jesus, born in a stable and lying in a manger, just as the angel had told them. Beloved, at Christmas God wants you and me to get alone with Him and by faith, go over unto Bethlehem, and see this thing. I remember when my first son was born. I knew he was a boy. I had seen before Aaron four girls, Amy, Heather, Gretchen, and Aaron’s twin, Audrey, born moments before him. I also got to later see another baby boy, Nathaniel and one more girl, Amanda. God wants me to remember the birth of my boys and the tears of joy I had. He wants me to see Him as glorious in my eyes of faith, becoming a little baby boy, just as I was born a little baby boy, on Big Creek, near Hazard, Kentucky. He wants me to see Him conceived in His mother’s womb, by the miracle of the Holy Spirit hovering over the obedient virgin Mary, who then, just like my mother, carried her son for nine months and then traumatically, with strong labor pain, and tears came into my world and yours. That’s just how Jesus became a baby boy, born of a virgin. Jesus wants me to see and know Him as He came into Bethlehem that first Christmas night. Andrew Peterson wrote a song I love that my two youngest children, Nathaniel and Amanda have sung a few times in our church. The words are:

“It was not a silent night
There was blood on the ground
You could hear a woman cry
In the alleyways that night
On the streets of David's town
And the stable was not clean
And the cobblestones were cold
And little Mary full of grace
With the tears upon her face
Had no mother's hand to hold
It was a labor of pain
It was a cold sky above
But for the girl on the ground
in the dark
With every beat of her beautiful heart
It was a labor of love.

Noble Joseph at her side
Callused hands and weary eyes
There were no midwives to be found
In the streets of David's town
In the middle of the night
So he held her and he prayed
Shafts of moonlight on his face
But the baby in her womb
He was the maker of the moon
He was the Author of the faith
That could make the mountains move
It was a labor of pain
It was a cold sky above
But for the girl on the ground
in the dark
With every beat of her beautiful heart
It was a labor of love
For little Mary full of grace
With the tears upon her face
It was a labor of love.

Luke 2: 17 adds, “And when they saw it,” – they weren’t calling Jesus an “it,” but only remarking that when they saw the sign given by the angel, “You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” They saw it, the sign just as the angel said. When we see Jesus by faith, it must run on a track just as the Word says, and when we see Him face to face, nothing in the Word we have been told will need to be touched up. Our spiritual and physical eido of knowing and perceiving is and will be as the Lord announced it to the shepherds. When the shepherds returned, Luke 2: 20, they were glorifying and praising God for all they

had heard and seen—eido, even as it had been told them. Beloved, when you and I see Jesus by faith, we will always glorify and praise God. I hear the song, “Have you seen Jesus my Lord, He’s here in plain view, Take a look, open your eyes, He’ll show it to you. Have you ever been to the cross, (I’ve been to Golgotha) seen a man dying in pain, with a look of love in His eyes, Then I say, You’ve seen Jesus my Lord.” In Luke 2: 30, the saint, Simeon, took Jesus up in his arms and blessed him saying, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, for my eyes have eido, seen your salvation.” Beloved, if you’ve looked in faith for Jesus to save you, you’ve seen Jesus my Lord, the same Jesus Simeon saw. Thirdly,

JESUS WANTS US TO BEHOLD HIM IN HIS GLORY, THE SON OF HIS FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH. (III.)

Turn to John 1: 14. John the beloved, who saw Jesus up close and leaned on His bosom said it so poignantly. He said, “And the Word—who is the Word? Jesus! John 1: 1-3 tells us, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” Now we can tell who John is speaking about as he continues in John 1: 14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld, or have seen His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” This Greek word for see or seen or beheld is **theaomai**. Theaomai means to look closely at, so as to know for certain, and to perceive. It means to behold with careful contemplation. It means to view with awe and wonder. It means to look upon attentively, with careful deliberate vision. Do we know what we are looking for, beloved? And if we have found the Lord, are we sure we are allowing His veiled glory which soon will not be veiled when He returns, are we sure we are seeing what John saw when he said, “We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.” A Swedish author said it well, in translated words of music, “I saw Him in a stable on a winter’s night. It was dark and lonely, His birth wasn’t right. But who could imagine that this little new born child, was the Son of God, the mighty One. I stand here moved to tears, Now I know who He is. Then I saw Him in a very gloomy place. There on Calvary’s hill, He took my place. And as He bled and died, He paid for all my sin. And now I’m His because He took me in. I stand here moved to tears, Now I know who He is!” Fourthly, and lastly,

JESUS WANTS US TO FIX OUR GAZE UPON HIM UNTIL THE DAY WE SEE HIM FACE TO FACE. (III.)

This last text Pastor Larry read is I John 1: 1 is the crowning way to see Jesus. John said, “That which was from the beginning,

which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life.” The word John used that is translated “looked upon” is the same word, theaomai that is used by him in John 1: 14—to behold Him in His glory, full of grace and truth. But the prior word, that which we have seen with our eyes is a brand new word. This last word is a word that takes us to the heart of seeing Jesus. This Greek word is **horao**. Horao means to gaze at with the eyes, the heart, the mind and soul and spirit. It means to discern clearly who someone is. It means to rivet our attention upon, to fix our gaze upon as we behold Him. An old hymn writer knew the meaning, Jacob Henry back in 1875 when he wrote about Mary finding the good spot, the sweet spot that Jesus said no one could take away from her. Our hymnal on page 401 says the author is unknown, but I found the author. The words are:

“Sitting at the feet of Jesus, Oh, what words I hear Him say! Happy place! so near, so precious! May it find me there each day; Sitting at the feet of Jesus, I would look upon the past; For His love has been so gracious, It has won my heart at last. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, Where can mortal be more blest? There I lay my sins and sorrows, And, when weary, find sweet rest; Sitting at the feet of Jesus, There I love to weep and pray; While I from His fullness gather Grace and comfort every day. Bless me, O my Savior, bless me, As I sit low at Thy feet Oh, look down in love upon me, Let me see Thy face so sweet; Give me, Lord, the mind of Jesus, Keep me holy as He is; May I prove I’ve been with Jesus, Who is all my righteousness.”

Beloved, this Christmas, let’s go to Bethlehem by faith and see Him, let’s see Him as He was at birth, as He was as He grew up, as He was when He died for us, as He is when He arose, and as He will be when He returns. Don’t miss Jesus this Christmas—God, help us see Jesus, we pray. Bow your heads with me.