

Luke 18:31-43

The King Who Opens Eyes

Intro: For some, the year 1993 was a pretty predictable one. Some of you maybe had the same jobs as you do now and were raising young children. For some you were not even born yet. For Travis Freeman that year changed his life forever. Freeman was 12 years old living in Corbin, KY, but in 1993 he woke up one morning completely blind because of an extremely rare sinus infection in his eye. True story. It is dramatized in the movie *23 Blast*, of how he would be the first blind football player in America. Travis, a Christian, went on to serve the Lord and earned a PhD from Southern Seminary.

Our text today is the true story of a man whose life one day was changed forever — unlike Travis he goes from blindness to sight.

- In context, this story stands in contrast with the Rich Young Ruler.
- There are two main points about having open eyes.

1. Open eyes and the glory of the cross (31-34)

- Jesus is with the twelve. Together they are going to Jerusalem.

Here we learn two essential things about the cross: God's plan and the human problem.

1. God's Plan (31-33)

- We need to remember that the journey to Jerusalem is rooted in God's eternal plan.
- Jesus speaks of his death as *fulfillment of scripture* (v31).

The specific text is probably Is. 53 — Innocent lamb-like figure who gave up his life to atone for the sins of God's people.

- Look at the graphic description of the crucifixion. Every word counts.
- With Good Friday coming up, it's good to dwell here for a second. Here are the ingredients of the cross. Mocking, shamefully treated, spit upon, flogging, finally death.

As Jesus's worshipers, we never get beyond this. God's eternal plan centered on the His Creator Son being mistreated and violently killed by his creation.

- Yet God's plan does not end in death — the peak of the mountaintop of Redemption is “on the third day he will rise.”

2. Human Problem (v34)

- It would be nice if the purpose of the cross was crystal clear to everyone. But even those so close to Jesus lacked understanding.
- The disciples still had their hope anchored in a Messiah who would rule through military and political action. They failed to grasp that God's plan was *suffering to glory*.

Illus: If you were told that God's plan for your life was to travel to a major city, be totally disrespected and eventually killed, how would that sit? That's essentially what the disciples were wrestling with. How can something so awful be part of God's plan?

*Often, we tend to think God's plan will go from comfort to glory. No, God's plan is to go from suffering to glory. Read Romans 8. Look at Jesus.

- This isn't just a problem the disciples had. It's a human problem. Our minds are hardwired to be dull and not able to grasp God's way. (noetic effects of the fall).
- The human problem is a failure to *see* glory in the cross. It's a sight problem.

(1 Cor 1:18 CSB)

¹⁸“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved.”

Being a Christian means the cross is at the center of our life.

(Gal 6:14)

¹⁴But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Apply: Are your eyes open to see the glory of the cross? It does seem unthinkable. Christians sing praises about a man who bled to death. Christians sing about and celebrate blood. It either means one of two things to you this morning. Either it's foolish and silly or the cross is God's power of salvation to you.

2. Open eyes and a transformed life (35-43)

- Here we meet a man, one who most ignored, yet his life was forever changed by *one encounter with Jesus*. Mark 10:46 says his name is Bartimaeus.
- Now picture the scene. A blind man is begging on the side of a road. His sight is his handicap, but his hearing is great. So, he picks up on the commotion made by a great crowd, and says, "what's up?"
- When he finds out it is Jesus, his choice of words are remarkable.

1. Son of David. He's essentially saying Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.

**The Son of David is another way of saying "The King who comes in the name of the Lord" (19:38). He's confessing that Jesus is God's ruling Messiah.

- Jesus fulfills the ancient promise that God gave to David (2 Sam 7:13) that his throne would be established forever.

So even these few words remind us this: God always makes good on his promises.

*This man knew that and it would change everything.

2. Have *mercy* on me—that's the humility found in the tax collector.

- This story is so beautiful in what it displays. Jesus is the final hope of the hopeless (James Edwards). Salvation is not for the self-confident or for people who try to add Jesus to an already sufficient life. Salvation is for the hopeless, who realize they are destitute and can only live on the mercy of another.

**But it's more than just confessing your hopelessness; it's also knowing that Jesus can help.

Apply:

This man teaches us how to come to Jesus— *by throwing ourselves at his mercy. Realizing that his compassion is our only hope. That our lives are simply a wreck without him.*

- (v39) The crowd is not there to help this guy, but he is persistent, just like the widow in the parable. He can cry out day and night if that's what it takes.

Illus: A persistent salesperson.

Then in verse 40 Jesus stops. Jesus is at a standstill to invest in this man.

- There may be not only a glorious picture of Christ, but also a discipleship lesson. Following Christ means we care enough to slow down and stop.

Apply: We so need this in a day that is called “Crazy Busy”. Being a follower of Christ is looking out for the overlooked. It's making room in our lives to be interrupted by those others would ignore. We can call these “God appointments” if you wish.

Illus: There was a young guy who lived in our previous community. He has Down's Syndrome and worked at the local grocery store. Living in a small town everyone knew him and treated him well. His job was to bag groceries and then help take them to your car. He was so friendly that he would talk to you, get highly distracted, and you may go home with a smashed slice of bread. We had our share. If you were checking out in the line he was working, it may slow you down 5 minutes of life.

I think the days I reflected Jesus the best is when I was ok being interrupted by him. I was ok making more room in my day to have him tickle my kids and accidentally smash my bread. The days I looked least like Jesus were the days it crossed my mind to stand in another line so I could get on checking tasks off of my busy schedule.

Apply:

I need stories about how Jesus handled people to teach me how to love people.

Disciples need pictures of Jesus so our lives will look more like him.

These pictures don't just shape our worship, but also our walk. Follow the Savior's lead. Don't overlook the overlooked. Make room in your life for God appointments.

- Now this man has one simple request: I want to see.
- And Jesus responds immediately (v43). Literally, in the blink of an eye this man's life was forever changed.
- Now he could see the blue sky of God's creation. He could see the food he eats, the clothes he wears—but most importantly, the first thing he saw was the face of Jesus.

**Also think about it—*the first sight this man saw was the face of Jesus Christ*. Eyes were actually created to see his beauty. The greatest of all sights.

Illus: Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn writer (*To God Be the Glory*) actually blessed God for her blindness and said, “when I get to heaven, the first face that shall every gladden my sight will be that of my Savior”.

Is that our heart?? That's what it looks like to have the eyes of your heart enlightened (Eph 1:18)—to have spiritual saving sight (v42).

Conclusion

Why does Jesus do this miracle? What lessons do we learn?

1. We see Jesus's continual compassion. Even with his suffering and death so close, he continues to give. If we are being conformed to Christ, we need to think the same.
2. We see what saving faith looks like (42). It's coming to Jesus, seeing him rightly (as King) and desperately clinging to his mercy. There is no hope without the mercy of Christ.
3. We see what a transformed life looks like (43). A transformed life is following Jesus and living for his glory and praise. Pretty simple, but it takes open eyes to get there.