

Who Can See God's King?

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Date: 02 April 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I wonder if you have trouble seeing. Some of us need glasses even for everyday things, but when we can't see at all, when it's too dark to see, maybe when our sight fails us, it can be quite frightening.

I once scratched my cornea. It was quite minor, really, but it was so sore that I could barely open my eye for a bit. I went to get it checked, and the doctor did some tests.

But when I went to go out of the clinic, I couldn't see anything. It was worse than when I'd gone in. Everything was a kind of blinding blur of light. So I stumbled my way back in and said, what have you done?

And the doctor explained that he'd put some drops in my eyes to dilate my pupils so that he could see better inside. I went to look in the mirror, and my eyes just looked like kind of whites with a big, round black hole in them.

I'm sure I got some funny looks that day, but I couldn't tell because I couldn't see. Now, thankfully, once those drops wore off, I could see again. The scratch slowly healed.

[1 : 1 1] But some seeing problems don't wear off on their own. And this morning, Luke wants us to know that we all have that kind of seeing problem, a seeing problem that doesn't get better on its own.

He wants us to see that we naturally have a problem seeing God's king, recognizing him. And he wants to show us what needs to happen, where we need to go so that we can see him properly.

I wonder if you have trouble seeing him today. And what you think needs to happen, who you need to see, where you need to go to sort it.

I hope we're beginning to see by now as we've gone through this wee bit of Luke, the bigger point that Luke's making. He's unpacking this for us. Who is right with God? Who can come into God's kingdom today?

Three meetings with the disciples, a blind man and a tax collector. And the question, who can see God's king? And I hope we can see that Luke's really asking the same question, making the same big point.

[2 : 2 3] How can we come rightly to God? And it's really common in churches to read these stories one by one, as if they were just kind of beads that had been threaded together on a string.

You know, each one is beautiful and wonderful, but do they really have anything to do with each other? Or are they just kind of next to each other? But Luke and the other gospel writers, they are less like bead collectors, and more like screenwriters or mural painters.

They are working for the big screen to show us something immense. And this section we're looking at today, it's a piece in that much bigger puzzle. How can we come rightly to God?

Luke shows us three encounters with Jesus. On the face of it, they might seem very different. What do they have to do with each other? But in each of them, he is showing us that we can only come rightly to God when we see Jesus rightly.

And my prayer for us this morning as we look at this together is that God would open the eyes of our hearts. That he would shine that light that we read about earlier, the light of his glory in the face of Christ in us.

[3 : 39] That we would see him. That some of us would pray with the blind man, Lord, I want to see. And that if we came this morning with trouble seeing Jesus, that we would leave here with our blindness healed.

That we would see him for who he really is. Do you see him today? Firstly, Luke wants us to see that the disciples didn't see.

The disciples didn't see. If you just look at verse 31, we have the 12 guys who have been with Jesus ever since the beginning of his ministry. They've seen and heard it all.

But have they grasped yet what he's been saying to them? Just look there. Jesus took the 12 aside and told them, Now it's hardly the first time that Jesus has told them this.

It's actually, as the heading tells us, the third time that he's telling them. That the first two were way back at the beginning of their time on the road, way back in chapter 9.

[4 : 59] And so what have they grasped on the way? The last nine chapters? Well, not, it seems, this crucial and most important truth.

I wonder if your mom or dad or anyone ever said to you, I'm only going to tell you this once. I don't want to have to repeat myself. Well, friends, Jesus isn't like that.

Jesus loves to repeat himself. He'll tell us as many times as we need to hear it from him. Tell me again, Lord. Tell me again what you had to come and do. Tell me again how you had to be rejected.

How you had to suffer, had to die, had to rise again. Do we ever get tired of him telling us that again and again?

Our trust is in Jesus. It's never old news to us, is it? What he's saying here. We have books at home that when we read it to Caleb, we get to the end and do you know what he does?

[6 : 04] He turns it straight back over and opens it again to the first page. Read it again. Read it again. Friends, see Jesus' gentleness, his patience.

He will tell us as many times as we need to, as often as we need to hear it from him, why it was he came, what it is he's done for us. But the fact that his disciples still don't get it should stop us in our tracks if we think that understanding Jesus is simply a case of hearing it enough times.

You think, three years that these guys have been with him in real time. Think of what they saw. Think of what they heard. Three years. We know only a tiny fraction, don't we, of what they saw and heard.

But even that is enough in the Gospels, isn't it? To know who Jesus is, why he came clearly. And yet they didn't see. They didn't see.

And years and years, decades, some of us still don't see. And 2,000 years pass and the world still doesn't see. Why is that?

[7 : 15] If it was just a problem of a lack of information or education, it would be as simple, wouldn't it, as putting a Gospel into somebody's hand and telling them to read it or pointing on the page to what Jesus says.

But we know, don't we, that that doesn't always leave people the wiser or the clearer about Jesus. We know Jesus is still misunderstood. Sometimes ignored, often even the coat hanger for our own views and opinions and values to throw on him.

If you ever had a Gospel conversation with somebody, come away thinking some version of verse 34. They did not understand any of this.

Its meaning was hidden from them. And they did not know what he was talking about. Jesus makes himself so clear, but that doesn't mean we see him clearly.

Why is that? Why is that? We'll come back to that as we go on. But let me just unpack for a minute what he has said, especially if you're hearing it for the first time from him or one of the first times from him, what he came to do.

[8 : 31] I'm so glad to have this opportunity to unpack for you what he has said here. Now, he's speaking about someone called the Son of Man, who the prophets wrote about in the Old Testament.

And the prophet Daniel speaks about a Son of Man in chapter 7 of his book, or one like a Son of Man, a human being who comes to God. And to the Son of Man, says Daniel, is given authority, glory, and sovereign power.

All nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom, one, that will not be destroyed.

What's he talking about? A great and supreme and sovereign king of the universe. And so that is what the disciples have in mind when Jesus is speaking about a Son of Man, when he speaks of himself as the Son of Man, as he did.

He is saying, here I am, that great, supreme, and sovereign king of the world. But what Jesus is saying here, look, is that to fulfill the prophet's vision, that same great king, he himself must be rejected by the world.

[9 : 48] He was humiliated, mocked, tortured, and killed. Which to these guys back then, and often to us today, and to our world, makes very little sense, does it?

It would have made as much sense to them as speaking about a round square, or a dark sun. How could this great and glorious king be defeated and disposed of?

But to do what he came to do, to fulfill God's promises, and take his rightful place in the cosmos, Jesus says that's what he has to do. To suffer, die, and be raised to life again.

And so if that's new to you, or you're still getting your head around it, as we have all had to do, who love Jesus, please know today, there's no getting around this. There's no getting around it.

What Jesus said had to happen, had to happen, and did happen. Whatever else Jesus said or did, he makes so clear that this is the key that unlocks the door to the kingdom.

[10 : 54] So any view of Jesus that does not put his death and resurrection at the very center is therefore a wrong view of Jesus. We are not seeing Jesus rightly or clearly if we are not seeing him through this lens of his suffering, death, and resurrection.

Now if that's a lot to take in, here is wonderful good news that you don't have to think this morning, if I don't get that yet, then I'll never get it.

Or if I don't get it yet, I must not be working hard enough to understand it. Now if you don't see it yet, our second point this morning is brilliant good news that Jesus gives sight to the blind.

Jesus gives sight to the blind. Luke tells us next about two people who want to see Jesus. The blind man in verse 35, his one request is, Lord, I want to see.

And then the tax collector, Luke, in 19 verse 3, who we're told wanted to see who Jesus was. And if you had to go through this passage with a highlighter and highlight every time you saw the word see or saw or looked or sight, you'd see that that's not a coincidence, that seeing is actually the theme of this passage.

[12 : 19] Why? Because Luke is using seeing physically with eyes as an analogy for understanding and recognizing Jesus.

Let's see that in the blind man. Verse 35, Jesus is walking. And by the side of the road is a blind beggar. And his blindness is so profound, he has to ask the passers-by in the crowd, what's going on?

Why such a big crowd? They tell him Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. Now, his response is very significant. If you have a look at verse 38, could you tell me why his words are supposed to sort of light up on the page?

Have we heard anything like that before? He says it again further down. Verse 39, have we heard this before? Have mercy on me.

Have mercy on me. Just glance back to verse 13. Who is it who went home right with God in Jesus' story? The man who prayed, look, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

[13 : 33] And so what does Luke want us to see here? That despite being physically blind, the blind man sees. He gets it. He understands how to come to God.

Have mercy on me. He understands what kind of king Jesus is. Not only a supreme and a sovereign king, but a savior king. He is crying out to him for what he does not deserve.

Have mercy on me. Give me the goodness I don't deserve. Son of David is a royal title like the Son of Man, speaking about that king coming from God.

And so the blind man sees rightly who Jesus is, not only because of what he asks from him, mercy, but because of what he calls him.

He is crying out to God's king for God's mercy. You can give what God has promised. He says, you can save me. The blind man sees.

[14 : 37] Now the crowd doesn't see that. Verse 39, those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet. That's no way to speak to a king, they say. And that's a reminder, isn't it?

As we've seen before, haven't we, that the crowd, when else has the crowd rebuked somebody for coming to Jesus? Last week, remember? Was it the children who were rebuked for coming to Jesus?

Now a blind man rebuked for coming to Jesus. It's a reminder to us, isn't it? That when we see Jesus rightly and respond rightly to him, we should be prepared for the crowd to say, we've got it wrong.

And not to come. And don't speak to him like that. Who could that be? The crowd, our circles of friends, our families, people we work with, people in our classes, our clubs, at school, at university, people who don't see Jesus properly aren't shy, are they, of telling those who do see him and would come to him, don't bother.

Don't bother. Don't bother. Don't do it. It's never been the popular thing to do, has it, even when Jesus was here? Why? Because they don't see what kind of king he is.

[16 : 05] That he is the promised king from God come to seek and save the least, the last, and the lost. Don't speak to Jesus like that.

They say, what does Jesus do? Verse 40, Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. Picture it. He stops walking. The crowd grinds slowly to a halt and he singles out this one man by the side of the road to be brought before him.

He gives him a personal audience with the king. What's going through the minds of the crowd now? And what is it he asks him?

What can I do for you? You're this one man in the crowd who cannot see, who is told to be quiet, not to cry out. He is the only one who can really come and be heard and be saved.

The only one who really sees. Isn't that incredible? And this is where the picture comes together. What does he ask Jesus to do? Lord, I want to see.

[17 : 11] Now, that might seem like an obvious request, but who else in the crowd would have asked for that? Well, nobody because they all thought they could see.

Only this one man would have asked Jesus to make him see and he does see physically and spiritually. He gets both from Jesus. Verse 42, Jesus says, receive your sight.

Then he says, literally, your faith has saved you. And so, verse 43, immediately he received his sight and what did he do?

Go off dancing into the sunset. He followed Jesus. See that? He gets his sight and he is saved. This would be a completely different story, wouldn't it, if the blind man had been healed and then gone off to do his own thing.

No, he wants to see because he wants to see Jesus. It was Jesus who gives him his sight and Jesus whom he follows, praising God.

[18 : 17] And so, when I say Jesus gives sight to the blind, I hope it's clear what Luke's getting at here. Not only is it great that this one man got to see again, but how wonderful, what good news that Jesus can heal our spiritual blindness.

If you ever said to someone, I wish I could make you see what I'm saying. Well, Jesus doesn't have to helplessly wish that we could see him.

Only Jesus can open blind hearts to see him rightly as the king who alone saves. If you're reaching out to friends, people in your life with the gospel and you're wondering, are they ever going to get it?

Take heart in this, brothers and sisters. Yes, show them Jesus and pray to Jesus that he would open hearts as he does. He loves to do this, doesn't he?

It was more important to him to stop, to listen, to heal this one man than it was to walk with the throng and the crowd, wasn't it? And remember, however long you've known Jesus, if you do see him rightly, know that this is what needed to happen for you to do that.

[19 : 36] But none of us are born with this natural ability to see him as he is. None of us are born seeing spiritually. But if you see Jesus rightly, it is because he has opened your eyes to see him.

What a wonderful savior we have. And perhaps you're feeling your way towards Jesus today. Perhaps you're still getting your head around his words. Well, this is why we don't see Jesus clearly and rightly from the start because our sin has blinded our hearts to him.

This is why information alone is not going to cut it. If you are in the dark about Jesus, you need him to open your eyes to heal your blindness to him.

And for that, you do not need to wait or study harder and longer. You only need to ask him humbly, helplessly, like this blind man to say to him, Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.

Have mercy on me. I want to see you rightly. Let me see who you really are, what you came to do. Let me come rightly to you and follow you.

[20 : 53] Lord, make me see. Please save me. Have you prayed that to him? And if you haven't, why wouldn't you?

It's a prayer that he loves to answer. He loves to stop for the one who cries out to him. He can heal your blindness of heart today.

Will you ask him? Because finally, Luke shows us that when we want to see Jesus, it is because Jesus has come to seek us.

Finally then, Jesus sees and he saves. In lots of ways, Zacchaeus, the tax man, he is where all that we've seen so far comes together.

If you just look, who was he, this man? Verse two, he's a chief tax collector. Okay, like the tax collector from Jesus's story. He was very wealthy, we see, like the rich ruler who Jesus had spoken to.

[21 : 58] And verse three, he wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see. Like the blind man who Jesus has just met.

So Zacchaeus, we have all these different kinds of people whom Jesus has met kind of rolled into one together. He has the problem of the rich ruler. His heart is weighed down by what he could give and do.

He has the problem of the blind man. He cannot see. But we also see he has the heart of the tax collector, the heart to turn, ask for mercy.

And as we've seen these past weeks, that is what counts with Jesus. That is what counts. See, as with the blind man, Jesus stops on his tracks, doesn't he, as he passes this man.

He wants to see. Jesus stops. He knows him. He calls him by name. He singles him out. Why? Because he has come looking for him. Zacchaeus, come down immediately.

[23 : 00] I must stay at your house today. See, Zacchaeus was desperate to see Jesus, but Jesus wanted to see Zacchaeus.

And again, the crowd is quick to rebuke. Except now, look, it's not Zacchaeus they rebuke, but the king himself who is condemned.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, he is going to be the guest of a sinner. See, for him to be the friend of sinners, he had to be rejected by the world.

He had to be. But in that happy home, in that meeting of a sinner and the friend of sinners, there is joy and peace and welcome.

Zacchaeus sees King Jesus truly. His heart overflows. Look, look, Lord, he says, here and now, I give half my possessions to the poor. If I've cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.

[24 : 02] Isn't that just what the rich ruler couldn't do? He couldn't let go, couldn't give back, couldn't give up. Zacchaeus shows us how to let go.

He repents. He gives back what he had wrongly taken. He restores what he has damaged and broken. And he is willing to come to Jesus, isn't he, with nothing?

Empty-handed, nothing to offer, nothing to give. He sees Jesus rightly as his king. And his savior. But here is the twist.

He sees Jesus because King Jesus has sought and found him. What does he say in verses 9 and 10? Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham.

For the son of man came to, to do what? to give us rules to follow or to overturn world politics.

[25 : 08] The son of man came to seek and save the lost. This great king, the son of man, came down to see, to seek, to find sinners, to save us.

Your seeing has been the theme all the way through, isn't it? People have not seen Jesus rightly, but friends, he sees us rightly. And what does he do?

Come to find us, to save us. And that brings us right back to Jesus' mission statement back in chapter 18. Remember, that the son of man had to be handed over to the Gentiles, mocked, insulted, sped upon, flogged and killed and risen again.

Why did that have to happen? Well, the crowd saw only a supreme and a sovereign king who had come, perhaps, they thought, to smash the other kings and the kingdoms of this world, to set up a worldly kingdom of his own.

And so, that idea that he would suffer, die, and welcome the poor in spirit and welcome the outsider and the one who had done wrong.

[26 : 23] To them, that just made no sense at all. Because here, Jesus is saying, he came as the savior king. That is what they missed, isn't it?

That he had to do these things because he came to seek and save the lost, not to fight, not to war against kings and kingdoms, but to find people like us and bring us to God.

That is why he had to suffer, why he had to die, because of the problem he came to save us from. We were blind to God, ignorant of him, in the dark about him, and we had turned away from him.

He had sinned against him. We were lost to him. And for us to cry out to him for mercy and grace and forgiveness, as he wants for us to do, he had to take what we deserve for our ignorance, our blindness, our sin and wrongdoing.

For our sin, we deserve to be rejected by God, but he came to be rejected that we might be welcomed. For our sin, we deserve to be punished by God, but he came to be punished, to suffer and to die that we might be forgiven by God.

[27 : 45] For our sin, we deserve death, but he came to die that we might live forever with God. And only then would he be raised.

He is the supreme, the sovereign king of the universe. He came to rule and to reign forever. His kingdom will never end, but in order for him to reign over a kingdom, he had to save his kingdom from death.

Friends, if we love and see Jesus today, that is what he came to do for us. And so, as we finish, let me ask again, do you see him clearly?

Do you see him seeing what he came to do, what kind of king he is? Have you cried out to him for that grace, for that forgiveness and mercy he came to bring?

If you still don't get him, have you asked him to show you? Have you asked him to shine his light into your heart, to open your eyes?

[28 : 50] Have you let go of what would hold you back from him? Have you repented towards him? Have you asked him to save you? Friends, this is who he is, this is what he came to do, that is why he died and this is why he lives, so that now he can save completely all those who draw near to God through him.

Let us do that, let us do that with confidence, let us do that as we pray to him now, let's pray together. God, our Father, how we praise you that when we were lost and blind and in darkness, that the Lord Jesus came to seek and to save us.

Lord, we confess we are so unworthy to be yours. Lord, even to this day, how we thank you for your grace in which seeing us as we are, you did not turn us away, but instead drew near that we might be saved.

Lord, how we pray you would open the eyes of our hearts, that we would see you clearly. Lord, we pray that we would never lose sight of you and your grace in your death and resurrection.

Lord, we pray for those who we know who don't as yet know you, and that you in your mercy would open their eyes also. Lord, help us, we pray as we point others to Jesus to pray to you to do this great work that you must do in order for anyone to come in.

[30 : 34] Lord, this we pray and ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.