

INTRODUCTION

Today we're going to examine a miracle in which Jesus gives sight to two blind men. I've known several people who are physically blind and I'm always amazed by what they can do without sight. Growing up in Alabama, one of the most celebrated sports heroes in our state was Charley Boswell. Charley was blinded in World War II while rescuing a buddy from a burning tank. He had always been a great athlete so after the war, he took up golf. While in college I saw him play an exhibition match. Of course he had a friend line him up and give him a distance, but I can testify that it's hard to hit that little white ball when you're looking at it. Boswell won the National Blind Golf Championship 16 times, once shooting a score of 81. In 1958 Charley came to Ft. Worth to receive the coveted Ben Hogan Award.

Mr. Hogan agreed to play a round of golf with Charley. Charley said, "Would you like to play for money?" Hogan said, "That wouldn't be fair!" Charley said, "C'mon, Mr. Hogan, are you afraid to play a blind golfer?" Hogan was really pretty competitive so he said, "Okay, I'll play for money. How much?" Boswell said, "\$1,000 per hole." Hogan said, "That's a lot. How many strokes do you want me to give you?" Boswell said, "No strokes. I'll play you heads up." Hogan said, "Charley, I can't do it. What would people think of me taking advantage of a blind man?" Boswell smiled and said, "Don't worry, Mr. Hogan, our tee time is tonight at midnight!"

In our text today we're going to see how Jesus healed two blind men, but we're also going to see that there are many kinds of blindness.

Matthew 20:29-34. "As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!' Jesus stopped and called them. 'What do you want me to do for you?' he asked. 'Lord,' they answered, 'we want our sight.' Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."

There are different kinds of blindness. I could talk about the miracle of healing physical blindness; but that wouldn't apply to many of us here today. Instead I want to talk about another kind of blindness – that is more debilitating than physical blindness. It is the blindness that occurs when people with perfectly good vision REFUSE to see what God is doing. Every culture has a proverb about this kind of mental or spiritual blindness. The ancient Persians used to say: "A blind man who sees is better than a seeing man who is blind." Our American proverb says, "There is none so blind as he who will not see."

I've been listening to the music of Stevie Wonder from the time he was called Little Stevie Wonder. Here's what he says about his blindness: "One of my teachers told me I had three strikes against me: that I was poor, black and blind, and the only thing an uneducated blind person could do was make rugs and pot-holders. Being blind, you don't judge books by their covers; you ignore things that are relatively insignificant and pick out things that are more important. The people I feel sorry for are those who have sight but still don't see."

In a few weeks we're going to study where Jesus addressed the spiritual blindness of the Pharisees. He said they were like the blind leading the blind—another example of Jewish humor.

You may have 20/20 vision and still be blind to what God is doing around you in this world. The real danger of spiritual blindness is that you may not even realize when you are spiritually blind. The English novelist Samuel Butler wrote: "A blind man knows he cannot see, and is glad to be led, though it be by a dog; but he that is blind in his understanding, which is the worst blindness of all, believes he sees as the best, and scorns a guide."

As I was studying this passage in Matthew 20 there was one phrase that stood out. It says, "Jesus touched their eyes." When Jesus touched their eyes, their lives changed. I started thinking, what happens when Jesus touches our spiritual eyes? So I'd like to ask you, "Has Jesus touched your eyes?" When He does, there are three things that change.

1. When Jesus touches your eyes, He gives you EYES OF FAITH: You see Jesus as He really is

When these two men received their sight, the first thing they saw was the face of Jesus. In that instant flash of light and realization, they knew He was more than a mere man. They had called Him, "Son of David," which was a term for a royal messiah; one who would restore Israel to the prestige they had during David's reign. After Jesus touched their eyes, they realized He was more than just the Son of David: He is the Son of God!

How do you see Jesus? Do you consider Him to be just a historical character, a religious teacher who lived 2,000 years ago? If that's all He is to you, then He hasn't touched your eyes. When the Apostle John penned his gospel account, he wrote about seeing the real Jesus. He wrote, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

The blind men heard Jesus was coming, and then they saw him. Maybe you've heard about Jesus, but you've never seen Him. Sometimes you see God at the darkest times of your life. I love that verse from Job when, in at the end of his suffering Job cries out to God, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you." (Job 42:5)

You may think I'm just sermonizing about the idea of spiritual blindness, but it is a truth that is taught in the Bible. In fact, the Bible teaches we were all blind until Jesus touched our lives and gave us the light of salvation. And you and I live with people who are spiritually blind. They are stumbling over themselves trying to find spiritual truth through crystals, meditation, or the newest and latest new age fad. Satan has blinded their minds.

The Bible says, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

We were all spiritually blind, and when Jesus touches your eyes, you see Him with eyes of faith. John Newton expressed it in these famous words: "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that

saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now I'm found; Was BLIND, but now I see."

2. When Jesus touches your eyes, He gives you EYES OF PURPOSE: You follow Jesus on a new path

The Bible says these two blind men followed Jesus. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to die. We never hear from these two men again, but don't be surprised to get to heaven and discover they were part of the group of 120 believers who were gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They had been on the same old path all their lives. As blind men, begging was their only profession. But now, they were followers of Jesus; they were on a new path.

Jesus said there are two paths in this world. One is a twelve-lane super highway of worldly pleasures and worldly thinking, and most people are on this path. Jesus said it is the path that leads to destruction. Is that the path that you're on? It's no coincidence the world calls it the rat race. But Jesus spoke of another pathway that is narrow, and only a few people are on it. It is the pathway of life. And that narrow pathway is located right in the middle of the twelve-lane highway going to hell, but it's going in the opposite direction.

It reminds me of a story of a man driving home from work and his wife calls his cell phone. She says, "Darling, be careful, I just heard on the news that there is an idiot on your highway driving in the wrong direction." He said, "It's not just one, there are HUNDREDS of idiots going the wrong way!"

When you become a Jesus-follower it's like going the wrong way on a one-way street. Except in this case, the majority is going the wrong way, and you're going the right way.

You have eyes in your head, but the Bible says you have eyes in your heart also. And this is a prayer that Paul prayed: "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you." (Ephesians 1:18)

Do you know why God created you? It wasn't so you could go to school and get a job and make a lot of money and then retire and then wait to die. God created you to have a personal relationship with Him and to enjoy Him forever. He has called you to a different kind of life. And He keeps on calling you away from the values and priorities of this crazy world. He keeps calling you back to the only thing that will give you HOPE—knowing Him and living for Him.

Have you ever had what is often called an "ah-ha" experience when suddenly you see something you've never seen before? Your eyesight didn't change, but your heart was enlightened.

Do you know what makes an airplane fly? For years I didn't. But when I was taking ground school for my flight training my instructor performed a little object lesson that helped me "see it" in an instant.

An airplane wing is called an airfoil. It is flat on the bottom and the front and top is curved, so air passing over the curve goes faster than the air below. The faster air creates less pressure, thus lift

is created. If that sounds complicated, watch as I blow air over the top of the strip of this paper. The faster air makes the paper rise and that is the basic aeronautical principle behind everything from a Piper Cub to a Boeing 747. Do you see it now?

When I was 17, I had the most important "ah ha" moment of my life. I suddenly saw something I'd never seen before. I came to see that if God really exists, then knowing Him, loving Him, and serving Him should be my purpose in life. I didn't know at the time it would take me on a pathway to be a pastor. If I had become a lawyer, a coach, or a carpenter, I would have tried to do those jobs to the glory of God. Has God open the eyes of your heart yet? When you follow Jesus you have a new purpose for living and a new path to follow.

3. When Jesus touches your eyes, He gives you EYES OF COMPASSION: You see everyone as a potential prospect for Jesus to change

In the miracle at Jericho the Bible says Jesus had compassion on the two blind men and He touched their eyes. When you have the eyes of Jesus you start seeing people in a different light. He gives you eyes of compassion.

The disciples were spiritually blind during much of Jesus' ministry. That's why they were always arguing about who would be the greatest, and who would sit on thrones next to Jesus. They just didn't get it. Even after the cross and resurrection, the disciples were still blind. Just before Jesus ascended they asked the dumb question, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) They were still thinking in terms of earthly thrones and political power. I can only imagine Jesus shook His head and said, "Not gonna happen yet." But here's what's going to happen, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Ten days later, the Holy Spirit came and filled them on the day of Pentecost and suddenly, with the person of Jesus living in them through the Holy Spirit, they started seeing things through the eyes of Jesus. Timid Peter who denied Jesus in front of a teenage girl a few weeks earlier looked out at the crowd of thousands of people gathered for Pentecost and he saw them as people who needed Jesus, so he stood up and loudly, boldly preached the gospel, and 3,000 people were saved that day.

It didn't stop there, in Acts 3 we read about something that happened a few days later as Peter and John were walking onto the Temple area. "A man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple...when he saw Peter and John he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John...Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'" (Acts 3:2-6)

The Bible says this lame man was brought to beg at the one of the Temple gates every day. We can be 100% sure Peter and John had seen this man dozens of times before. Like everyone else all they saw was a poor, lame beggar holding out his hand for money. But after Jesus came to live inside them through the Holy Spirit they started looking at people the way Jesus looked at people, with eyes of compassion. So Peter stared at the beggar. The Bible uses a very strong word for how Peter looked at the beggar. The Greek word is *atenisis*, the very word from which we get our English word "attention." Peter had *seen* him plenty of times, but for the first time in

his life, he paid *attention* to him. Everyone else still saw a helpless cripple, but with his new eyes, Peter saw a man who was a potential prospect for Jesus to change. Peter gave him something much more valuable than money; he gave him the power to walk in Jesus' name.

Do you have eyes of compassion? Do you see people in need, or do you just ignore them, or refuse to make eye contact? A few years ago at a Methodist Church in North Wales, as worshippers arrived at the church, they were distressed to see a dirty, drunk, smelly homeless man on the front steps. They didn't realize this bum was actually their pastor, Derek Rigby, who had disguised himself as a homeless man. To prepare for that morning, Derek hadn't shaved that week. He caked dirt on his hands and face, and drew on tattoos. He went to a thrift shop and bought old clothes and ripped them, rubbed them in dirt and soaked them in beer. To complete his disguise he donned a scraggly wig and put on thick broken glasses and hung a half-smoked cigarette from his mouth. Then he sat on the church steps clutching a can of beer. On that morning not one of the members of his congregation spoke to him or offered to help. You can imagine their shock when it came time for the sermon and this homeless man walked on stage and took off the wig. Then he told them they were a stingy lot. He talked about how Jesus said that when we help one of the "least of these" we are helping Jesus. It was a disturbing experience.

I thought seriously about performing the same stunt here at Green Acres, but since we have multiple services, it could only work once. Plus, I knew that none of you would have any beer I could borrow; I'd have to ask some of my Methodist friends. But I hope you'll get my point without the smell. If you encountered a bum on the way in to church, would you stop and help him, or would you hurry on past, not even looking?

Someone said there are two kinds of people in the world: those who say there are only two kinds of people and those who don't. That's cute, but Jesus fit in that first group. At the end of time, He says humanity will be divided into two groups, like sheep and goats—the lost and saved. When we talk about Global Missions we often refer to all the different people groups of the world. But when you boil it down there are only two people groups that matter—the lost and the saved. The Bible teaches at the end of time, some people will be welcomed into heaven and the others will be banished to hell. There is no third category.

The problem is I don't really know who's saved and who's not. What would happen if suddenly God gave you the ability to see a mark on everyone's forehead indicating whether they were saved or lost? It's like that movie "The Sixth Sense," but you don't see dead people, you see people who are spiritually dead and spiritually alive. This sixth sense would allow you to look at a person and if they were lost there would be a big "L" on their forehead. If they were saved you would see a big "S" on their forehead. How would that change your life? Would it even bother you that there are people in your family, in your class, at your job, or maybe seated right next to you right now, and they have a big "L" on their forehead? If you saw a room full of people and only one had an "L" on their forehead would you go to that person and engage them in conversation?

Well, we can't see a big L or a big S, so we should assume everyone we meet is a potential for Jesus to change. The only way we can know is to lovingly engage them in conversation to see

that Jesus lives in them. May God give us compassion for the lost and a passion to share the good news with them!

Many of you know I'm legally colorblind; actually, the correct term is color vision deficiency. I see a few bright colors, but can't detect subtle shades. I can't tell green from brown. When I was a young preacher I once wore a brown sock and a green one. After the service someone came up and said, "Did you know you have on a brown sock and a green one?" I realized what I had done so I said, "Sure, and I have another pair just like these at home." I can see a rainbow, and I've been told there are seven colors there, but I can only see a couple of shades. I can see a sunset, and it's still beautiful, but I can only see two or three different shades.

There is no known treatment or cure for colorblindness. But for the sake of this little illustration, let's imagine for a moment that Dr. Jeff Pennell, one of our ophthalmologists, invents a pair of lenses that correct colorblindness. First, that would be great because Jeff could tithe his earnings from such an invention and we could pay off the Crosswalk Conference Center! But in addition, can you imagine how my life would change if suddenly I could see the full range of colors? I would walk out tomorrow morning and see things I've never seen before. It would literally change my life.

Imagine I'm watching a sunset with my new lenses and I say to a stranger, "Wow, would you look at all those colors? There's pink, purple, orange, and look at that gold!" The stranger says, "Yeah, but I can't see them. I'm colorblind." What am I going to say? "Man, that's too bad, there is a lot of color to see in this world!" Instead, I'd say, "Let me take you to Dr. Jeff, he can help you see the world like you've never seen it before. And when it comes to people who need hope, we should say, "Let me take you to Dr. Jesus. He can touch your eyes and you'll see the world in a totally new way!"

CONCLUSION

If you want Jesus to touch your eyes, you need to do the same thing those two men in Jericho did. You need to cry out to Jesus, "Jesus, have mercy on me!" You may think Jesus is too busy to stop and help you, but I'll remind you Jesus was on His way to the cross. He had a schedule to meet, and a world to die for. But He still had time to stop and help these two desperate men. The mighty sun burning 93 million miles away is holding the planets in their gravitational orbits, but it will warm your face on this cold day as if it has nothing else to do. And the God of the Universe who keeps everything together will pause and answer your prayer as if He had nothing else to do.

Jesus asked the blind men, "What do you want me to do for you?" They could have said, "Could you give us the name of a good eye doctor?" Or they could have just asked non-specifically, "Bless us, Lord!" But I love their simple, yet specific prayer, "We want our sight!"

If Jesus stood before you right now and said, "What do you want me to do for you?" What would you say? "Bless me?" "Help me win the lottery?" Why don't you tell God your most desperate need? "Lord, I'm addicted to alcohol or drugs, touch my heart, Lord, heal me!" "Lord, I have cancer, touch my body, and heal me!" "Lord, I'm addicted to porn, and I'm eaten up with lust,

touch my eyes, Lord!" "Lord, I'm consumed with anger and bitterness, touch my eyes, and let me see people the way You see them."

Your greatest need is for salvation. Remember what I said about the big "L" and the big "S" on people's foreheads? When you look in the mirror what do you see? Is there a big "L" there? It's not for Loser, it means LOST. But the "L" also means LOVED, because Jesus said, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save those what was lost." (Luke 19:10) If you're lost you can cry out to Jesus to have mercy on you and save your soul. You may be thinking, "Yeah, I've got a problem, but what's the rush? There will be another opportunity for me to get right with God." It's a good thing that these two blind men didn't wait. This was the LAST time Jesus ever passed through Jericho. He was on the way to the cross. Have you heard the expression, *carpe diem*? It's Latin for "seize the day." The two blind men seized their final opportunity to have Jesus touch them and change them. Don't let Jesus pass you by today without crying out to Him.

Will you ask Jesus to touch your eyes today? He might have already touched your eyes previously, but you may need a second touch. In Mark 8 Jesus touched the eyes of a blind man. At first he couldn't see clearly. He said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." (Mark 8:24) Jesus touched his eyes a second time and he saw clearly. Maybe you need to ask Jesus to give you that second touch because the real world has gotten out of focus.

God is at work all around you, can you see it? Years ago, when teachers used chalk to write on blackboards there was a college professor who was an atheist. At the beginning of one class he wrote these three words on the blackboard: "God is nowhere." He asked if anyone could refute that. A Christian student simply walked up and erased some space between the letters of the word nowhere, making it two words until it read: "God is now here." It all depends on your perspective.

One of my favorite theologians is the country singer, George Strait. He has a song that says exactly what I've been trying to say about seeing God at work around us. He sings: "I've been to church; I've read the Book; I know He's here, But I don't look; Near as often as I should. Yeah, I know I should. His fingerprints are everywhere. I just slowed down to stop and stare, Opened my eyes and man, I swear, I saw God today."

Has Jesus touched your eyes? If He has you can leave today saying, "I saw God today."

OUTLINE

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1. EYES OF FAITH: You see Jesus as He really is

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." *John 1:14*

2. EYES OF PURPOSE: You follow Jesus on a new path

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you." *Ephesians 1:18*

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"A man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple...when he saw Peter and John he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John...Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'" *Acts 3:2-6*

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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor
Green Acres Baptist Church
Tyler, Texas*