

Christ Came Down |

For the Blind

Rob Rogers December 18, 2022

Introduction

In this series, we've been simply asking the question... why did Christ come down? If at Christmas we celebrate the incarnation of Jesus... God entering into the human story... what did He come down for?

We've been looking at different aspects of what Jesus stated His mission was in Luke 4. Jesus enters the synagogue in Nazareth and is handed the Isaiah scroll and He gives us his purpose for entering into the human story.

Luke 4:18-19

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

He tells everyone in the room that this prophecy out of the Isaiah scroll, written 800 years before... "was written about me. I'm the Messiah."

We've talked about **liberty for the captives**.

- Last week we talked about God coming to **heal the brokenhearted**. Stories are coming in of how the Spirit of God is moving in this church family... evidenced by work that only God can do.
- **Today**, we're talking about Jesus coming down to **give sight to the blind**.

While Jesus came down and worked incredible miracles... every miracle points to a deeper spiritual reality.

- Jesus brings liberty to the captives... but that doesn't mean He's going around helping murderers break out of prison. Throughout the gospels, He's bringing physical healing... but the physical healing is always pointing us at something deeper. He does give sight to the blind... but in all of these things, He's doing something far deeper, far greater. Because healing physical blindness is a temporary healing. But healing someone of spiritual blindness is eternal. Far more significant than any form of physical healing... as wonderful as those miracles are.

ILLUSTRATION: There's this fairly new invention, about five years ago... called **eSight**. It helps people who are severely visually impaired, legally blind in some cases, to be able to see.

I watched testimonies of what this device has done for people. There was one story of a man putting on these glasses and seeing his wife and daughter's face for the first time. He is so overwhelmed with emotion at the beauty of seeing his family for the first time he starts sobbing, they start sobbing, and then alone in my office, all by myself... I started sobbing!

- But what he didn't do when he saw for the first time is say, "*Oh... this is pleasant. I'm glad we did this.*" And then go back to his old way of living.
- It changed him! It melted his heart... he couldn't even fathom going back to life as he'd known it!

This is exactly what happens when Jesus heals you of spiritual blindness...

If you've recognized your own spiritual blindness and Jesus gives you sight... your reaction won't be, "Oh that's pleasant and thoughtful that Jesus did that for me... now, let me get back to my old way." If that's your reaction to what Jesus offers you, it proves that you're still spiritually blind.

- This is why the song is "Amazing Grace!" Not "Mediocre Grace, I once could see pretty well, but now I can see a little better..."
- "**No, I once was blind! But now, I SEE!** I'm changed! My world has changed forever.

What do we mean by spiritual blindness?

Spiritual blindness is an impaired ability to recognize Truth.

Spiritual blindness keeps you from perceiving reality *as God designed it*. Truth in life. All throughout life, we perceive truth and reality through our limited knowledge and experience... it's what we perceive with our senses, our logic, and finite human understanding.

Scripture tells us there is a reality behind what we can perceive. There is Truth beyond our limited, finite human understanding. **In order to see it, you need to be healed of your spiritual blindness.**

Jesus says, "I am the way, the TRUTH, and the life." Jesus says, "I'm the light of the world." Jesus is saying, I'm the Truth that sheds light on all other realities. I'm the one who designed the world, the principles, the systems, the functionality of the universe, and I'm the One who defines reality — and unless I open your eyes, you'll continue to live in darkness and deception.

There are three major areas of spiritual reality that we're blind to — apart from the work of God in our lives.

OUR OWN BLINDNESS THE GLORY OF GRACE THE PURPOSES OF GOD

Our Own Blindness

One of our greatest dangers as church-going southerners is to think we can see — when we're really spiritually blind.

Matthew 7:3-5

Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You **hypocrite**, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Have you ever found yourself judging someone else's journey — while completely ignoring what God is doing in your own?

Take the Apostle Paul for example...

Before he was a follower of Jesus... he was known as Saul of Tarsus. He was incredibly devout, incredibly religious, so adherent to religion that in the book of Acts, he was persecuting the Church, imprisoning, and killing Christians — approving of the stoning and death of Stephen, the first recorded martyr. Saul did all of this in the name of "truth and religion." *And look at what God does...*

Acts 9:3-8

...suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And He said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing.

Paul thought he could see, that he was on the side of “truth,” but he could not have been more blind. He’s persecuting the Church, and Jesus says, “Why are you persecuting ME?”

Jesus and His Church are so intimately linked that if you’re persecuting the church, Jesus says, “No, you’re persecuting Me. If you go after my children, it’s the same thing as coming after Me.”

Jesus blinds Saul so that he might begin to truly see... so that his eyes might be opened to the reality behind all other realities... to the Truth.

- An interesting detail we often miss in this story is that Paul’s companions could see perfectly well. They saw Paul fall to the ground; they saw him go from sight to blindness in a moment; they even heard the voice of Jesus! And yet, in all of that, they still could not perceive or accept the spiritual realities right in front of their faces... ***they were spiritually blind to the truth!***

Are you so caught up in the logic of the physical realm that you’re completely missing the supernatural? Are you so stuck in your perceptions that you’re missing the Truth right in front of you?

Are you missing out on what God is revealing to you in your own journey because — like the Pharisees and hypocrites — you’re too busy judging what God is or isn’t doing in someone else’s? Jesus says, you’re blind.

In John 9 Jesus heals a blind beggar and the Pharisees can’t accept it. They ask everybody what happened; they accuse the parents of lying about his blindness; eventually they ask Jesus.

John 9:40-41

... “Are we also blind?” Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

Here’s what Jesus is saying, **“If you think you can see, it proves that you can’t. It’s only when you recognize and can admit your inability to see, that God can give you sight.”**

- He’s saying, if you could just admit that you’re blind, I would remove your sin. You would be forgiven... but since you claim that you can see... your arrogance, your pride, your self-deception, your need to be right, your need to “win at all costs” is keeping me from doing anything for you. I can’t help you, not because of Me. I can’t help you because of YOU!

God in human flesh is standing in front of them, trying to get their attention, working unexplainable miracles, and they refuse to accept it. They’re so busy judging someone else’s journey that they’re missing what Jesus is doing in their own!

Some of you have been raised in church, you’ve been going to church your whole life — you’ve read the Bible your whole life — you know the stories, you know the principles, you know the teachings — but it hasn’t deeply impacted you, changed you. Why? To some degree, it’s because you’re blind to the... Glory of Grace.

The Glory of Grace

STORY: There's a story I read about recently of a pastor of a prominent church in Birmingham, AL ,years ago. The pastor was raised in church, went to seminary, trained for the ministry. Through a series of circumstances, he ended up going into the military in the 1950's — and a military chaplain led him to Christ.

All of a sudden, he really began to change... the beauty of God's grace, of the gospel really began to get a hold of him. The guy looked at the chaplain and said, "*Why didn't any of my pastors, or all the books I've read.. why doesn't anyone understand the gospel? I've never heard it before! In all my years of sitting under preachers and pastors, no one ever told me the gospel.*" Then he asked the chaplain in all seriousness, "*How is it that even Martin Luther didn't understand the gospel!?*" The chaplain asked, "*Why in the world do you think Martin Luther didn't understand the gospel?"*

He said, "*Because, I took a class on Martin Luther's writings, and I read the entire commentary on Galatians – there isn't one single thing about the gospel in there!"*

The Chaplain told him, "*Now that your spiritual eyes have been opened, go back and read Luther's commentary again."*"

"I went back and opened that book. There on every single page was the gospel! The beauty and power of grace! That's all Luther talked about!"

Unless the Holy Spirit illumines your mind, opens your spiritual eyes, you will not be able to perceive or accept spiritual reality. You won't be able even to perceive the life-changing truth of the gospel of grace unless God reveals it to you! Unless the Spirit of God gives you Revelation, you won't be able to perceive or understand the Glory of God's Grace.

Ephesians 3:17-19

...being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to **comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge...

Anyone who thinks they can see... just like the pharisees... blinded by pride, and self-reliance — the gospel of grace isn't good news for you. To some degree, you think grace is unfair, unjust... because after all you're a "decently moral person."

Watch the sermon video to see Pastor Rob's scale illustration. If God is here... and Mother Teresa is here (*who continually acknowledged her own sinfulness and desperate need for God's incredible grace*), where would you place yourself on that scale?

- What the scripture tells us is that everyone is blind! *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God...*
- It's only the ones who will admit it that will be able to see. Only then will you be changed by the power, the beauty, the glory of grace.

Last week, if God revealed to you an area of brokenness in your life... that's God giving you spiritual sight... that's the Holy Spirit giving you revelation.

And yet, there are some of you... coming out of last week... that have a *theoretical* understanding God's grace... of his forgiveness — yet your life hasn't been impacted by the reality of it. You are still twisted up in shame and guilt.

Why is that? You know the truth theoretically... but you don't SEE it. You know forgiveness theoretically... but it's abstract. You know God's grace as a principle, but it's not real to you! It's philosophical. It's not REALITY!

What happens when you *come to Christ as a reality*... When He **opens your eyes**...

- You'll say, "I've heard these stories all my life.. but now I SEE it! It's amazing... It's moving me to tears... the realness of it. It's changing me..."
- You say, "I knew these things, **but I didn't KNOW these things!**"
- They become compelling! Thrillng! Life changing... you can't get enough!

Lasty... we're often blind to... the Purposes of God.

The Purposes of God

There's a famous story in 2 Kings 6 where Elisha and his servant are surrounded by the Syrian army... outnumbered... doomed, totally trapped with no way out. Elisha's servant is panicked — he knows that he knows that they're going to die. Elisha is completely calm in the midst of being faced with certain death.

2 Kings 6:16-17

He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see. So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

The servant then saw, not merely the physical realm and the adversaries — but he saw into the spiritual realm and the angel armies that were surrounding the enemy..

- While the servant is saying, "Oh no we're surrounded!" Elisha is saying, "Thank God, we're surrounded!"

We're all like Elisha's servant at times. Maybe we don't face a foreign military... but there are situations in life where we think, "*It's over. I'm doomed! What am I going to do? How will I ever make it out of this?*"

**We can get so overwhelmed by what's happening right in front of us
that we miss what God is doing all around us.**

Elisha's servant went from total panic to total peace in an instant...Why? **His eyes were opened.**

This tells us that that no matter what circumstance you find yourself in... God is at work behind the scenes. He's doing something that you might not be able to perceive with your physical eye... but that doesn't mean He's not at work.

Regarding the Christmas story, between Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament and the book of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament, there were 400 years of deafening silence from God — not one recorded instance of God speaking, working, moving, no miracles, no signs, no wonders, no prophets calling Israel back to Himself... not a single recorded instance of God's activity.

If you had lived during that time, it would have been really easy to believe that God had abandoned you, your people, your family.

In the middle of circumstances like this, it's so easy to miss what God is doing in your journey — before the journey is over. It's so easy to become blind to the reality that God is still at work in your story.

In hindsight we can see that God, during that 400 year period, was setting the stage of the first century world for Christ to be born, for the Messiah to enter into the human story... so that at the moment of His resurrection...

- all of the political, economic, and social elements were perfectly set for gospel message to spread like wildfire through the first century world — Pax Romana, the Roman Road system.

If you had lived during those 400 years of silence, you would have thought God had left you... if you had been Elisha's servant, you would have thought God wasn't for you, that he abandoned you...

Hope and Help for Enslaved Families — Freedom Fund

Today there are our brothers and sisters in Christ that probably have begun to believe that God has abandoned them. They have no idea that God has been at work in a little country church in Leipers Fork, TN, to provide their means of deliverance!

Over the last few weeks, we've been talking about certain enslaved Jesus-loving families in South Asia, that are doomed to a life of indentured servitude in brick kilns, with their debt passing on to their children and their children and so on...

We've talked about the opportunity we have to set vetted families free, to pay off their debt (legally binding), to relocate their family to a safe community, supported by local churches, and to get them set up with a small business. From slaves to business owners in a matter of a few days!

We said that there were currently a little over 100 families that have been vetted for freedom... and the average cost to set a family free and set them up for their future is \$2,500.

Church, would you stand with me...

We didn't set a numeric goal... we just said, "Ask Jesus what He would have you give, and obey Him and we'll see what God does..."

PERSONAL: Now, I want to let you in on what I'm thinking behind the scenes... "God, if we could raise \$250,000 to set every one of these 100 families free, I would lose my ever-loving mind!"

- One little girl brought an envelope with \$45 in it... she emptied her whole piggy bank and wrote on the envelope, "For the family that makes bricks."
- One teenager said, "I don't want any Christmas presents... Mom and dad, just take what you would've given and put it toward freeing these families."
- Another youth is giving up the money raised for their youth retreat — to put the money toward freeing families.

Grace Chapel — you gave \$ 602,502! You just changed the lives of 241 families! That's over 1,500 individuals that are about to be rescued, set free, set up for their future! About to have their lives changed forever!

These are people that believed they were doomed to slavery, that their children and grandchildren would be doomed to slavery... **every single one of these people are about to know that God has not abandoned them** — that He's been working behind the scenes in ways that they never could have dreamed or imagined! They will know the love and mercy, and glory of God's grace because of your generosity!

Because you simply listened to the Lord and did what He wanted you to do. And it's not just these 100 families... now, we are able to free families beyond the initial 100 are vetted for freedom!

This is what happens when churches quit throwing stones at one another, link arms, and work together to advance to kingdom!! Because it's not about us! It's about Him. It's not about what WE want to do. It's about what He wants to do. When we get on board with HIS agenda... not even the gates of hell can prevail against a unified "capital C Church."

Discussion Questions

1. This Christmas, remember why Jesus said He had come to earth. Read Luke 4:18-19 aloud.
2. Have you ever been healed of spiritual blindness? Share with the group.
3. Have you ever found yourself judging someone else's journey while completely ignoring what God is doing in your own?
4. Discuss: "It's only when you recognize and can admit your inability to see that God can give you sight."
5. Has there been a time in your life that you were so overwhelmed by what was happening, that you missed what God was doing around you — only to be able to see it in retrospect?
6. If you have not been able to participate in the "Freedom Fund" — it's not too late. If you write a check — put "Freedom Fund" in the memo. Online – Scan QR – or Text to "Give Freedom."

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