

Lord, That I May See. Open The Eyes Of My Understanding

Text: Luke 18:31-43

1) To See The Need Of Christ's Suffering

Suggested Hymns:

2) That Christ's Suffering Was In My Behalf

158, 263, 241, 320, 59

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 18:31-43, ³¹ *Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³² "For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. ³³ "They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again." ³⁴ But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.*

³⁵ *Then it happened, as He was coming near Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the road begging. ³⁶ And hearing a multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. ³⁷ So they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. ³⁸ And he cried out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ Then those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"*

⁴⁰ *So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be brought to Him. And when he had come near, He asked him, ⁴¹ saying, "What do you want Me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." ⁴² Then Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³ And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

A man lost his sight but in this adversity found his Saviour.
One day a friend expressed his sympathy to him. But the blind man said: "Do

not pity me; I am fortunate. If I still had my eyesight, I might still be blind. Now that I have become blind, I have learned to see. Taking away my physical sight, God taught the eyes of my soul to see. I could never see Jesus before, and I was not interested in Him. But I see Him now, and I am happier today than I was before I became blind.”

There is a blindness of the body and a blindness of the soul. Both are terrible calamities. However, the blindness of the soul is by far, the worse of the two. The physically blind do not see the beauty of God’s wonderful creation, the beautiful sunshine, the flowers, the trees, and the mountains.

But the spiritually blind do not see the beauty of God Himself, of His love and grace, His mercy and compassion. Like the Sodomites of in the Old Testament they grope about in blindness and are unable to find the door that leads to the Father’s heart and into the presence of God with its fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

And this spiritual blindness is doubly insidious because it is not always recognised. Saul, *“still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,”*¹ thought that he was doing God a service. The Pharisees were *“blind leaders of the blind”*² but imagined themselves to be the very torch-bearers of the world.

Our text for today presents both classes of blind people for our consideration, the spiritually blind disciples and a physically blind beggar.

However, of the two, the disciples are the more to be pitied, for *“Eyes they have, but they do not see.”*³ The evangelist is very emphatic on this point, *“But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.”*

How true is this of thousands of nominal Christians today! They go with Jesus to Jerusalem and witness the details of the Lenten story, but they remain blind as to the real significance of it all. The blind beggar, of whom the second part of the Gospel tells us, at least knew that he was blind, and as Jesus passed by, he could cry to Him for help.

Jesus, who opened the eyes of the blind beggar, is able and willing to open the eyes also of our understanding and faith if we but ask Him. Let us, then,

make the beggar's plea our own, "**Lord, that I may See.**" May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Open The Eyes Of My Understanding To See The Need Of Christ's Suffering

In clear and unmistakable words Jesus addressed His disciples, ***Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished.***

As true Israelites they were familiar with the prophecies. But to refresh their minds, Jesus set forth six of the events very plainly. ***He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. "They will scourge Him and kill Him.*** Why could the disciples not comprehend these plain facts?

The only plausible answer is that it did not agree with their reason. Somehow or other a suffering and dying Saviour did not fit into the picture which they had made for themselves of the Saviour.

They had seen rays of His hidden glory and had been assured of "***greater things than these.***"⁴ Therefore they envisioned Jesus as a king in royal apparel, sitting on the throne of David and Solomon, surrounded by princely courtiers, with a mighty army at His disposal.

And somewhere in that picture they saw themselves in positions of honour and distinction. Surely Jesus cannot mean what He says of shame, mockery, scourging, suffering and death, — these things are out of the question. His words must mean something else!

So, because they followed their reason instead of the clear words of the Lord, they remained blind to the gracious mystery which Jesus had revealed to them. Oh, how the disciples needed to pray, "***Lord, open the eyes of our understanding!***"

But, friends, are we any different from the disciples? Have we not the same seed of unbelief and doubt and questioning in our hearts? We know the Passion-story, know all the details of it, know that it is true, but our reason prompts us to ask, ***Was this really necessary?***

We, too, have a different picture in our mind of our Saviour's kingdom and of the manner in which He ought to establish this kingdom. Why should Jesus suffer to enter into His glory?

Instead of accepting the clear Word of God, our heart prompts us to ask, *“Is it be possible that God could be so cruel as to force His own Son into suffering and death? Is it not a farce that an innocent person should suffer in the place of a guilty one? Is God really the God of Love if His wrath can be stilled only by the sacrifice of His Son? Or can God claim almighty power if He is not able to put sin out of the way unless it is atoned for?”*

To make matters worse, liberal theologians and those who follow them come along and sneer at what they are pleased to call “the blood religion of the Bible.” Pompously they declares that the suffering of Jesus was not only unnecessary but that such a doctrine is unworthy of God.

Indeed, as Scripture says, *the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*⁵ Therefore they also need the prayer, *Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

Jesus on the road to Jerusalem remains a mystery until the eyes of our understanding are enlightened to see that Jesus went up as the Substitute for man's sin. Man had become a rebel, separated himself from God, gone against His holy will and Law, and was doomed to death. *“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear,”* says the prophet Isaiah.⁶

Because of man's transgression the first parents were driven out of Paradise and the angel with the flaming sword placed at the entrance. From generation to generation the curse fell upon man. We read in Romans 5:12, *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*

There was no way of escape from this doom of death. All the attempts of man — and there are many — have been in vain. Man has tried to run away from the punishment; but *“Though they dig into hell, From there My hand shall take them; Though they climb up to heaven, From there I will bring them down”*⁷ says the Lord.

Man has tried to cover his sin with the garments of his own righteousness; but all his best works have turned out to be only filthy rags.⁸ He has tried to deny his guilt, but his own conscience condemns him, and with fear and trembling he calls upon the mountains to fall upon him and on the hills to cover him from the wrath of the Lamb.⁹ What about those fine-spun arguments of human reason when you stand face to face with the righteous Judge?

Do you still ask, *Was the suffering of Jesus really necessary?* If this question yet troubles you, you do not see clearly. You do not understand the holiness and righteousness of God. You say, God is Love and therefore will not punish. Certainly, God is Love. Believe that with all your heart. But the God of love is also a God of holiness and justice.

Our loving God has said, *“Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,”*¹⁰ and *“You shall be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy.”*¹¹ God’s love does not make void His holiness. Do not picture God to yourself as a weak-kneed father who, from a false notion of love, lets sin go unpunished.

God is not like Eli. St. Paul warned the Ephesians, *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”*¹² And to the Romans the same apostle wrote, *“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.”*¹³

But God found a way that mercy and truth might meet together and righteousness and peace might kiss each other as we read in Psalm 85.¹⁴ Since no man could fulfil God’s holy demands, this very God of love has found a way.

The hymnist writes,¹⁵

*He bids His Son go forth to share
The lot of children doomed to bear
His wrath and condemnation;
Though great the punishment, and dread,
God wills that He His blood shall shed
To purchase man’s salvation.*

Was the Saviour willing to do this? His answer is given in the words of our text, *“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.”* Yes, the suffering of Jesus was

necessary. It was the only way if the world was to be redeemed. Would God not have spared His Son if a different way could have been found? Would Jesus have gone down to Jerusalem to face the mockery and shame, the spitting and scourging, the crucifixion and cruel death, if it had not been necessary?

Who are you that you would dictate to the almighty and all-wise God and say what He can or should do? Oh, Lord, open the eyes of my understanding to see the necessity of Your suffering!

2. Open The Eyes Of My Faith To See That Christ's Suffering Was In My Behalf

But God grant that we may see more than merely the necessity of the suffering of Jesus! May we also see, with the eyes of faith, that the suffering of Jesus was necessary for us!

Many a person has heard the Lenten story year after year. At times these people have been deeply moved; they have shed tears of emotion and expressed deep sorrow over the Saviour's bitter agony. But still it does not force tears of repentance from their eyes, nor does it bring the joy of faith into their hearts. Why not? Because there is no-real connecting link between them and the Saviour, between His suffering and their sins, between the purpose of His suffering and their salvation.

Jesus was coming near Jericho as He discussed His forthcoming suffering in Jerusalem with the disciples. There sat a blind beggar by the roadside. He could not see Jesus approaching. But as the procession came near and the multitude grew larger, he asked what it meant.

They told him that *Jesus of Nazareth* was passing by. At once he began to cry, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*" "*Jesus of Nazareth*" — that meant something to this blind man. That brought to his mind's eye the glorious promises of God in the Old Testament, the promises of the Woman's Seed who would bruise the Serpent's head, the Lamb of God which was to be slain for the sins of the world, the great Prophet who would preach good tidings to the meek and the opening of the prisons to those who are in prison, who would heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and open the eyes of the blind.

You notice that he does not address Jesus as "*Jesus of Nazareth*" but rather by that significant title "*Jesus, Son of David.*"

With the eye of faith this blind beggar saw deeper than most of the people who followed Jesus. They saw only a man mighty in word and deed. But the blind man saw the Messiah, the promised Son of David. That explains his incessant cry ***“Have mercy on me!”*** In all this wide world there is no one to help except Jesus. Jesus who helped so many others will surely not reject me. If He answered the cry of the heathen woman of Syrophenicia, if He had pity on ten lepers, nine of whom proved ungrateful, He will have compassion also upon me. O God, have mercy!

His cry is a cry in distress. He knows his own wretched condition only too well. Others may urge him to be quiet, but he will not be silenced until the Saviour has helped him. They do not know in what misery he has been all his life. And though he has nothing to offer, he will not let this opportunity pass by.

If only we felt our spiritual wretchedness as keenly as this beggar felt his physical wretchedness! We would then, too, cry out, ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us!”*** We would not permit any one or anything to silence our plea. Our text tells us that ***“those who went before warned him that he should be quiet; but he cried out all the more.”***

Why did the people rebuke the beggar? Because they did not find themselves in such a pitiful plight as this man. Perhaps if they had been able to realise only in a small measure what this man suffered, they would have helped him in coming to Jesus and would have even pleaded for him.

Let us apply this to ourselves. We are sitting by the roadside. Jesus is passing by. He is always passing by. Every sermon that is preached, every chapter that is read from the Bible, every prayer that is spoken, tells us that Jesus is now passing by.

But many people do not get very stirred up about it. They continue with the work that they have before them. They think little or nothing of the invitation to go to church and hear God’s Word; they neglect to read the Bible and omit family devotions. How about us?

Are we also indifferent toward the Lord? Do we ask what it means that Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem? How can we let Him travel on without raising our voices to cry, ***“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me”?*** Friend, the reason is that we do not feel our sad plight. We are satisfied to remain as we are.

We are not disturbed over our sins. We do not believe that *“the wages of sin is death”*¹⁶ and that every unforgiven sin will condemn us to eternal damnation. Otherwise we, too, would cry out loud and long like the beggar, *“Lord, have mercy!”*

Or when we cry to the Lord, we permit this cry to be stifled. There are also those today who “go before” us and are quick to rebuke us or to dissuade us when we cry. They tell us, *“Your sins are not so serious. You have done many good things which God will take into consideration; at least you have tried your best to lead a good life. No one is perfect, and therefore you need not be alarmed.”* Thus the tempter’s voice lulls our terrified conscience to sleep.

What would have been the result if this blind man had stopped crying for mercy? Jesus would have continued on His road to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, and possibly He would never have crossed this man’s path again. The blind man would have continued to grope about in needless darkness. Oh, let us be warned! It is not enough to know that Jesus of Nazareth is on the road, He must come and lay His hand on us. He must say to us just as He said to the blind man, *“Receive your sight.”*

“And immediately he received his sight.” How wonderful Jesus must have looked to this blind beggar! Many others, thousands of others, had looked upon Him, but no doubt no one saw such love and kindness, mercy and grace, in His countenance as this man.

The same Saviour who said to the blind man, *“Receive your sight,”* can and will open the eyes of your understanding so that you may see Jesus as your Saviour, trust in Him with your whole heart, rejoice and take comfort in Him in time and throughout eternity. Then you, too, will see the real beauty of Jesus.

“And he followed Jesus, glorifying God.” Now that he was able to see, he was eager to tell others about the great miracle performed by Jesus. How can the mouth remain silent when the heart is full to overflowing? Shall we remain silent, we who have been delivered from a much worse fate, who have been torn out of the very clutches of Satan and from the bonds of sin, death, and hell?

Ought we not to proclaim from the housetops what great things God has done for us? Ought we not to be eager to bring many others who are in spiritual blindness to this gracious Saviour? *“And he followed Him.”* Henceforth he

wanted to be near Jesus, ready to serve Him. So let your life be devoted to His service.

And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God. If you truly praise the Lord with your mouth and glorify Him in your life, your praises will raise a responsive chord not only in all your fellow-redeemed but also in the hearts of many others who as yet do not know Christ and His all-sufficient sacrifice.

My dear friends, do you see Jesus as your Saviour? He is again now passing by.

Let us conclude with the words of the hymnist, Philip Doddridge, who wrote,

Lord, I know Thy grace is nigh [near] me
Though Thyself I cannot see;
Jesus, Master, pass not by me;
Son of David, pity me.

While I sit in weary blindness,
Longing for the blessed light,
Many taste Thy loving-kindness;
“Lord, I would receive my sight.”

Room, ye saints that throng behind Him!
Let me follow in the way.
I will teach the blind to find Him
Who can turn their night to day. Amen

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Acts 9:1

² Matthew 15:14

³ Psalm 115:5

⁴ John 1:50

⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:14

⁶ Isaiah 59:2

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- 7 Amos 9:2
 - 8 Isa 64:6
 - 9 Rev. 6:16
 - 10 Heb. 12:14
 - 11 Lev. 19:2
 - 12 Ephesians 5:6
 - 13 Romans 1:18
 - 14 Psalm 85:10
 - 15 Hymn 57 v 2
 - 16 Romans 6:23