

“Faith for Sight”

Luke 18:31-43

The ability you have to see is a wonderful gift from God. To perceive light and darkness, to appreciate the breathtaking beauty of a sunset, to notice the exquisite shading of a variegated rose, to witness a baby’s first smile, and to see the light of love in a person’s eyes; all these add beauty, wonder, and mystery to life.

But the ability to see doesn’t necessarily equal true sight. Modern surgery has given some formerly blind people the power to see light, color, shapes, and more. But their minds have no ability to form the images into anything remotely familiar to them.

Physicist Arthur Zajonc describes the history of light and mind as being entwined. Someone has correctly described these as the “two ultimate metaphors of the human spirit.” From both animal and human studies, we know there are critical developmental windows in the first years of life. Sensory and motor skills are formed, and if this early opportunity is lost, trying to play catch up is hugely frustrating and mostly unsuccessful.

Author Zajonc quotes from a study by a Dr. Moreau who observed that while surgery gave the patient the "power to see, the employment of this power, which as a whole constitutes the act of seeing, still has to be acquired from the beginning." Dr. Moreau said, "To give back sight to a congenitally blind person **is more the work of an educator than of a surgeon.**" To which Zajonc adds, "The sober truth remains that vision requires far more than a functioning physical organ. Without an inner light, without a formative visual imagination, we are blind," he explains. That "inner light" -- the light of the mind -- "must flow into and marry with the light of nature to bring forth a world."

Arthur Zajonc’s words are powerful in relation to physical sight; but they also have an application to spiritual sight.

In our study of Luke’s Gospel we’ve come to the concluding verses of chapter eighteen. In verses 31 to 43 Jesus predicts his imminent suffering and death and heals the blind man of Jericho. Viewed in context with the earlier parts of the chapter it is a powerful reminder that faith and sight are inextricably linked together.

Listen now as I read this portion of the Holy Scripture. That’s **Luke 18:31 to 43.**

This text provides EXAMPLES of how faith and sight are inextricably linked together.

The First EXAMPLE (of how faith and sight are inextricably linked together) is,

The Word Without Faith

Recall with me that just prior to our text Jesus promised the Twelve certain rewards because they forsook all to follow Him. Immediately following that promise He gathers the Twelve to Himself and gives them details about the near future. As we noted before, they're on their way toward Jerusalem for the Passover. And this Passover will be unlike any other because the Passover lamb will not be an animal but the Lamb of God!

Jesus reminds them they're not going to Jerusalem haphazardly, and they're not simply going to participate in the Passover feast. Jesus is on a mission that has, in His words, been outlined in centuries past by the prophets of Israel. He tells the Twelve that all the things the prophets have written about Him will be fully accomplished.

He specifically tells them He'll be handed over to the Gentiles, the Roman authorities. That must be done because the Jewish leaders didn't have the authority to put anyone to death. He will be mocked, ridiculed, insulted, and spit upon (by both Jews and Gentiles). Further, He will be flogged and put to death (by crucifixion). On the third day He will rise again.

The Twelve knew what the prophets had written. Isaiah's prophecies in chapters 50 to 53 relating to Jesus' crucifixion were extremely detailed. Numerous Psalms also gave details of the experience of crucifixion, even though that form of death was unknown at the time.

But notice verse 34 of our text. *"But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken."*

Luke seems unable to say strongly enough how entirely hidden from them at that time was the *sense* of these very plain statements. He says they understood NONE of these things. His sayings were hidden from them and they could not grasp the meaning of His words. How can this be with words so plainly spoken? They heard with their ears the words that Jesus said – but it didn't penetrate their hearts.

As I reflected on this moment in their shared experience my mind went to Jesus' conversation with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus after His resurrection. Do you remember His rebuke to them in their sorrow? Luke records Him saying, *"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ*

should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Did you catch the reason why the Twelve missed the clear meaning of Jesus' words in our text? They DIDN'T believe! The message they heard didn't benefit them because it wasn't united with faith in their hearts. I'm sure they appreciated the promises of reward Jesus gave regarding their forsaking all and following Him. But they didn't accept the suffering. (Mark's Gospel specifically records Jesus including persecutions in with the promised rewards).

In their minds they'd created a picture of what Messiah's reign would be like. And because suffering didn't fit the profile of a conquering king and his loyal subjects, they rejected it. They ignored it. They were blind to it! Even though they had physical sight their lack of faith made them blind to the truth. The Word without faith makes seeing people blind!

My friend, how much we are like them! Too often we pick and choose the things we believe. The positive things of God we embrace gladly; the joy of the journey, the blessings of daily provision, and the promise of eternal glory. The negative things we tend to ignore: the suffering, the sacrifice, the self-surrender demanded of all genuine Christ-followers.

When the things Jesus was telling them began to happen, what did the Twelve do? According to Mark 14:50 "*...they all deserted him and fled.*" Their refusal to believe what Jesus said left them blind-sided by the events as they happened. The same will happen to you and me if we refuse to believe the Word of God.

There are some Christians in North America who think they'll never experience suffering and persecution like many of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. They have the mindset that "it can never happen here." That's a lie and a trick of the Devil! Closing our minds to the things we don't like won't prevent them from taking place. Refusing to acknowledge truth doesn't make it untrue.

The Scriptures prophecy many things about the second advent of Christ and the conditions we'll face as the end of the age approaches. And yet there are professing Christ-followers who refuse to accept the words of Scripture. Let's not make the same mistake the Twelve did by refusing to BELIEVE the clear teaching of Jesus. Their lack of faith left them blind to the truth. What a contrast between the Twelve and the blind man of Jericho.

The Second EXAMPLE (of how faith and sight are inextricably linked together) is,

The Word With Faith

As Jesus and the Twelve continue toward Jerusalem they encounter a blind man by the road and he is begging. Either he or someone else had the good sense to put him where many people were passing by. Since many of these passersby were going to Jerusalem for the Passover they may've been more generous than usual. It was a good deal for the blind man.

As the blind man sits there he hears the commotion of the multitude surrounding Jesus as they came up the road. So he inquired repeatedly about the source of the noise until someone finally responded to his questions. He was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. His response is both amazing and instructive.

He shouted out "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*" This is a declaration of Jesus as Messiah! Where did this blind man get the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah? The Gospels tell us often that, in response to His miracles, the fame of Jesus spread throughout the land. The blind man obviously had heard about Jesus and in simple faith believed that the only person who could perform such miracles must be the Messiah.

What a contrast! The Twelve walked with Jesus and heard His teaching. They saw His miracles firsthand. They heard Him speak of His suffering, death, and resurrection. Yet they didn't believe what He told them. The blind man only knew about what he had heard secondhand from others; yet he believed and acted on that belief. His is a worthy example to be followed!

The part of the crowd walking in front of Jesus basically told the blind man to "shut up." Their response reminds me of the Twelve earlier in the chapter when some parents were bring their children to Jesus for a blessing. "Be quiet; you're nobody; Jesus doesn't have time for you." But look at the blind man's response.

"He cried out all the more..." The original text uses two different words and verb tenses to describe the blind man's initial cry in verse 38 and his intensifying cries in verse 39. After the people in the crowd rebuked him, he didn't give up; he redoubled his efforts.

The grammar expresses the idea as, **to scream** - to declare in a very loud voice; often indicating a harsh sounding utterance. So you can almost hear the blind man screeching himself hoarse crying out again and again, "*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*" Persistent faith, like that of the widow in the opening parable of this chapter, is rewarded.

Jesus stops in the middle of the road; and when Jesus stops the crowd stops. He commands the blind man to be brought to Him. Why didn't Jesus go to the blind man? One possible reason is; genuine faith is meant to be exercised in community, not in isolation. This man needed help to be guided toward the spot where Jesus was standing. Could it be that the very people who told this man to "shut up and sit down" were the ones tasked with leading him to Jesus? If that's the case, there's irony in Jesus' command.

When the blind man is brought to Him, Jesus asks "*What do you want me to do for you?*" In simple faith the blind man responds, "*Lord, let me recover my sight.*" No doubting, no questioning, no beating around the bush; just a simple statement of belief in Jesus' ability to heal him. Only a few words with the Master, but the blind man had confidence in the power of the Son of David to effect lasting change in his life.

Jesus responded; "*Recover your sight, your faith has saved you.*" What a beautiful, beautiful statement! Not only did the blind man's faith result in restored sight, it also gave him spiritual vision. He was saved from the daily humiliation of sitting by the road begging; that was a big deal. But an even bigger deal was that he'd been rescued from the humiliation and degradation of sin - eternally. His physical blindness was a temporary condition that would've ended with his death. His spiritual blindness, if left unaddressed, would've led to eternal punishment. Now he could truly see! And what did the formerly blind man do? He followed Jesus. We should do no less.

And what was it that effected this change? Jesus said to him "*your faith has saved you.*" It is always so, my friend. **Faith is necessary for sight.** A lack of faith results in blindness. The Twelve and the blind man had the same information; in fact, the Twelve had a lot more than the blind man. Yet they refused to believe what He told them concerning His suffering, death, and resurrection. The blind man had only the reports of others; but what he heard was enough to convince him that Jesus was the Messiah.

My friend, with which of these do you most identify, the Twelve or the blind man? Many of us have had the privilege of hearing the Word of God from childhood. But unless that Word is mixed with faith we are still walking in the blindness of sin. Jesus calls us to believe what He says and prove that belief by obedience. We must remember that full sight is never possible without genuine faith! Let's follow the example of the blind man and experience faith for sight!