

BLIND TO THE GLORY OF THE SON

John 8:21-30 (No. 48)

Treasuring Christ Church – Pastor Boyd Johnson

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INTRODUCTION

The main point of last week's sermon was that Jesus is the light of the world and it is self-evident in all that he does and says and is. If you want to know who Jesus is, come to Jesus and see. Observe him. Listen to him. And see. Jesus is the blazing Son of Man who radiates the glory of God and is the exact imprint of his nature.

But just because Jesus is the light of the world doesn't mean that everyone sees him that way. Most people in the world are blind to the glory of the Son. The Son of God blazes and they do not see him shine. Paul tells us why this is in his second letter to the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 4:3–4: "If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."

They can't see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ because they are blind to see it. But for those of us who see Jesus as he is—as the light of the world, our Lord and Savior and Treasure—we only see him that way because of God's intervention.

2 Corinthians 4:6: "God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

God's light has shown into our previously darkened hearts. He has lifted the veil that was covering our spiritual eyes. And now that the veil has been removed and God's light has shone, now we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This is all of God's doing. If he does not rescue us from darkness, we cannot see. But we also saw last week that those who are blind are willfully blind and therefore morally culpable for not seeing the glory of the Son of God and responding in belief.

In this week's passage, Jesus continues to address the Jews who were spiritually blind. He spoke to them at the temple below the lampstands as the shining one whose light would lead them to the Father's home, if they would have him. But he also addressed them as the blind and warned them of the consequence for not believing in him.

Seeing him, they did not see him. They saw him as many other things—demon-possessed, a fraud, a criminal, a prophet, a man—but they did not see him as the only one who could lead them through the darkness to the Father's home. They were blind to who he was. They were blind to what was obvious and apparent. They were blind to what everyone with eyes to see could see. This passage serves to shine light on their blindness and warns all who are also blind of their fate.

Text

John 8:21–30: "So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins." So they said to him, "Who are you?" Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him." As he was saying these things, many believed in him."

As Jesus exposes their blindness, I want you first to see in verses 21-22, that the Jews were blind to where Jesus was going.

I. **THEY WERE BLIND TO WHERE JESUS WAS GOING**

John 8:21–22: "So he said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"

In John's Gospel, Jesus is presented as always on the move:

In chapter 1, Jesus is the true light who "was coming into the world" (1:9) and he came to his people (1:11).

In chapter 2, he's in the little town of Cana, then Capernaum, then Jerusalem.

In chapter 3, he's in the Judean countryside.

In chapter 4, he intentionally travels straight through Samaria, which supposedly respectable Jews didn't do, so that he could confront the woman at the well. Then he is back in Cana.

In chapter 5, he returns to Jerusalem to heal a man.

In chapter 6, he's at the Sea of Galilee, going from one side to the other, healing and teaching.

And then in chapter 7, he travels from Galilee to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths.

Not only is he always traveling, he moves with divine purposes:

In 5:36, Jesus says, "The works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me."

In chapter 6:29, after Jesus had walked across the Sea of Galilee and the crowds found him on the other side, they asked him what they must do to earn eternal life and Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

He tells his opponents in 8:42, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me."

In our passage—verse 26—he again says, "He who sent me is true."

Fundamental to Jesus' identity is that he is on the move because he has been sent by the Father with a divine mission and when the mission has been accomplished he will return to the Father. "I am going away," Jesus says.

In 7:33–34, Jesus says something almost identical "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."

Later, in 13:33, Jesus says to his disciples, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'" That's what he says to the Jews in verse 21, "Where I am going, you cannot come." That is, you can't follow me to the Father. Why? Because even though "you will seek me. . . you will die in your sin."

This word "seek" is the word for a desperate, unfulfilled search. They will go on seeking the Messiah, they will go on looking to be saved from the wrath of God, but they will not find the Messiah and they will not find their Savior because they missed him when he came.

Rather, they will die in their sin. Because they have scorned the only one who saves, because they have rejected the one sent from the Father who takes away the sins of the world, they will die in the state of unredeemed flesh. This is sin not atoned for. This is sin not forgiven. This is sin that counts against them. This is sin that requires the full weight of God's justice. Once dead, judgment comes (Heb. 9:27) and reversal of the judgment is impossible.

How did the Jews respond to this dreadful warning?

John 8:22: "So the Jews said, "Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?""

The form of the question is intended to be answered in the negative. That is, "Surely he won't kill himself, will he?" The Jews considered suicide one of the darkest of sins, resulting in the person going to the blackest of hell. They couldn't imagine that Jesus, as a Jew, would be suggesting this. But that it even crossed their minds demonstrates their contempt for him and what low esteem they had for Jesus.

Nevertheless, in an ironic way, though Jesus wouldn't commit suicide, he would lay down his life for his sheep. He would be crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23) and lay down his life for his sheep as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11).

Where was Jesus going? He was going to the cross. His God-ordained mission was suffering and bearing the wrath of the sins of his sheep on the cross. But the Jews were blind to his mission and where he was headed. Not only were they blind to where he was going, they were also blind to who Jesus was.

II. THEY WERE BLIND TO WHO JESUS WAS

John 8:23: "He said to them, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

The contrast between Jesus and the Jews couldn't be more stark. They are from below. He is from above. They are of this world. He is not of this world. They are from different realms and from different worlds. They belong to the realm of Satan. They belong to the place where creation is in rebellion against its creator. Jesus belongs to the realm of God. He belongs to the place where there is perfect harmony and peace with God.

The chasm between them and Jesus was humanly unbridgeable. And the reason the gulf existed was due to their essential nature. They were worldly. They were earth bound in their thinking and affections. This is the reason they could not understand Jesus. He was from another world and realm. There is only one way to cross over. There is only one way to come to the side of Jesus.

John 8:24: "I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins."

The only escape from dying in your sins is to believe who Jesus is. You must come to terms with who Jesus is to be saved by Jesus. This is the difference between life and death. Failure to believe in him is the unforgiveable sin.

Who is Jesus? Jesus plainly tells us—"I am he." The pronoun "he" is not expressed in the Greek, but supplied for the sake of translation into English. So Jesus says, "I am." This is a clear, unambiguous claim to deity. Jesus here claims to be God. He uses language that all the Jews should have understood. In Exodus 3:14, God declared his name to be "I Am."

In the book of Isaiah, God discloses himself repeatedly with the declaration, "I am he."

Isaiah 41:4: "Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he."

Isaiah 43:10: "'You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me."

Isaiah 43:13: "Also henceforth I am he; there is none who can deliver from my hand; I work, and who can turn it back?"

Isaiah 43:25: "'I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins."

Isaiah 46:4: "even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save."

Isaiah 48:12: "'Listen to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am he; I am the first, and I am the last."

You will die in your sins, Jesus says, unless you believe that I am God. To be saved by Christ, you must have a high view of Christ. Unless you believe he is more than a man—that he is God in the flesh—any trust that you put in him will not be saving faith.

It's almost as if the Jews couldn't believe their ears. They knew what Jesus was saying.

John 8:25: "So they said to him, "Who are you?"

The word "you" is emphatic. It's as if to say, "You are he? Who are *you*?" This is the response of unbelief. If anything, they were now more indignant. Jesus responded: "Just what I have been telling you from the beginning." His witness has been consistent. He had been making this claim to be from God and God himself all along. He was saying, "I've told you already. You're not hearing me. You're blind *and* you're deaf. They were blind to where he was going, blind to who he was, and, thirdly, they were blind to where Jesus came from.

III. THEY WERE BLIND TO WHERE JESUS CAME FROM

Jesus went on in verse 26: "I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." He had much he could say *about* them. What he could have said about them in judgment would fill books. But at this moment, what needed to be said had nothing to do with them.

This moment was ordained to honor the one who sent him. He was sent from the one who is true and Jesus' own testimony was true because he declared to the world exactly what he heard from the true one. But the point was lost on them. We don't know if they said anything in response, but John provides us commentary about the situation.

John 8:27: "They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father."

They didn't recognize that Jesus' sender was the Father. Since they didn't recognize his heavenly origin it meant nothing to them to trace Jesus' message back to the one who sent him.

IV. THE FULLEST DISCLOSURE OF JESUS TO COME

So they were blind to his origin, blind to his identity, and blind to his destination. Despite his teachings, despite his character, despite his fulfillment of prophecy, despite his miracles, they did not recognize him as their Messiah, their Savior, or their God.

But in the next verse, Jesus goes on to say that there would be a time coming that would be the fullest disclosure of Jesus' origin, identity, and destination. There would be a time coming when even a hard-hearted Roman soldier would say, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" There would be a time coming when a crucified criminal would beg to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingdom and would even defend Jesus' innocence. For those given eyes to see, there would be a time when they would know that Jesus was the I am.

John 8:28: "Jesus said to them, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me."

The cross would be Jesus' vindication. The cross would be his proof of his deity. The cross would be his doorway to return to the Father. Some would view his cross as a sign of shame and dishonor. They would view the cross as a deserving punishment for one who blasphemed God, broke the Sabbath, led Israel astray, and challenged the authorities.

Others, on the other hand, would view his cross as the power, wisdom, and beauty of God. They would see his cross as the clear testimony of who he was and is. Only the God-man could take the weight of the sins of the world on his shoulders. Only the God-man could suffer in our place. Only the God-man could bear the punishment that we deserved. Only the God-man could love us this much to die for our sins. The cross would lead to his death, but also his resurrection and exaltation. It was the path to his glorification.

Shortly before his death, Jesus would say to his disciples in 12:23, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." And Paul, reflecting on Jesus' death and resurrection wrote in Philippians 2:8–11: "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation would be proof that he spoke just as the Father taught him. It would be proof that (v. 29) the Father was with him, and that he hadn't abandoned him, and that Jesus always did what pleased the Father. Indeed, many Jews would come to believe in him after he was lifted up—they would come to know that he is God.

After Jesus' ascension, on the day of Pentecost, Peter would preach to a crowd of Jews in Acts 2:36: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." And they would be cut to the heart and cry out, "What shall we do?" And Peter would reply, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" and 3,000 Jews would be saved that day.

But on this day, what was the result of all that Jesus said?

John 8:30: "As he was saying these things, many believed in him."

Was this saving belief or were they merely won to his side? That's a question we'll leave until next time. But at least we can say that Jesus' words were so compelling that many were persuaded by his words.

CONCLUSION

If they believed in Jesus—believed that he was truly the God-man who was sent by the Father to die for their sins—then their faith was genuine and saving. But if they merely found his words appealing and winsome, but their hearts unyielded to him as their Lord, then their belief was superficial and would not save them. But, here, Jesus offered them the way out of darkness. He did not hide from them the path to eternal life. He told them how they could be free from dying

in their sin. He said, “Believe that I am.” Simply believe in Jesus for who he has shown himself to be and you will be saved.