

The Blind See

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Luke 24¹³⁻³⁵

There are all sorts of blindness in life. I now suffer from a growing blindness which is deeply frustrating to me. Once I could see sharply all things that were even this close to me. I was the one in the family whom people went to get prickles out because I could **see them!** I can't say much for my surgical skills – sometimes the hole I left was pretty big but I still manage to remove all sorts of dangerous sharp things including bits of glass for a variety of friends and family. These days I wouldn't advise you to come to me to extract anything from you because frankly I can't see anything sharply unless it's about half a metre away!

And this is frustrating because I know what I could once do and cannot do now. But it must be even more frustrating in some ways never to have known what it was like to see – never having even an idea of what sight is like and this is, of course, the case for many, many people; people who are **born blind**.

As serious as real blindness is it is perhaps even more serious as a metaphor for human ignorance and unknowing. Jesus uses it to describe what he saw in the religious authorities of the day and even in His own disciples. Blindness is also a wonderful metaphor for sin because it speaks not just to our wrong actions but also how easy it can be for us to justify those actions believing them to be right. In other words, because we don't **see things accurately** we really believe ourselves to be in the right so we justify ourselves. The question for us before God becomes not – am I wrong but – 'How can I see this differently God?' 'How can I see this as it really is or as you see it God?'

‘How can I see things from this person’s point of view?’ ‘How can I see this in a way that breaks through my own blindness?’

This is also a version of what theologians call the hermeneutical question which asks about how we should interpret the Bible. In short, when we understand that our sight in regard to God’s Word is never entirely accurate we begin to understand how difficult the question of interpretation is. So much hangs on how we see things to start with since this will always determine the outcome of any future interpretation.

Again, we can so easily miss the obvious because our seeing is distracted...

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are camping. They pitch their tent under the stars and go to sleep. Sometime in the middle of the night, Holmes wakes Watson. "Watson, look up at the stars and tell me what you deduce." Watson says, "I see millions of stars, and if even a few of those have planets, it's quite likely there are some planets like Earth, and if there are a few planets like Earth out there, there might also be life." Holmes replies, "Watson, you idiot, somebody stole our tent!"

God works to help us see but that work often requires a considerable **refocusing** of our sight. Sometimes it takes a deep and shameful conviction which only God can bring.

Ignatius writes ‘The devil cannot take from the soul **the light of faith**: he, however, removes **the light of consideration**; so that the soul may not **reflect** on what it believes. And as it is of no avail to open the eyes in the dark, so says St. Augustine, "it is of no advantage to be near the light if the eyes are closed." The eternal maxims [**contained in the Word of God and**], considered in the light of faith, are most clear; yet if we do not open the eyes of the mind by meditating on them, we live as if we were perfectly blind; and so precipitate ourselves into every vice.

Today we are continuing our series on '40 Days with Jesus', looking at how for a period of 40 Days, Jesus appeared to hundreds of His followers – and on each occasion convincing them that He really was alive. We will see that as their lives were changed then, our lives can be changed now!

Today we are going to be looking at 'An Eye-Opening Journey'. It's Easter Sunday afternoon and two of Jesus' disciples were:

...going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:13)

On that journey they are joined by the risen Jesus. At first they fail to recognise Him as if they were blind – but by the end of their journey their eyes were opened, and their lives were changed forever.

I wonder if you've ever experienced anything like this? I wonder if missed something or someone even though they were literally standing in front of you?

Question: How about you? How clear is your vision of the risen Jesus? Is your vision blurred and do you need 'corrective spiritual-eye surgery'?

As we look at the eye-opening journey to Emmaus found in Luke 24:13–35, two key principles stand out:

1. Our vision of Jesus can be blurred

We see in the story how:

As they talked and discussed ... with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognising him.

(Luke 24:15–16)

There are different reasons as to why the disciples didn't recognise Him. They may be some of the same reasons we looked at last week in Jesus' encounter with Mary Magdalene.

However, the phrase 'kept from' suggests something else. One commentator has suggested that this was Satan keeping them spiritually blind; others suggest that God Himself was doing so. But as we shall see it was also the attitude of the disciples themselves that caused a partial blindness or blurring of their spiritual vision.

There are three things that hindered disciples and that can hinder us. Firstly, our vision can be blurred:

- **By despair:** Notice their sense of despair as Jesus engages them:

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, 'Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?' (Luke 24:17–18)

Notice the immense sense of sadness: 'their faces were downcast'. Why? Because they were looking at life without the resurrection! Despair is perhaps the most dangerous emotion to entertain because it reflects a deep lack of faith. When we despair we believe nothing can change – we believe that our own very negative view of the future is fixed and unchangeable and we believe, above all, that God **cannot work** through the present circumstances. And the problem with this is that for faith to work in and for us we must be prepared to **move in faith**. The rudder on a boat is useless without movement. You can turn it any way you like but if the boat is not moving forward the rudder will

make no difference. Despair anchors us to the place of our standing – it allows us no movement so the rudder of faith cannot turn us in the direction God would have a move. Despair must be rejected. The ropes holding us to the harbor must be released for the rudder of our faith to begin working.

Jesus is present in the midst of the most troublesome and distressing of circumstances. He is a God who doesn't stand aloof from human suffering, but instead He became one of us.

Secondly, our vision can be blurred:

- **By disappointment:** The despair of the disciples was clearly based on a sense of acute disappointment.

...but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel... (Luke 24:21)

Their disappointment came from the fact that they saw the cross as the defeat of Jesus. Disappointment can have a huge blinding or blurring effect on us.

Thirdly, our vision can be blurred:

- **By doubt:** Having revealed their disappointment concerning the cross, they go on to reveal their doubt concerning the resurrection:

In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was

alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus. (Luke 24:22–24)

Like these two disciples, our doubt and unbelief can blur our vision from the truth of the risen Jesus.

The good news is that no matter how blurred your spiritual vision, or how spiritually blind you are; there is a cure.

2. Our vision of Jesus can be corrected

Jesus tends to show up as we gather together and our vision can be corrected. There are three different forms of laser surgery!

A. As we read the Scriptures: Notice here the priority of the risen Jesus:

He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

(Luke 24:25–27) emphasis mine

This is a hugely important section in understanding how Jesus reveals Himself to humanity. He directs the disciples to what the Old Testament scriptures say about Himself, His suffering and His entering into glory.

Jesus continues to work through the scriptures in this way enabling us to see more clearly the Living God as we meditate on them

The second way that our vision of Jesus can be corrected is:

B. As we welcome His presence: Here's the shocking truth. In spite of Jesus being on the journey with these two disciples, and Him personally revealing the Scriptures to them, they still could have missed Him!

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly, 'Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them.

(Luke 24:28–29)

This reminds me of a similar principle in Revelation 3:20 where Jesus says:

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Jesus is knocking but he will only come in, when invited! Invitation is our prerogative. God does not break into our lives but waits for our invitation.

The third way that our vision of Jesus is corrected and our eyes are opened is:

C. As we break bread together: The disciples invite Jesus to come in and He immediately takes charge:

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes

were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. (Luke 24:30–31)

There is a clear contrast between Adam and Eve's eyes being opened to shame when they ate the apple, with the disciples' eyes being opened to the glory of the risen Jesus.

Once our vision has been corrected the most naturally supernatural thing is to go and share the good news with others. This is what the two disciples did:

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread. (Luke 24:33–35)

Will you ask God to give you new sight? Do you understand that you need a new way of seeing things? If you will won't you pray with me now and, if you can agree with this prayer and pray it for yourself please tell someone this week what you've done.