

Part 66: Blind Ears and Hearing Eyes

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There's a style of interviews that's often used by day-time TV or late night talk shows and it's called "Man-on-the-street" interviews. The premise is simple, you take a camera and a microphone and you ask people on the street a question. It's not uncommon to see it as a sort of comedy bit where the interviewer asks individuals what they thought of the game last night when in fact there was no game last night.

Even though there's not any truth to their answer, people still talk. If you took a camera around Missoula and asked "man on the street" style "Who is Jesus?" what kind of responses do you think you would get? I once had a plumber working at my house and as he asked about my job, I began to share the gospel with him. He told me that Jesus of Nazareth was not even a legitimate historical figure.

If you ask a Muslim, they would say that Jesus was a prophet of God but not the son of God. A Mormon would call Jesus the Son of God, but they would not admit he is God. A non-religious individual may affirm that Jesus was a good moral teacher, or a social revolutionary.

Even for Christians our description of Jesus may vary. A study in 2022 gave professing Christians the opportunity to pick their top three descriptors of who Jesus was. In order of popularity Jesus was described as: the Savior, the Son of God, the Messiah, Lord, healer, shepherd, friend, mediator, lover, liberator, disruptor, brother, and son.

A man-on-the-street theology of Jesus may yield a range of answers. But in the journalism world these kind of interviews are often used only in instances where expert or eye witness sources are not yet available. But when those subjects show up, they take center stage.

In the book of Luke today, the expert shows up. Luke's narrative, and Jesus' teaching reveal to us how Jesus understood himself. You can ask around, you can google, or you can listen to how Jesus describes himself in this text. Jesus sees himself as the Son of Man and the Son of David.

What do those titles mean? Their significance will be exposed in two contrasting stories: Jesus will clearly define the Son of Man to the disciples, but the significance was hidden from their sight. Meanwhile, a blind man who cannot see anything is the first to clearly see and recognize Jesus as the Son of David.

These stories reveal to us three ways in which Jesus wants to be understood, and this makes up our main point today: **Jesus is most clearly understood according to scripture, on the cross, and by faith.**

All three of these witnesses are necessary if we want to understand Jesus as **The Suffering Son of Man** (Luke 18:31-34) and **The Restorative Son of David** (Luke 18:35-43). That's the roadmap for us this morning.

As we've talked about before, the primary way Luke has assembled this account of Jesus is through geography. It began in Jerusalem with a barren womb and ends in Jerusalem with an empty tomb. In

between we read of the events of Jesus in the north, and Luke slowly walks Jesus closer and closer to Jerusalem in the south—to the cross itself.

But before Jesus gets to Jerusalem, Luke slows down the pace of things as Jesus moves into the city of Jericho. We aren't sure how long Jesus stayed in Jericho before he went into Jerusalem, but we are going to spend three weeks in this pit stop—as Jesus' identity and purpose is further clarified so that we might better understand the significance of his entrance into Jerusalem.

This is where our story picks up today: **(Luke 18:31)** "And taking the twelve, he said to them, 'See we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.'"

Here we encounter our first point this morning: **Jesus as the Suffering Son of Man.**

There are three quick pieces of this text that are helpful for us to see: the *desire of Jesus*, the *dilemma of expectations*, and the *dumbfoundedness of the disciples*.

First, look at the *desire of Jesus*.

I remember when I was certain that I was going to marry Sarah telling her in the spring of that year, "You know I'm going to propose to you this summer." While her initial reaction was, "Please, don't," the effect it had was to cause her to really assess her relationship goals and to prepare her heart to not be surprised when that day would come.

This is the third time in Luke where Jesus explicitly prepares his disciples for his death. Why is he doing this? What do we learn about Jesus' heart here? He wants his disciples to be prepared for what is coming. Jesus' isn't into bait and switch discipleship. He's not selling you a bill of goods and then leaving you to figure it out. He wants you to be aware so that you can faithfully trust him when our own understanding of life's events is uncertain.

Jesus says to the disciples here, and he says to us daily: see this is the life of the cross. This is what it looks like to follow me. And what's the tool he uses to help us prepare for that? How does he want us to understand him and his life? Through scripture, as he references the Old Testament prophets.

In total Jesus will refer to himself as the "Son of Man" 25 times in the book of Luke. It's his favorite way to speak of himself. But Jesus did this not because he wanted the disciples to take his word for it, but because he wanted them to understand who he was according to God's word—according to how the prophets and the Old Testament spoke of the Son of Man.

Jesus assumes that if we are to understand him, we cannot understand him apart from understanding the whole of God's scriptures. Jesus is not some new intrusion into God's plan, Jesus was the plan all along. We will dig into this more in depth this spring in Luke 24, but if we want to understand Jesus as Jesus understood himself then we need to read all of God's word in the same way Jesus did—which is to read the entire story of scripture as a story about God's plan to save the world through Jesus, the Son of Man.

While the disciples are still going to be shocked and confused at everything which is about to happen in Jerusalem, Jesus says, "You shouldn't be surprised...you read the book right?"

Brothers and sisters, Jesus wants you to know him and he wants you to know him by looking at his word. All of it, from Genesis to Revelation. Do you have a Jesus-sized Bible? We can learn much of Jesus by reading books by godly men and women, and by hearing sermons, but if we want to know Jesus as Jesus wants to be known we must set a pattern of reading the Bible eagerly and through the lens of the cross.

But the way Jesus spoke of himself as the Old Testament Son of Man shows us something else: *the dilemma of expectations*.

The primary passage a Jew would have thought of in connection to the prophetic Son of Man was in Daniel 7. Speaking of the Son of Man it says, **(Daniel 7:14)** "And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

The Son of Man was equated to an undefeatable and eternal kingdom. Therefore the expectation of Jesus as the Son of Man showing up in the royal city would have been sweet victory. It wouldn't have been unlike the vision we have of General MacArthur when he sailed into Tokyo Bay to accept the surrender of the Japanese. One author described his arrival, "In a blaze of glory, riding a white charger down the gangplank of the U.S.S. Missouri...he stepped ashore to the strains of 'The Star Spangled Banner.'"

But that's not the picture Jesus paints here is it? Look at the picture he paints of the Son of Man **(Luke 18:32)**: "For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him and on the third day he will rise."

Can you imagine how shocking this would have been in light of the Jewish hope they had in the Son of Man? Here was the one who was to put all nations under his feet--but he is being handed over to the Gentiles. He was the one who was to have nations flow to him in worship--but here the nations mock him. He was the one to bring judgement on the enemy--but here he is the one flogged and killed.

In fact if we put together all that Jesus says about these events in the book of Luke this is what we find: **In the Son of Man all that was written by the prophets will be accomplished (18:31). The Son of Man will suffer many things (9:21, 17:25), be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, the scribes (9:21) and this generation (17:25), he will be delivered into the hands of men (9:43), even Gentile men (18:32), he will be mocked, and shamefully treated and spit upon, and flogged (18:32-33), after which he will be killed (9:22, 18:33).**

That seems like a lot of things that the prophet Daniel left out of his vision. But this suffering Son of Man is all over the Old Testament.

It's in Leviticus 17 in the Day of Atonement where a sacrifice was made for the sins of the people. It's in Ezekiel 4 where Ezekiel, who is called the "son of man," is told to lay on his side as a prophetic metaphor. What is the metaphor conveying, **(Ezekiel 4:5b)** "So long shall you bear the punishment of the house of Israel." It's there in Isaiah 53 when the Lord's servant is pierced for our transgressions.

We cannot escape Jesus' role as the suffering Son of God. Jesus is preparing us for that. But all the preparations of God end in the promise of God: but on the third day, he will rise. This world wages war on your idols—so it pays to worship the only God who defeats death itself.

Jesus will suffer, because he's suffering for the sins of the people. But Jesus will rise because he's going to redeem his people. He's going to punch death in the teeth and promise that one day all who hope in him will rise just as he did.

Jesus spells this out so incredibly clearly but what we find is the *dumbfoundedness of the disciples*. Luke tells us: **(Luke 18:34)** "But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said."

I like to imagine the disciples reading the first copies of Luke's book and wondering if he needed to say it so redundantly: they didn't get it. There's two important issues we can see behind this statement.

First, we see here that the disciples are no dummies. When Jesus spoke of rising from the dead they didn't naturally assume that to be possible. You'll often hear people say that these eyewitnesses believed Jesus did miraculous things because they were predisposed to believe in supernatural magic and didn't know science. C.S. Lewis calls this chronological snobbery. It's an argument that basically says: "They believed what they believed because they were dumber than we are now."

But these men were just as astounded that Jesus would rise from the dead as any modern observer would be. It didn't make sense to them because it doesn't make sense to anyone. The undoing of death is not plausible to man, but it is to the God who made and redeemed man through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But secondly, we can understand the significance of seeing the cross. Everything was laid out clearly for the disciples and they didn't get it. Not only did they not understand it, not only did they not grasp it, but did you notice what else was said: "This saying was hidden from them."

What does that mean? It means that God the Father was intentionally hiding and concealing a full awareness of what Jesus just said. Now as we will see, once Jesus rose from the dead, once the events of the cross occurred, all the gospel writers say: "Then they got it."

But why does God cloud and blind them to what Jesus makes abundantly clear in language? Are the two persons of the Trinity warring against each other? No. Instead Jesus is explaining by words what God the Father is preparing them to understand only after they see the cross and resurrection in all its glory.

God is modeling for us what is true in our own lives today: We cannot understand Jesus unless we see the cross. God says in the book of Habakkuk (1:5), "I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told." The cross is the moment of clarity we all need. One of my professors said that those of us who live on this side of the cross have "the grace of place in redemptive history." On the cross all that God said in language is laid out in space-time-history. We cannot understand Jesus unless by the eyes of faith we see that cross in vivid color. Until that moment, until Jesus' cross becomes your cross, until his resurrection is your resurrection, it's won't make sense.

Jesus is the Son of Man who has come to deal with our sins, but here's the problem: we can't naturally see him. So how do we get the eyes of faith?

This is where we turn to the blind man in Jericho where Jesus takes on another title (here's our second point this morning): **Jesus as the Restorative Son of David.**

The disciples were blind in hearing, but the blind man was healed by seeing.

Now Matthew's gospel tells us that there were two blind men Jesus healed outside Jericho. That may have been a different healing, but what seems more likely is that Mark and Luke's gospel simply focus on the response of one of the blind men perhaps because he went on to be well known in the church. Mark actually gives us his name, Bartimaeus.

But, Luke tell us (**Luke 18:35-36**), "As [Jesus] drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant."

In verse 37, the crowds responded to him: "It's Jesus of Nazareth, he's passing by."

When he hears this, Luke tells us (**Luke 18:38-39**), "He cried out, 'Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.' And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

Notice the absolute truthfulness of the crowd's description: Jesus of Nazareth. That was true! It was a profoundly historical and accurate description of who Jesus was.

But notice how the blind man saw Jesus as more than simply the man of Nazareth. He didn't cry out for Jesus of Nazareth, he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me."

It's one thing to view and describe Jesus in light of who he is to the worldly eye. It's another thing to see Jesus in light of who he is in the word of God. That's what this blind man saw. Jesus couldn't merely be understood in regards to his place, but in regards to his purpose: He was the Son of David, the one who would go into Jerusalem as the next and final king in the line of David.

Here again we see the importance of understanding Jesus in light of the Old Testament. Jesus' favorite book of Christology was the Old Testament itself. He was not only the Son of Man, he was the Son of David.

Who was the Son of David? Well in 2 Samuel 7, David the great King of Israel, sought to build God a house and God inverted the plan and said: David, I will build you a house. Look at what God promised David in **2 Samuel 7:8-16**.

God was going to make the throne of David the eternal kingdom Israel needed. So now we see that the eternal kingdom of Daniel 7 is tied to the eternal king of 2 Samuel 7. If you remember all the way back in Luke chapter 1, when the birth of Jesus was foretold the angel said this to Mary: (**Luke 1:32**) "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. And the Lord will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there will be no end."

The significance of this Son of David was that he was the restorer of things. In Jeremiah 23 the son of David is the shepherd who cares for the lost sheep of Israel. His coming symbolizes in Isaiah 16 the end of oppression and destruction. In Jeremiah 30 it's the son of David who says, (**Jeremiah 30:17a**) "For I will restore health to you and your wounds I will heal..."

Where the Son of Man came to establish the kingdom in power, the Son of David would come to care for his people by gathering the lost and the lame. Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of David.

And while this reality was lost on everyone else, this blind beggar saw it. He had heard what had been said of Jesus of Nazareth, he had heard that he was claiming to be the Son of Man. He had heard of his miracles. And unlike the rest of the crowds he saw the connection.

This man was no man. This Jesus is the Son of David. The one who will restore and heal, and he is the one who will give me mercy. You see it is possible to have a historic view of Jesus like the crowds but not have theological view of Jesus like the blind man. But the blind man saw, even before he was healed.

His understanding of Jesus is so profound, so desperate, so crystal clear that even when he was silenced, he cried out all the more. He went out that morning to beg for money, but he ended up begging for mercy because finally hope had come.

Luke tells us what follows, **(Luke 18:40-43)**, "And Jesus stopped and command him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me recover my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.' And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God."

So here the Son of David, the king who has kingly things to do, the eternal ruler who has things of eternal significance to do, allows his movement towards the cross to be stopped by a man who sat blind on the roadside. And do you see even the heart of our king? The one to whom the world and all that's in it is subjected, subjects himself to the man in need of mercy and he asks him: "What do you want me to do for you?"

How would you respond if Jesus showed up in church today and asked you that very question?

Remember, Jesus is constantly rebuking the Pharisees for what they want Jesus to do. But here, Jesus actually leans into and asks a blind beggar what he wants the king of kings to do for him. Why?

Because Jesus knows his heart. The Pharisees, and perhaps our own answer to that question betray our hearts. The Pharisees asked because they wanted Jesus to do things for them so that they might get on with their life. We might want Jesus to do things for us so that we can overcome whatever hurdles we think are most severe and resume living life how we want to live it.

This man asked for one simple thing: he asked for his sight. And in asking for his sight, Jesus shows us what he truly saw.

The man's cry for mercy implied that he knew there was something in him that could only be made up by the mercy of God's King. He knew something was wrong and it needed to be made right by the Son of David. Now it's true, this man didn't really know what he needed did he? He didn't say, "I need mercy from my sins." He said he needed his sight. But while he didn't fully understand his problem, like many of us when we first come to faith, he clearly saw the solution: He needed Jesus.

You could have told him his biggest problem was his long fingernails, and he would have asked Jesus to help him with it. Jesus, not his sight, was the object of his hope. That's what Jesus affirms: "Your faith has made you well!" Faith in what? Faith in Jesus.

This man got his sight because Jesus was all he could see. This is confirmed all the more because upon seeing Jesus what does he do? He followed Jesus, glorifying God.

The only thing that happened in the miracle is that he was able to see with his eyes what already captivated his heart.

Here's how we get the eyes of faith. We come to Jesus for mercy, and when Jesus gives us mercy, our eyes are open to see him and to follow him. No one who comes to Jesus for mercy through faith will ever leave blind.

Receiving the mercy of God is receiving the ability to see Jesus by faith.

That's who the Son of David is. God's mercy for sinners. The prophet Zechariah describes it this way: **(Zechariah 12:10,13:1)**, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps for a firstborn...On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness."

Here, on the outskirts of Jericho, the fountain bubbled. What trickled on the streets of Jericho for a man physically blind would flow with force from Golgotha for those spiritually blind.

It is to those who come to Jesus with exclusive and desperate faith that he stoops in beautiful humility to ask us, "What do you want me to do for you?" And we reply—give us sight to see. Because when we see him for who he is, then the following is easy.

It's not easy in that there are not trials or hurdles, but it's easy in that we have a clear perspective on the Son of Man who suffered for us and the Son of David who has come to restore us. So for those who have yet to see, come and ask for mercy.

To those who have seen, let us go and follow him, glorifying God.

My wife and I have started doing a morning prayer with our family to help us transition into our day, and it's the prayer I want to close with today as a point of application. So would you bow your heads with me this morning.

*Heavenly Father, today is another day you have given us.
Give us eyes that see your glory,
Ears that hear your word,
Mouths that praise your name,
Hearts that repent,
Hands that serve,
Guts that try hard things,
And feet that follow you wherever we go, Amen.*