

14th May 2023

Ezekiel 12:1-11

The Exile Symbolized

12 The word of the LORD came to me: ² "Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see but do not see and ears to hear but do not hear, for they are a rebellious people.

³ "Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they watch, set out and go from where you are to another place. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious people. ⁴ During the daytime, while they watch, bring out your belongings packed for exile. Then in the evening, while they are watching, go out like those who go into exile. ⁵ While they watch, dig through the wall and take your belongings out through it. ⁶ Put them on your shoulder as they are watching and carry them out at dusk. Cover your face so that you cannot see the land, for I have made you a sign to the Israelites."

⁷ So I did as I was commanded. During the day I brought out my things packed for exile. Then in the evening I dug through the wall with my hands. I took my belongings out at dusk, carrying them on my shoulders while they watched.

⁸ In the morning the word of the LORD came to me: ⁹ "Son of man, did not the Israelites, that rebellious people, ask you, 'What are you doing?'

¹⁰ "Say to them, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: This prophecy concerns the prince in Jerusalem and all the Israelites who are there.' ¹¹ Say to them, 'I am a sign to you.'

"As I have done, so it will be done to them. They will go into exile as captives.

Matthew 20:29-34

Two Blind Men Receive Sight

²⁹ As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him. ³⁰ Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³¹ The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!"

³² Jesus stopped and called them. "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

³³ "Lord," they answered, "we want our sight."

³⁴ Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.

Sermon: Jesus is an Eye-Opener (Ezekiel 12:1-11 and Matthew 20:29-34)

Please have your **Bibles** open at **Matthew 20:29-34** to begin with.

You should have a **sermon outline** to take notes if you wish.

Let me **pray** first...

Context

Before we look at **this morning's passage** – we need to get the context.

[Slide 1-Context]

Back in chapter 19 a **rich young man** who **wanted eternal life** – **went away sad** when **Jesus** told him to **sell everything** he had and give it to the **poor**. The rich young man couldn't do that - because he **loved his wealth more than God**.

The **disciples** were **flabbergasted** because in the **Jewish culture** of the day – the **wealthy, healthy and wise** were seen as **blessed by God** – and seen as **shoe-ins for Heaven**. If the rich can't get to Heaven who can – they thought?

But Jesus makes it clear – it's by **putting God first and following Jesus** – that we **get eternal life in Heaven** – and we can't get there **under our own efforts**.

Jesus also made the point that in **His Kingdom** – things **operate a bit differently than in this world**. In Jesus' Kingdom, people who think they're **first end up last** – and people who think they're **last end up being first!**

Jesus then told the **parable of the workers in the vineyard** – every worker got the same pay – whether they worked 12 hours or 1 hour

Jesus' Kingdom is upside down – everyone is equal!

In fact - Jesus says – even He – as the **King of Heaven** – **didn't come to be served but to serve** – and to lay down His life for people to be saved.

What an **upside-down Kingdom!**

In this morning's passage – we come across **two blind men**.

We need to mention at this point – the **culture of the day** – said **anyone who was poor, sick, disabled (blind, deaf, dumb, lame)** were seen as being that way because of - **sin in their life** and **seen as cursed by God** – so they were **written off by society**.

Given how Jesus handled the rich young man – how will He handle two blind men?

Physical Blindness (Matthew 20:29-34)

[Slide 2-Physical Blindness]

We pick up the story in v29 as **Jesus and His disciples leave Jericho** on their way to Jerusalem – where Jesus will die.

And **two blind men** – v30 – take the **only opportunity** they are going to get – **Jesus is not likely to come by this way again**.

They cry out “**Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!**”

They are **desperate for Jesus' help**.

They even use the **term “Son of David”** which is a phrase describing God's **Promised Messiah – God's Chosen One** – whom God promised to send to save His people.

Isn't it **ironic** – **poetic even** – that here are **two blind men - social outcasts** – and they **have more idea of who Jesus is** – **than many** of the **religious leaders, Pharisees and teachers of the law!**

(pause)

Sadly, **the crowd rebuke the blind men** – v31 – the **blind men** are **told to be quiet.**

The blind men are **outcasts** in society and are seen as **irrelevant**. They were **not to annoy Jesus**. The crowd think - **Jesus is too important to be bothered by such people in society.**

But **Jesus is for all people** – not just the wealthy, healthy and wise.

Application: A lesson for us - **not to write anyone off** – **Jesus is available to all people!**

The **blind men** are **not put off** – they shout **even louder** “*Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!*”

They are **desperate, persistent and determined** they know Jesus can help.

Application: A lesson for us to also **be persistent when we ask God in prayer** – *we are to keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking on the door* – as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:7)

Even though Jesus is on a mission to go to Jerusalem – v32 – **He stops and calls the two blind men over - asking a telling question** – “*What do you want me to do for you?*”

What an amazing question!

Jesus asked this question with the **full knowledge - that these men were blind**.
He **knew what they needed**, but God still wants us to tell Him our needs as a constant expression of our faith and reliance on Him.

These **blind men** might have replied to Jesus' question by saying: 'I want some bread' or 'Give me a blanket to keep warm at night' or 'Give me money so I can buy food'.

But they replied – v33: ***“Lord, we want our sight”***

V34 – **Jesus had compassion** – touched their eyes and **healed them**.

He didn't need to touch their eyes – he could have just spoke and they would be able to see. But by touching their eyes – the **blind men knew Jesus was doing something** – and it was **a physical sign to the crowd watching!**

What does this miracle tell us about Jesus?

It says – **He** - who was at creation - and by whom - and through whom all things were made, **is also in the business of “re-creation”**.

Jesus, God's Son, has the **power of God** and can do things that only God can do – **because - He is God!**

Jesus is in the business of **restoring things back to the way things were in the Garden of Eden** – before Adam and Eve sinned – and before sin and brokenness came into the world.

Jesus is also putting into practice what He said in v28 – that ***He came to serve*** – **by being a servant here to two blind men!**

Through this miracle Jesus also demonstrates how - **the blind men** – **who are seen as “the last” in society** – are included in Jesus' Kingdom – and **they will get**

into the Kingdom whereas perhaps those who think they are “first” like the Pharisees and teachers of the law – might not even get into Jesus’ Kingdom at all!

[Slide 3-Lessons]

Application: What can we learn from the blind men here?

- The **blind men refused to accept discouragement** when the crowd tried to silence them. We need to be aware – as a person comes to Jesus – **Satan will use other people to try to discourage that person from coming to Jesus.** The **last thing Satan wants** is for **someone to follow Jesus!**
- The **blind men were specific in their request and took the opportunity presented to them** – when Jesus came by.
A lesson for non-believers **not to let Jesus pass them by.** People should **not put off accepting and following Jesus for a more convenient time** – because - often - **a more convenient time never comes.**
- The **blind men showed persistence and faith.** Their faith brought them healing.
- The **blind men not only believed what Jesus could do** – importantly they followed Him. We must **not neglect following Jesus** – His life example - and - His teaching!
- Coming into contact with Jesus, **transformed the blind men’s lives** – **Jesus can and does transform our lives too!**

Application: What can we learn from Jesus here?

- We too must put into practice what Jesus taught “*to serve and not to be served*” – and **follow His example** - and **become a servant** and **show compassion to those who ask for our help**; **especially those rejected or ignored or written-off** in our society!

Spiritual Blindness (Ezekiel 12:1-11)

Israel’s Spiritual Blindness

Now it’s all very well **Jesus healing the blind men**

But there’s **another blindness** – which is **way more serious**

And that’s **spiritual blindness**

[Slide 4-Israel’s blindness]

Which bring us to our **Old Testament reading** [Please turn to Ezekiel 12:1-11]

The prophet **Ezekiel** lived between **622BC and 570BC**.

He was **among the people of Judah** who were **taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar** and taken **into exile in Babylon**.

In our OT reading this morning

God speaks to Ezekiel and tells him – in v2 – that **he is living amongst a rebellious people – the Israelites!**

Ezekiel **describes the Israelites** as “*having eyes to see but they do not see and having ears to hear but they do not hear*”

In other words, they are **spiritually blind**

Over the centuries – since the time they occupied the Promised Land – the people of Israel have:

- **Disobeyed** God’s commands

- They have been **unfaithful** to God and **worshipped false gods and idols**
- They have **lived lives to please themselves** rather than pleasing God

Because of this rebellion

God tells **Ezekiel to “act out” the Israelites punishment**

God gives Ezekiel **two dramas** to act out

1st – He is to **pack all his belongings** and **carry them away** as though he is going into **exile** – and the people are to watch as he goes. Perhaps they will understand (vv3-4)

2nd – He is to **dig a hole in the wall of his house** – as the people watch – and he is to **carry out his belongings** through the hole in the wall (vv5-11)

These **two dramas** acted out – are to be **a sign to all the Israelites** in Judah that **God will send them into exile**.

The bottom line – **spiritual blindness leads to punishment from God!**

Our Spiritual Blindness

What about us?

The **two blind men** in Matthew 20:29-34 **were in a kind of exile** because of their blindness – they **were not able to participate fully in society**.

In the same way – our sin and rebellion against God leaves us in a spiritual exile where our relationship with God is broken – and **that relationship needs to be fixed**.

What does **spiritual blindness** look like then – **for us?**

[Slide 5-Our Blindness]

1. 1st - To be spiritually blind is to not see Jesus - and to **not see Jesus - is to not see God** (Colossians 1:15-16; 2 Corinthians 4:6). Spiritual blindness is a **grave condition** experienced by those who **do not believe in God, Jesus Christ, and His Word** (Romans 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:12). Those who reject Jesus are the lost (John 6:68-69). Being spiritually blind, they are **perishing** (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Revelation 3:17). They **choose not to accept the teachings of Jesus and His authority in their lives** (Matthew 28:18). They are **blind to the manifestations of God as revealed throughout His Word and Jesus Christ** (John 1:1; Acts 28:26-27). They are described as those who *“do not accept the things of the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 2:14).

2. 2nd – before we get all puffed up and say – ‘well I **do believe in Jesus** – so I **don’t have spiritual blindness**’

Even as Christians we can have spiritual blindness.

The number one accusation that non-Christians have against Christians is that we are hypocrites.

We say we are Christians but we **don’t act like it** and we **don’t keep God’s commandments** – we just see them as guidelines.

Even non-Christians know how we should behave – and they will quickly point out when we don’t behave right. They’ll say things like: “**Call yourself a Christian?**” – “**You’re a minister, aren’t you?**”

3. 3rd – As Christians we can be spiritually blind – in our handling of God’s Word.
We fail to apply God’s Word to our lives...

Jesus says “*love one another as I have loved you*” (John 13:34) but we show anger, bitterness and hatred instead.

The Bible says “*forgive one other, as Christ forgave you*” (Ephesians 4:32) but we say “*I’ll never forgive that person for what they did*”.

Jesus says “*be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful*” (Luke 6:36) yet we see an unjust situation or someone who needs mercy - and we do nothing!

The Bible says “*carry each other’s burdens*” (Galatians 6:2) but we see someone needs help – and we do nothing!

(pause)

The Cure for Spiritual Blindness

So, what is the **cure** for spiritual blindness?

Well, it’s as **simple as A B C...**

[Slide 6a-A]

A = Admit we have sinned – admit where we have **rebelled against God** – admit our **hypocrisy** – admit how **we haven’t applied God’s Word to our lives** - and say **SORRY** to God.

As King David prays in Psalm 139:23-24:

*²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
 test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

*²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
 and lead me in the way everlasting.*

[Slide 6b-B]

B = Believe that Jesus is the only one who can take away our sins – and give us forgiveness and eternal life.

As Acts 4:12 says: *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.*

And when believe in Jesus - **we receive the Holy Spirit** – which **opens our eyes to all things related to God** and reminds us of Jesus' teaching (John 14:26)

[Slide 6c-C]

C = Confess – that Jesus is the Saviour of the World. And by confess here we mean **“openly declare”** who Jesus is – and **follow Jesus' Great Commission** He left us - from Matthew 28:19-20 - *¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*

[Slide 7-Jesus is an eye-opener!]

There we have it - the cure for **spiritual blindness** – as simple as ABC.

Jesus literally is - a real **“eye-opener”!**

(pause)

So let me finish with our **response this morning** from **Ephesians 5:8-17**

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) ¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord. ¹¹ Have nothing to do with the

fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. ¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. ¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. ¹⁴ This is why it is said:

*“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”*

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

Let’s pray...

Father God,

Thank you for sending Jesus to restore our relationship with you.

Thank you that Jesus restores people’s lives both physically and spiritually.

*Thank you that Jesus is the light of the world – and Father - **help us to live as children of the light** – and follow Jesus’ example by producing the fruit of the light - showing goodness, righteousness and truth to everyone we come across.*

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.