

# Our Greatest Needs 4) Sight for the Blind

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Some people are calling it Moon-gate. It is the charge that some smartphone makers are adding details to photos which aren't captured by the phone's camera. One easy way to do this is to use artificial intelligence to enhance pictures taken of the moon. How it works is complicated. But the basic premise is simple. You take a picture of the moon while zoomed in 30 times on a phone. The phone recognizes it as a shot of the moon and uses artificial intelligence to make the image of the moon more detailed and crisper. Sometimes it even adds details that the camera can't see. Samsung has admitted its scene optimizer setting will do this with photos of the moon. But it makes you wonder if what you see in a photo is what you really are supposed to be seeing. Some users claim they tricked their phones into making the phone think it is taking a real picture of the moon when it wasn't. It was even worse when the Huawei company had stock photos of the moon in its phone software and added moon craters to pictures of lightbulbs because it thought it was a picture of the moon. Whether it is stock photos or artificial intelligence you wonder if what you capture and see is really accurate. This isn't too different from some social media platforms changing the appearance of users without telling them. It gave an illusion of what artificial intelligence and computer programs considered beautiful instead of real faces. Once again, we must wonder if we really know what we see. Ironically, we claim to have some of the best cameras but still might not have the most accurate photos.

Today we see Jesus encountering many who thought they could see clearly, but were blind, though they would never admit it. They considered themselves perfectly capable of seeing and knowing what they saw about Jesus. But even with eyes to see, they did not all see Jesus the same. Why is it that some see Jesus differently than others do? We learn the answer from Jesus after he gives sight to a blind man.

Jesus was walking along when he stumbled upon a man who had been blind from birth. The disciples immediately wanted Jesus to shed some light on the reason behind this man's blindness. Jesus' disciples asked him, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" You can guess the reasoning behind such a question. The disciples wanted to know the ugly sin behind this man's condition. They figured that they had it all down. In their reasoning, if you sin, you get punished. Therefore, this man afflicted with a life of blindness must be getting his payback for some sin. But this man presented a dilemma. If this man had been born blind it didn't seem to fit into that line of reasoning. Obviously, the man born blind didn't have the chance to sin before he was born blind. And it doesn't seem fair that he should be punished with blindness because of his parents' sins.

Jesus' answer reveals that he didn't just stumble upon this man this day. "*Neither this man nor his parents sinned,*" said Jesus, "*but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.*" You see, Jesus never stumbles along. He is the light, and his work is to bring light to the world. His encounter with this blind man was part of God's plan. Of course, this man wasn't sinless. But there was no sin that had made him blind. There was a higher purpose. God had planned to use this blindness to bring him to the light and the disciples to a clearer understanding of the light. Jesus says that is why he came, to shed light on the work of God by doing the work he was sent to do in the world. "*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"

What Jesus does next is something the blind man never could have imagined. Jesus spits on the ground, makes some mud with his saliva, and puts mud in the man's eyes. "Go, wash" he says. The blind man heads to the Pool of Siloam to wash out the mud. He takes Jesus at his word, and washes. And when he leaves, he sees the light of day for the first time, his new life of vision begins! But something else began that day: trust in a man they call Jesus.

It didn't take long for people to take notice. But not everyone would believe what was right before their eyes. All the neighbors and friends of this blind man couldn't believe it was actually him. We read how they had to hear the man himself say what was beyond believing with the eyes, "I am that man who was blind!" Among those who couldn't believe it were a group of Pharisees. They had the man brought in before them for questioning. After hearing the first-hand testimony of how Jesus restored his sight, they were at first divided. Some charged Jesus of sinning. They said he had worked on the Sabbath by making mud and healing the man. Then they concluded Jesus couldn't be a godly man because he did this work. But others still wondered, "If he is a sinner then how can he possibly be doing God-given acts like this?" They saw with their eyes the miracle of sight in the man. But for some of them a blindness remained toward Jesus. They could not trust in him as the Messiah.

Why did people see Jesus differently? It didn't matter what people beheld with their eyes. The blindness that plagues us all from birth includes proudly thinking we understand and see it all. It is the blindness of looking only at the outward and making our limited judgments. It is pretending that we are truly by nature theologians. "Whatever we see and think must be true, right? We define the truth for ourselves, don't we?" In blindness we like to look at others as greater sinners than ourselves. We see their sin with greater detail but are blind to our own. In blindness to our own sin we sometimes fail to even recognize or repent of sins we commit. We readily ask, "What sin did that person

commit?" But we fail to scope the darkest hidden corners of our own hearts and minds. This is what the Scriptures often call blindness. It is a spiritual blindness that we all have from birth.

And who sinned that we were born spiritually blind? Our parents. It was our parents who stood in the garden of Eden and heard the devil say, "You will not stumble, you will not die, you will be fine." It was the devil who lied, and it was our parents Adam and Eve who stumbled into blindness. They swallowed the lie, "Your eyes will be opened." And we are born to walk in that blindness in our own shared sinful hearts. We all stumble in spiritual blindness. The disciples thought that they were somehow better than the blind man begging under them. They entertained the thought that they were spared from being struck blind because they avoided some sin. The Pharisees regarded themselves as capable of spiritually navigating their own way. They didn't see their own stumbling in the darkness of sin.

How did things continue for the man who had been born blind and for the Pharisees? Each grew in their sight and blindness. We can read about the questioning and the dialogue. The Pharisees claim to be superior and with less sin than the blind man. Meanwhile the formerly blind man grows in seeing, believing, and confessing Jesus to be something more than meets the eye. The Pharisees became enraged. "You were steeped in sin at birth;" they cried "how dare you lecture us!" And they threw that man out.

Jesus, the light of the world, came to give that man more than just ordinary sight. *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.*

When Jesus spoke of "the Son of Man" he was referring to the promised Savior, the Messiah. Though the man saw an ordinary person before him, with faith he saw his Savior. The man now trusted in Jesus as his Savior, as his God. His faith grew to one that not only trusted Jesus, but trusted him as the Messiah, his Lord, his God, his Savior.

The world today will look at Jesus and it will stumble in blindness. In spiritual blindness it will overlook sin. It will see no need for a Savior who would take on flesh and walk this earth. It will be blind to the sacrifice for sin that Jesus paid for the world on the cross because it is blind to sin and blind to its savior.

But Jesus came to rescue us from our spiritual blindness. It is because he has led you to trust in his Word that you now can say, "I believe" and you too now worship him. It is not with your eyes, but with your heart that you believe. Like the blind man and the hymn writer we sing in the truest sense "I once was blind, but now I see!" This is why Jesus came! "I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

We can zoom in on the cross and see all the details for ourselves. As we zoom in on the man hanging there we see Jesus, a lowly man from Nazareth. But we see more than a man. We see one who is without sin. He is the holy Son of God who came to die in the place of every sinner. And we zoom in and see the pains that he endured were a fulfillment of prophecy that the Holy one would bear our sins in our place. God opens our eyes to see what really took place when Jesus came as the Son of Man. He came to save us from the darkness of our own sin.

And we can zoom in to see the tomb where they placed him. There is no body. He rose from death. He is the holy Son of God. He is our Savior who now lives. We see that now only with the eyes of faith, but someday we will see him just like the man healed of blindness saw him -in the flesh.

Sometimes we think we have things all figured out. I occasionally find myself testing and challenging myself in this regard when in the dark. Usually, it is done not so much as a game but my own laziness or haste. Instead of flipping on the light switch in a dark room I have found myself trying to make it from one spot to another without the light. "I know this house; I can manage without flipping on the light this time." That's what I think --until I get a painful reminder that I couldn't possibly remember where every part of Mr. Potato head was at the end of the day. More than once my feet have found a Lego piece, a small wooden block, or another tool left in the dark. I thought that I would still be fine --could still see in the darkness. That's what we do when we refuse to look to Jesus for light and life.

Why do some see Jesus different from the way others do? It's not because of blind faith missing the details. It is because of the blindness of unbelief changing the details. In blindness many cannot see the light of Christ but create their own false reality. They stumble in the darkness.

Now Jesus says, while it is day, we must do the work that he sent us to do. While you live in this world full of those still stumbling in blindness, do the work you are sent to do. Show them the light of the world, Jesus. Use the opportunities God places before to give him glory and point to Jesus. Point them to the cross and the payment made to take away their sin. Show them the shining victory of Easter and Jesus alive. Let God bring them with you to this wonderful light. Tell all who are born of Adam and Eve "Jesus Rescues us from our Blindness."