



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**

Lent
(Preparation)

Part II

Daily Scripture Readings for
March 16 - April 12

WEEK 4: SEEING AS GOD SEES

Monday, March 16 - 1 Samuel 16:1-13

I thought everyone saw this way. I was sitting in the optical center at my local WalMart about this time 18 years ago. I needed glasses. I didn't know I needed glasses until I went to get my driver's license. As I took the eye test at DPS, I thought the test was bad. I thought I hadn't pressed my forehead into the binocular looking tester hard enough. Before that, when I was in school the months prior, I thought the overhead projector was just blurry. I thought the room was too bright to see the board clearly. I thought everyone saw this way. Spoiler alert: not everyone saw this way. I failed my vision screening and was getting fitted for glasses. Once I put them on, I was shocked at how poorly I was seeing before. I could read the signs all the way to the back of the store. I could see without glare on the board. I could see as everyone else actually sees.

In our spiritual life, we think we see as God sees. More likely than not, however, our spiritual vision is just as blurry as my vision without glasses. We need God-sized glasses in order to see as God sees. God saw a king in David. David was the runt of the family. The littlest one whom his father did not even bother to bring in the house to meet Samuel. When Samuel met the other stronger, older sons of Jesse, he saw kings. God did not. Both Jesse and Samuel thought they could see clearly, but their vision was skewed. They looked at the outside of the person while God looked at what was inside.

We need to use our God glasses to see the world as God sees. Oh, what are God glasses? They are the glasses you learn to use by reading the Bible, praying, and learning what it means to be the hands and feet of God on this earth. Our human eyes gravitate towards doing what is best for us and what looks the best. God's eyes look

inward to see the soul of each person. Let our eyes match God's eyes. Let's put on our God glasses and see clearly.

Tuesday, March 17 - Ephesians 5:8-14

Verses 10-11 get to the core of what it means to see as God sees. Each verse represents one half of our duty as Christians. First we try to find out what is pleasing to God. There is a phrase used in the Executive Branch of government over and over again: "I serve at the pleasure of the president." The meaning is quite clear: your position in the White House is incumbent on you doing as the president requires. As citizens of the Kingdom of God, we have a similar obligation to God. It is our duty to serve as God requires. In order to do that, we must discover what is pleasing to God. This discovery is not as difficult as it sounds. Reading your Bible is the best way to discover God's will. Secondly, go to Bible Study and Worship Services to continue to learn about God's desires for your life. Spending time with God is how we know what is pleasing to God.

The second half of our instruction is to not participate in the "works of darkness." This makes sense following what we just discussed. Know what God wants you to do; don't do what God doesn't want you to do. Easier said than done, but it makes sense. The difficult part of the verse is what does it mean to "expose them?" Are we supposed to be telling everybody what they are doing wrong? In a way, yes. Some have thought this verse limited to only holding other Christians accountable, but verses 12-13 seem to support verse 11 being a teaching for Christians to hold the world accountable for their actions (Be careful, though. Make sure that plank is out of your eye first! (Matt. 7:3-5)). Christians are to go into the world and expose the evils of the world. Bring light to the dark places. Show others the true path to salvation through Christ, so they can become children of God. Sometimes we expose the evils of the world through gentle encouragement to do the morally upright thing. Other times, our tact must be more

forceful and commanding. It depends on the situation and that is where we rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance. The Spirit will tell us how to speak to the darkness at that moment.

Pray today for God to lead you on the correct path. Pray that you know what is pleasing to him and that you avoid the works of darkness. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in how to stand against the evils you see around you and be a light for Christ in the darkness.

Wednesday, March 18 - 1 Samuel 17:1-58

This is the most famous story in the Bible. People who do not go to church know this story. People know this story and yet don't even realize it's in the Bible. The story of David and Goliath is an underdog story, right? At least, that's what we've been taught. I'm not so sure. After all, God was on David's side. Can anyone with God on their side be called an underdog? I have other questions from this story we will discuss tonight. If God is going to make sure David will win the battle, why does he pick up five stones? Also, when you read the entire story, did you remember the story being so violent? Lastly, the previous story has David in Saul's court playing the lyre. Then this story makes it seem that David and Saul are just now being introduced. How does that make sense? I'll bring my questions, you bring yours. I'll see you tonight.

Thursday, March 19 - John 9:1-7

Seeing as God sees means seeing the world for what it is. Sometimes things happen that are no one's fault. I have an aunt who has Cerebral Palsy. When she was born, my grandparents were questioned about what they had done wrong to bring this upon their daughter. This passage, along with the entire Bible, refutes this type of connection. Disability is not a consequence of your or your parents' sin. Illness is not a consequence of sinful actions. Sometimes physical events occur without a reason.

There isn't some magnificent spiritual explanation for your condition. This isn't some great test. I had a person come meet with me one time. This person told me that God had told them to do something. They tried to shrug God off and then got "sicker than they ever have been in their life." Now, this person was going to listen to God. Did God make them sick to listen to God? It's possible. Did the person just get really sick because they caught a stomach bug or got food poisoning? That's probably more likely.

Sometimes, seeing the world as God sees it means spiritualizing events *less than* we do now. The disciples ask Jesus who sinned to bring blindness upon this man. Jesus clearly tells them that's not why this man is blind. And then Jesus proceeds to show his power over worldly events and heals the blind man. While God nor the spiritual caused the blindness, God brought sight to the man. That is seeing the world as God sees it. He doesn't cause pain; he only brings healing.

Friday, March 20 - John 9:35-41

Verses like the ones today make me reflect on my own life. I have made it my mission to be a life-long learner. Part of always wanting to learn is to never be sure I am absolutely right. It makes me nervous to think that I probably have more in common with the Pharisees than I do others in the Bible. I am a church-goer. I am a church leader. I am a person concerned with others "doing the right thing." Too often, I am judgmental when it comes to sin I can see (if I'm honest, I'd be judgmental of sin I can't see too...if I could see it). If some radical came into the church and told us we were doing everything wrong, I'd be hesitant to believe and want to wrong the guy out of town. I'm a lot like the Pharisees.

So I have to stop myself every so often, especially when I read passages like this, and ask: am I blind? Am I seeing things the way Jesus sees them or do I have spiritual blindness? Am I excited that this blind man is healed or am I more upset that

Jesus broke the Sabbath to heal him? Am I elated that God's work is being done in my community or am I more upset that people are missing church to do it? Do I have my God glasses on or is my vision skewed?

I hope and pray that I am seeing the world as God sees it. Pray that prayer in your own life as well. Pray that your eyes can be opened. Pray for God to give you sight and see as he does.

Saturday, March 21 - Psalm 40; Hebrews 10:5-7

How can you truly thank God for what he has done in your life and who he is? Psalm 40 helps to answer that. I think the main point of the psalm is found in verse 6-8, which is quoted in Hebrews 10. How can we really thank God? By delighting to do his will in the world. By writing his law on our heart. Come tomorrow night and we will discuss thanking God.

Sunday, March 22 - Psalm 38

Are you hurting this morning? Your anguish is known by God. Come and worship that God this morning!

WEEK 5: GOD MAKES ALIVE AGAIN!

Monday, March 23 - 1 Kings 17:17-24

Do you believe in God's Resurrection Power? First Kings 17 is the first time we are introduced to Elijah. There are three stories within this chapter about the life-giving power of God. First, Elijah is fed by the ravens. Second, God provides food for the widow at Zarephath after she shows hospitality to Elijah. Then, in our reading for today, God raises the widow's son from the dead. God truly has power over death and is the giver of life.

The choir is planning to sing a special on Sunday morning, called Resurrection Power. The basic message found in the song is that it is Jesus alone who can make us alive. We are no longer held captive by sin, darkness, and death, but we have been given life because of Jesus. We are like the widow's son, who has no breath left inside. Without breath, without the Spirit inside of us, we are spiritually dead. But when God comes to live inside of us, we are made alive. The old is gone, and we are new creations!

I hope you can say that you are a new creation. I pray that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is real and has resurrection power.

Tuesday, March 24 - Romans 8:6-11

This is an extremely difficult passage to read. It is my opinion that Paul is grasping at words to try to describe the indescribable. He is searching for how to explain the unexplainable. How does one explain to the world living with God as the controller of your life? How do we talk about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit influencing our lives? That is what Paul is trying to do in Romans 8.

These six verses come at the end of a long argument Paul began to make in Romans 7:1. The argument is how do the Law and Spirit co-exist? It is by seeing Romans 7:1-8:11 as one unit where we will try to draw conclusions for us today. What do we do with the Old Testament and the Law in a life where we are to live according to the Spirit? The Law and the Spirit have a common enemy in Sin. The desires of the flesh are pointed out by the Law, and a person who sets their mind on the flesh is contrary to one who sets their mind on the Spirit. A person who sets their mind on the Spirit or, in other words, has the Spirit of God inside of them will have peace in their relationship with God because Sin is not influencing that relationship. The person who sets their mind on the Spirit will live according to the small "L" law while not necessarily

living according to the capital “L” Law. Why do I say it that way? Because Jesus came to fulfill the Law. He *changed* the Law (“you have heard it said, but I say unto you...”).

What is Paul describing? He is describing how we are to live every day. He is explaining the pains that follow from sin and the blessings that follow from doing as God requires. Do you want life and peace today, as Romans 8:6 describes? Set your mind on being led by the Spirit since the Spirit of God lives inside you.

Wednesday, March 25 - 1 Samuel 18-20

For the first few weeks of our study of David, we have only read one story at a time. Over the course of the next few months, I want us to cover most of David’s story from 1 Samuel 16-1 Kings 2. That means reading several chapters on Wednesdays. This type of reading is different than when you read a select 5 verses on a given day. Your Wednesday readings will be more for comprehension of the story instead of deep spiritual truths. Will there be spiritual realizations during your readings? Likely so. After all, the Bible is the Word of God, not just some history book.

Today’s reading will consist of the beginning of trouble between Saul and David. You will see the relationships David has with Jonathan and Michal, two of Saul’s children. We will spend much of our time talking about the friendship of David and Jonathan. I hope you plan to join us tonight.

Thursday, March 26 - John 11:28-44

As the television might say, we join our story already in progress. Today reading concludes the story of Lazarus in John 11. Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, friend of Jesus, has been dead four days. Jesus received word earlier in John 11 that Lazarus was sick and instead of going at once to be by his friend’s side, he remained where he was for two days. It was during that time that Lazarus died even though Jesus gave a cryptic statement in John 11:4 that Lazarus would not die due to this

illness. When Jesus does arrive in Bethany, Martha and Mary say the same thing: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Jesus surveys the crowd of mourners who have gathered and Jesus is greatly disturbed in his spirit. Jesus begins to weep.

This is what I want us to explore today: why does Jesus weep? Here is what we know. In verse 33, Jesus is disturbed, moved, frustrated, agitated, or angry depending on your Bible translation. At what? We aren't fully sure. He could be upset at the lack of faith in Martha, Mary, and the crowds. He could be upset at the fact that people die. He could be anxious about his own upcoming death. He could be frustrated that there are Jews who are not his followers with Mary, so his planned raising of Lazarus was now going to be a public matter (which as we learn tomorrow, becomes an issue). All of these explanations have been given by others. Most suggest the explanation is that Jesus is disturbed about the lack of faith in Mary, Martha, and the crowds. I, however, do not think it is fair to Mary and Martha to see them as untrusting of Jesus at this moment. Why would they assume Jesus is going to raise Lazarus from the dead? How can we or Jesus be angry that they are grieving the loss of their brother? We aren't and Jesus wasn't angry about that. I think Jesus sees the beginning of the end of his life before him. The end of his earthly ministry. Jesus is angry that the crowds are there. As we will see tomorrow, these crowds effectively ended his public ministry.

So we see why Jesus is angry, but is that why Jesus weeps? For the most part yes. His tears are shed after being invited to see Lazarus' tomb, but his tears cannot be about Lazarus' death or seeing the body. After all, Jesus knows exactly what he is about to do. All of John 11 is leading to the moment where Jesus will raise Lazarus from the dead showing all who are at the tomb that he has power over death. His tears in verse 35, I believe (and I understand I'm in the minority), are tears about a public ministry that is quickly coming to an end. Jesus wept because his time was coming.

Friday, March 27 - John 11:45-57

I'll try to make today's reading shorter than yesterday, but no promises! While the readings this week and the sermon on Sunday will be focused on the resurrection power of God, today we take a slight detour in our devotional. It is in this epilogue to the Lazarus story that Jesus becomes a fugitive of sorts, hiding from the Pharisees for an indeterminate amount of time. We see in this account that the reason the Pharisees want to kill Jesus is because they do not want Rome to come and take away their power. They do not want the Temple to be destroyed. They don't want people to continue to flock to following Jesus. It truly has nothing to do with questioning if Jesus is the Messiah. It only has to do with power.

Christians must be on guard for the draw that power has. It's destructive temptations lead to ignoring the spiritual in order to gain the material. We put Jesus to death because of what Rome might do when "everyone [believes] in him." Don't be like the Pharisees. When the choice to please Rome or please God is set before you, may we all please God.

Saturday, March 28 - Psalm 53; Romans 3:10-12

We are going to talk about a new term but not new idea tomorrow night: *functional atheism*. Who is a Functional Atheist? People who live Monday-Saturday as if there is no God. What can Psalm 53 teach us about the ramifications of that lifestyle? Read today and we will discuss tomorrow night.

Sunday, March 29 - Psalm 39:7

WEEK 6: GOD'S TIMING

Monday, March 30 - Luke 4:16-30

It's not time yet. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, his home synagogue wants to throw him off a cliff because of a unpopular sermon (talk about a rough crowd). The end of the passage might be the most enjoyable passage to me in the Bible from a pure entertainment level. You can imagine the scene. The crowd is incensed at what Jesus says and starts yelling. They get up and run him out of the church, up to the edge of a cliff. The crowd is closing in, they have him trapped and plan to throw this blasphemer to his death. And then that would be the end of Jesus of Nazareth. A ministry cut short before it really even began. But then...Jesus just walks through the middle of them and goes on his way. The miracle of Jesus passing through the crowd is "the most fun" of all of his miracles.

Why does Jesus not get thrown off the cliff? It's not time yet. God's timing is important in all of our lives. It was important for the life of Jesus. Did you know that Jesus came at the perfect time in history? You might say of course, because you believe in God's perfect timing, but he really did! The reason it was the best time is because it was the first time in human history that the world had relative peace because of the Roman Empire and the Romans had built roads to connect the entire Empire. This meant that the message of Jesus could be spread faster and to people all over the known world for truly the first time in human history.

God's timing was perfect for the earthly ministry of Jesus and God's timing is perfect in your life. What are you waiting on today? What are you anxious about? Trust God's timing. He will lead you perfectly.

Tuesday, March 31 - Philippians 2:5-11

While Jesus performed a miracle to escape the crowd in our story yesterday, his life was not about self-preservation. His life was about obedience to God. When that obedience meant remaining alive, this is what he did. When that obedience meant humbling himself and dying on a cross, he gave his all to the Father. His life was about following God's timing.

This early Christian hymn is written in order for us to follow Jesus' example. Let us have the humility to do as Jesus did and follow God's timing in our lives. Let us also worship Jesus as we should because of what he did. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is Lord. We are five days from Palm Sunday, ten days from Good Friday, and twelve days from Easter. What Jesus did for you deserves your unending praise. Prepare for Easter and praise him today.

Wednesday, April 1 - 1 Samuel 21:1-22:5

Tonight, we will survey three stories that give us a picture of David's life on the run. They are stories of God's provisions and David growing into the leader of men he would need to be when king. Of note, while there is not much commentary in 1 Samuel on the events of David taking the holy bread, Jesus uses the episode to explain why it is not unlawful for his disciples to pluck grain to eat on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:3-4). Jesus indicates that providing sustenance from the bread is acceptable. What kind of message can this send to us regarding "things for God" and "things for man?"

Thursday, April 2 - Mark 13:32-37

Are we in the "End Days?" If I had to rank the frequency of a question I get as a pastor, questions regarding the return of Jesus would be at the top. When I get this question, I don't reference a passage in Revelation about signs of the times. I don't find

a news article about something happening in Israel today. I don't talk through any world events or apocalypse references. I go to Mark 13:32-37.

Do you trust in God's timing? Then stop worrying about when he is going to come back. All of that effort could be better used to do the work of God. It is impossible for any of us to know the day or the hour of Jesus' return. Somebody once asked one of my college professors "if that meant we could figure out the month or the year." No. Looking at the verse with that type of specificity is completely missing the point. The point is we cannot know when Jesus is coming back.

So what should we do? Keep alert. Stay awake (something the disciples couldn't do later in the garden). Always be ready. Always be expecting Jesus' return. The way I believe we do that is to be about the business of God's Kingdom. Tell others about God. Share with the poor, widow, and orphan. Do you believe Jesus is coming back? We don't know when he is going to come back, so let's help as many people be ready as possible.

Friday, April 3 - Psalm 69; John 2:16-17

Tomorrow we will begin to read Holy Week readings, so our passage today is for this coming Sunday night. Psalm 69 is a desperate cry for help. It is written by a person in deep despair. Read over the words a few times today. Think about a time when you felt like the psalmist did. How did God rescue you in that moment? Pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for that rescue. If you are in a moment of trouble right now, pray for God to deliver you. And let others know so they can pray for you as well.

Saturday, April 4 - Matthew 21:1-11

****Note:** These begin our Holy Week readings. Devotions will be only one question long to allow you time to reflect and meditate on the daily passages.**

When Jesus rode into town, would you have been part of the crowd shouting “Hosanna” or part of the city in turmoil grumbling “Who is this?”

Sunday, April 5 - Psalm 118:21-29

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

WEEK 7: HOLY WEEK

Monday, April 6 - Mark 11:12-19

Have we turned the church into something else than “a house of prayer for all the nations?”

Tuesday, April 7 - Matthew 26:6-13

Do you relate more to what the disciples say in 26:8 or more to the woman’s actions in this story?

Wednesday, April 8 - Luke 22:1-6

If Satan is doing the influencing and God has a great plan for all of this, should Judas get as much blame as he does?

Thursday, April 9 - Matthew 26:26-30

What do you think was going through Jesus’ mind when he was leading the Passover meal for one last time with his disciples?

Friday, April 10 - Mark 15:20-39

What do you think the disciples were thinking on this day?

Saturday, April 11 - Luke 23:56b

What do you think this Sabbath rest looked like?

Sunday, April 12 - Luke 24:1-12

Do you believe in the Resurrection of Jesus?