

**“For a long time I have kept silent,
 I have been quiet and held myself back.
 But now, like a woman in childbirth,
 I cry out, I gasp and pant.
 15 I will lay waste the mountains and hills
 and dry up all their vegetation;
 I will turn rivers into islands
 and dry up the pools.
 16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known,
 along unfamiliar paths I will guide them;
 I will turn the darkness into light before them
 and make the rough places smooth.
 These are the things I will do;
 I will not forsake them.
 17 But those who trust in idols,
 who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’
 will be turned back in utter shame.
 18 “Hear, you deaf;
 look, you blind, and see!
 19 Who is blind but my servant,
 and deaf like the messenger I send?
 Who is blind like the one committed to me,
 blind like the servant of the LORD?
 20 You have seen many things, but have paid no attention;
 your ears are open, but you hear nothing.”
 21 It pleased the LORD
 for the sake of his righteousness
 to make his law great and glorious. (NIV84)**

Theme: Open your Eyes to the Way of Salvation

1. God wakes us from spiritual sleep with his law.
2. God promises his righteousness through the gospel.

All of us here today can see. You are able to use your eyes to see where you are walking, to grab certain objects, to do just about everything. The only time you don't use your sight is when you are sleeping. But what if you lost your sight? Maybe you got hit in the temple or you got some disease that affected your eyes. Your life

would completely change. You would have to learn how to do things all over again. Many things that you enjoyed doing—like watching t.v., driving, or simply watching the sun set you would no longer be able to do.

But what would happen if they came out with a new procedure that would be able to restore your sight. Would you do it? What if there were absolutely no side effects and it was free of charge? Would you do it? Would you get the procedure done? I'm sure many people would. But there are others who would be too lazy to get it done. They would come up with excuses: “Blindness doesn't really bother me. I like the extra attention. It's just too much of a hassle to get the procedure done” Sound ridiculous, right? It's absurd. Why would anyone in that hypothetical situation give up the ability to see and remain blind?

And yet, that's what many people do when it comes to spiritual blindness. So today God calls you to open your eyes to the way of salvation. For he wakes us from spiritual sleep with his law. and he promises his righteousness through the gospel.

The Israelites knew the way to salvation. They saw what God did for them. He rescued them from the oppression of the Egyptians. He brought them safety through the wilderness. And he brought them into the Promised Land. When the countries of the land attacked, he won for them victory after victory. All the while he Promised them a Savior. He assured his children that he would send the Messiah who would save them from their sins.

But eventually the Israelites stopped caring. They knew that God had rescued them. They knew the promises well. But it became old hat. They heard that story before. They wanted something new and exciting. And blindness is something new after all. So they went after other gods. Or they thought that they could earn their own way to eternal life without the Lord's help.

Spiritual apathy didn't just hit the Israelites. It hits us as well. But we can't possibly be as bad as the Israelites, right? We're not worshiping other gods. We haven't even come close to rejecting the Lord completely as most of the Israelites did. Yet, we often have the same lack of enthusiasm for the gospel as they did. Often it seems as if we

simply don't care about God and his Word. We've got better things to do than worry about such things. My job, my family, or relaxation become more important than the Lord. My children have dance practice, baseball workouts, or too much homework to do. We often spend more time with our kids talking about sports, playing games with them, or going to the movies than we do reading God's Word to them or praying with them.

We become so busy in our lives that God often takes a back seat. We never intended that to happen. But we get so involved with our jobs or hobbies, or getting our children involved with every possible single thing they can do, that we forget about God. So our worship attendance begins to wane. We're simply too busy or too tired to come. So instead of making the time in our busy schedules and making it a priority in our lives we only worship when we've got nothing better to do. When you become so busy it's easy to skip your daily Bible reading. Soon that devotional book begins to gather dust. Studying God's Word in Bible Class rarely seems to enter your mind. You've got better things to do than learning more about God and what he has done for us—like getting a bite to eat, getting some housework done, or catching up on your favorite TV. show. The busier we become, God and his Word seem to matter less and less. And we become apathetic or indifferent to God and his Word.

Isaiah talked against this. **Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the LORD? You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing.**" God's children had become blind. They hear his Word, but they don't listen. They see his love and grace, but they don't seem to care. They are spiritually blind. At one point they saw the light of salvation. But the disease of our sinful nature is getting the best of us. Like cataracts, it is slowly taking us over. We begin to lose our sight—of God. And soon we are spiritually blind. Like the Pharisees of Jesus' day. They were so incensed that Jesus had the audacity to make mud on the Sabbath that they lost sight of his divine power. They couldn't see that he was the Promised Messiah. They were too busy with their own agendas. They were too busy complaining about Christ to see who he truly is. They were leaders of

God's people—his servants. But they were spiritually blind. They heard but did not listen.

And what does God promise such people? Judgment. As he says in verse 15, **those who trust in idols, who say to images, 'You are our gods,' will be turned back in utter shame.** It may seem as if God won't do anything. It may seem as if he looks away at such sins. But eventually the time will come when he will act. And when he does he will bring his wrath and punishment on all those who fail to obey him. They will face utter shame when he sends them to suffer in hell forever.

That is who we are and what we deserve. All of us fail to put God first in our lives. And so we all deserve his wrath and punishment. But that's not what God wants. Listen to verses 20 and 21. **You have seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing. It pleased the LORD for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious.** We rebelled against God. We failed to listen to him. And yet it pleased the Lord to make his Word great and glorious. It pleased him to reveal to us the way of salvation.

And that plan wasn't forced upon him, but something he did out of his love and grace. That plan involved sending his Son to this earth. To give up his son to die. To forsake his son when he became guilty of all our sins. To raise his son from the dead. So that he would declare us not guilty. So that he didn't have to treat us as our sins deserve. But so that he could consider us pure and innocent just like his Son, Jesus. So that he could declare us righteous.

And so he leads us to places we could not see on our own. As Isaiah mentions in verse 16. **I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.** We were the blind. We were those who on our own do not know the way of salvation. We were hopeless, helpless, and ignorant as to how to be saved. The human heart cannot comprehend grace. It cannot fathom that God would freely forgive out of his love. So God leads us on the way. He brings us to faith and shows us the way of eternal life.

The unseen and unfamiliar path is that way because we cannot see it by nature. So Jesus leads us on that path. He guides us on our way. And he gets rid of all obstacles. All the objects of this world that might cause us to stumble. The things that block our path. And those that which may cause us to become sidetracked. He removes them all. Making our path smooth. That which hinders us, whatever may threaten us—Christ clears away. He leads us who were spiritually blind down the way of salvation.

And how does he do so? Through the Word. As the psalmist wrote in psalm 119. **Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.** It is through his Word that Jesus brings us from the darkness of unbelief into the light of salvation. He shines the light of his gospel in our sin-darkened hearts. It is through the gospel that he makes the blind see. Through it, he shows us the way of salvation. In today's gospel Jesus gave sight to a blind man. While that is amazing, and by doing it Jesus showed his divine power—as well as his mercy and love, it wasn't the most important thing that Jesus did for that blind man. That was sharing the gospel with him. Jesus didn't just give him physical sight and let it go at that. He led him to see the light of salvation. By revealing himself as the Son of Man—true God and our Savior, he gave him spiritual sight. He led him down an unknown path. He showed him the way of salvation.

Jesus did that by talking to the blind man. By showing him the gospel. He does the same today. He brings us to faith through the gospel. He shines light on our sinned darkened hearts through the message of his love for us. So what do we do? We get into the Word. We read it at home—alone and to our children. We study God's Word in Bible Class. For always want to know more and are never satisfied with the limited knowledge of the Lord that we have. And we make it a top priority in our lives. Not only in our lives but in the lives of our children. We make the time our busy schedules to do so. Not just to have devotions, to pray with our children, but also to study his Word and attend worship together. And there are no good excuses. There are no good reasons not to do so. You can't justify your actions when you fail to put God first in your life. You know what God does with the gospel. He shines light into our darkened

soul. He shows us what he has done to win for us salvation. He gives sight to the spiritually blind.

If there was a cure to your physical blindness that was absolutely free and contained no side effects, you would get the procedure done in a heart beat. There is a cure for spiritual blindness. It's not hypothetical. But it is free. It is the gospel, which God works through to create faith in our hearts. Don't become blind by forsaking the Word. Make it a top priority in your lives to hear and study it. For through it the Lord has opened your eyes to the way of salvation—which is through faith in him alone. Amen.