A RECIPE FOR BLINDNESS

The Real Jesus
John 7:43-8:20 // Craig Smith
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Craig // Hey, welcome back to week number two of our Real Jesus series, I hope you were able to join us last week as we kicked the series off. But just in case you didn’t, let me catch up real quick. We looked at a claim that Jesus made that really kind of sparked off a firestorm of controversy, and the claim was basically this, that Jesus says that he can satisfy our deepest longings and he can make us agents of a transformative hope. So not just that Jesus says I can give you what you most need, but I’m gonna make you someone who can give that same hope to others that you can be part of what God is doing in transforming lives through the hope that we have found in Jesus Christ. And we asked the question, you know, what do you think about that? Do you believe that? And we said there’s really three answers, you can say yes, I believe it. No, I don’t, or I don’t know.

And today as we continue to stay in the Gospel of John, we’re gonna take a look at a group of people whose answer was no, they said, “No, I don’t believe that. I don’t believe that you are who you say you are, Jesus, and I don’t believe that you can do what you’re saying that you can do.” And there’s nothing inherently wrong with saying no, but what we’re gonna see today is it’s not that they arrived at that conclusion by considering the evidence, it’s that they assumed that conclusion and they were blinded to the evidence. And so along the way what we’re gonna see John tell us really is really what I call four ingredients for spiritual blindness. Four ingredients for spiritual blindness, and the good news is that if you would like to be spiritually blind all you have to do is follow their example.

On the other hand, if you’d like not to be spiritually blind then you would wanna do the opposite of everything that we see this group of people do. And I think it’s important that we wrestle with this issue because the reality is that I don’t think spiritual blindness is an exception in this world, in fact, I would argue that unless we guard against it, spiritual blindness is our default setting. And I think that’s true for nonbelievers as well as for believers. For nonbelievers, spiritual blindness is sort of the world’s default setting, and then as long as the spiritual blindness persist then they’re not gonna understand who Jesus is and who God is.

But I think even for believers, it’s possible to slip back into the sort of old habit of spiritual blindness, and that means that we don’t see what God’s doing. We don’t see how God’s moving and what it looks like for us to be part of it. And so I think it’s important that we wrestle with these issues of spiritual blindness. Let me just give you a warning right now, a lot of this sermon is going to be sarcastic. And if you are sarcasm impaired, I’m basically gonna do like a closed caption for the sarcasm impaired, okay? If you have a Bible I love to have you join me in John chapter 7, we’re gonna be picking up where we left off in verse 44. Let me set the scene while you’re turning there. The religious leaders of Jerusalem have decided that Jesus needs to go away and so they’ve called their guards, the temple guards, and they’ve said go find him and arrest him.

And so the guards have gone out, but they found Jesus in the middle of a big public thing that’s going on, it’s in the middle of a big public festival. And it’s interesting that Jesus doesn’t play it...he doesn’t play it safe, he doesn’t play it cool. He could’ve very easily stayed under their radar by not drawing attention to himself. But instead of that, he actually invites conflict by standing up in the middle of this festival and making this bold claim about himself. Which means that the guards now have to make a choice about whether or not they’re going to arrest him. And what we’re told in verse 44 is that some wanted to seize him. Some said, “Yeah, we need to arrest him.” But no one laid a hand on him. That they couldn’t come to an agreement about what to do about Jesus. So even though they’d been sent to arrest him, they ultimately didn’t and what we’re told in 45 is finally, the temple guards went back to the chief priests and the Pharisees who asked them, “Why didn’t you bring him in? Where is he?” Did you not understand the order, where is he? And they said, “No one ever spoke the way this man does,” the guards replied.

Now, something you need to understand to really make sense of this whole story is this, and that is that the religious leaders in Jerusalem have never heard from Jesus for themselves. They’d never actually listened to him. They’d never interacted with him. They were basing all of their decisions to arrest him and get rid of him on the basis of secondhand information. So what they’d been told about him, but not what they heard from him. And that’s really our first ingredient for spiritual blindness, if you wanna be spiritually blind, don’t listen to Jesus for yourself, okay? Because the truth is, if you listen to Jesus for yourself, it will mess you up. Which is really what’s happened to these guards, right?

When they were sent out just go get this man, there’s no interaction with them, just go get him. But they made a mistake and that is they actually listened to Jesus. And keep in mind, they could have easily said whatever they wanted at this point when they’re being question about why they hadn’t brought him back in because the Pharisees and the religious leaders, they hadn’t been out there in the festival, they were still back in the home office. So the guards could have easily said, “Hey, you know what, it was too crowded, we couldn’t find him,” or “You know, he slipped away
in the crowd, we couldn’t catch him before he was gone,” or “We didn’t wanna stir up the crowd.” I mean, there’s all kinds of things they could have said, but instead they say something that’s very honest, and honestly, it’s pretty courageous. They say, “We listened to him.” They say, “No one has ever spoken the way this man does. There’s something different about this man.”

You see, what happened is they listen to Jesus for themselves and it messed them up. It’s probably the most dangerous thing you can do is actually listen to Jesus, it will mess you up. I mean, it messed me up. I mean, I grew up in church. I grew up going to church a lot because my mom was the organist. So we were there all the time and I heard a lot about Jesus from other people. I heard all kinds of stories about Jesus, but it wasn’t until high school and college that I really started reading the Gospels for myself. I started reading what Jesus had to say. For example, I started listening to him for myself and it messed me up. See, I was going into quantum physics. I know.

But that’s where I was headed and that was my back up because my eyes had gone bad so I wasn’t gonna be able to fly F15 fighter jets. But I had other plans and then I actually started listening to Jesus for myself and it messed me up. I mean, I’m here today because I started listening to Jesus for myself. Listening to Jesus will mess you up. It messed up these guards. They broke the cardinal rule. They broke the first rule of maintaining spiritual blindness which is don’t listen to Jesus. Now, if you’d like not to be spiritually blind, for the sarcasm impaired, here’s what you need to do. There’s a prayer that I wanna encourage you to pray, and that prayer is, Jesus would you show me who you are. And then read the Gospels for yourself. Actually, read the bible, see what Jesus has to say about who he is.

Just be warned, he’ll mess you up. I mean, if you’ve decided what you think about Jesus, if you think you’ve got it all figured out, maybe you’ve been...you know, you’ve been searching. You’re trying to figure out what you think about Jesus and you have an idea in your mind, you’re kind of like I think he’s this or this. Then if you read the Bible, you may find that your ideas are not even close. And honestly, maybe you’ve been following Jesus for a long time and you think you know everything there is to know about Jesus. Just be warned if you actually start reading the Bible for yourself, you might find that you’ve only caught just the narrowest glimpse so far of everything that he is.

Now, the religious leaders of Israel, fortunately, they’re reasonable people, and so when the guards come back and say, “We couldn’t arrest him because we’re not sure that’s a good idea, because we listened to him for ourselves.” The religious leaders go, “Oh really, you know, that’s probably a good thing to do. We should go listen to him for ourselves.” I’m just kidding. That’s not what they do at all. This is what they do, they say, “You mean, he’s deceived you also?” In other words, “How pathetic are you, guys?” The Pharisees retorted if any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him? No, but this mob that knows nothing of law there’s a curse on them. You know, so what they’re doing is that they’re kind of forcing people to choose sides. They’re saying, “Hey, listen, there’s only one group of people that’s following Jesus, it’s a group of people that are...they are uninformed, they’re unimportant, and they’re unspiritual.” Those are the only ones who are following Jesus, the uninformed, unimportant, unspiritual. They’re uninformed, they say, because they know nothing about the law. I mean, they don’t know their Bible not like we do.

You know, we’re educated, we got our facts straight. That crowd of people, like they’re ignorant and they’re unimportant. They call them the mob. I love the way the NIV translates the Greek word there, the Greek word literally just means the crowd, but it’s clearly used in a derogatory sense. It’s like it’s the rabble, it’s the common people. It’s not the movers and shakers, it’s not the elite. I mean, why would you wanna side with those people? They can’t help your career. They don’t have anything going for them. They’re unimportant and they’re unspiritual. They say that there is a curse on them which is their way of saying, God doesn’t love them, God doesn’t like them, God’s not pleased with them. They’re not on God’s side, and what they’re doing is they’re kind of setting these two sides so the guards are going, “Listen, you need to decide who you’re gonna side with. Is it gonna be the uninformed, the unimportant, the unspiritual, or is it gonna be us?” Do any of us believe in him? No, no, no.

And this is your second ingredient for spiritual blindness, which is dismiss others who think differently than you do. Dismiss them as uninformed, unimportant, and unspiritual. And I see this happen a lot when it comes to questions about who Jesus is. I mean, I’ve spent a lot of time over my life in higher education circles and there’s an arrogance that often comes in those circles where people go, you know what, it’s only the ignorant, it’s only the uneducated, it’s only the unimportant people in this country who believe in Jesus. You know, the elite, the movers and shakers, the educated, all those people, I mean, they don’t believe that Jesus is the Son of God. They don’t believe that he died on the cross or that he rose from the dead. They don’t believe any of that stuff. And so there’s this temptation, I think, that often exists as people are beginning to ask questions about Jesus to feel like, “Ah, you know what, I wanna side with the right people and the right people all think that Jesus is nothing to get too excited about.

But I think the same kind of dismissal happens even in the church. I mean, I don’t know if you know this. I feel like I kinda need to let the cat out of the bag. So among Christians, there are some differences of opinion on a couple of things. I don’t know if you knew that but, you know, we don’t always agree on everything, hopefully agree on the big things. But, you know, there’s theology, and some doctrine, and different kinds of ways we do things. They were not all on the same page and the temptation for some Christians, I think, is very easy to go, “Oh, you think that? You believe that? Well, I don’t have to listen to you.” And there’s a dismissal because those people, they’re uninformed, they’re unimportant, they’re maybe even unspiritual.

This happens at the seminary for me and I find there’s a number of areas that I have to kind of deal with. One of them is, there’s this thing it’s called Calvinism and Arminianism, some of you know exactly what I’m talking about, some of you don’t. And the issue is not really that important, it’s
And sometimes I have to tell Arminians, “Hey, you know what, the reason they disagree with you, it’s not because they don’t love Jesus.” And sometimes that temptations go, “Well, you know, the only reason the Calvinist think the way they do is because, hey, you know, they’re not really serious about their relationship with Jesus.” And I’ve said to both sides, “You’re wrong and you gotta be careful. You gotta stop dismissing people who think differently than you do.” And I don’t have to listen to him because and, you know, you fill in the blank. It’s because you’re unimportant, or it’s because you’re unimportant, or you’re unspiritual, or something. Instead, if you wanna not be spiritually blind for the sarcasm impaired, what you’re gonna need to do is this you’re gonna need to engage others with the belief that they might know something you don’t, no matter who they are. That’s how you open yourself to everything that God might be doing, what God might want to teach you.

Now, here’s where I think the story gets very interesting, because as the religious leaders are setting up this very clear division and they’re going, you know, it’s those people, the common rabble, the uneducated, the unimportant, the unspiritual. They are the ones who follow Jesus, but none of us do. While they’re saying that there’s a member of their group actually who does believe in Jesus, or at least he’s in the process of becoming a follower of Jesus. Verse 50 says this, “Nicodemus who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number one of the elite, he asked, “Does our law condemn a man without first hearing him to find out what he has been doing?”

Now, I’m not gonna say that Nicodemus was necessarily a follower of Jesus at this point. We don’t know where he was on his faith journey, but we know he was in process. We do know that he eventually became a follower of Jesus, and we know how it happened. We know how he got on that road, right? John tells us. What did he do? What mistake did he make? He went and listened to Jesus for himself. He went to have a conversation with Jesus. You can read about in John chapter 3. And what’s interesting is that if you read the conversation, honestly, Jesus doesn’t look like the nicest guy you’ve ever met. He’s pretty hard on Nicodemus. He asks him a question, Nicodemus doesn’t have a good answer, and Jesus ends up saying, “Huh, interesting.” So you’re like the teacher of Israel and you don’t know the answer to this. Interesting. Master of sarcasm.

In spite of the fact that Nicodemus was kind of raked over the coals in that conversation something about listening to Jesus impacted him, and it set him on the road, he eventually became a believer. Now, right now, he’s not quite willing to say to the people that are around him, “Hey, you know what, I think the guards are right.” You’re not quite ready to do that, so what he does is really pretty wise and that is he finds common ground. There’s a good principle of wisdom here and that is that, the more divided people are the more important it is to find common ground for the conversation. It’s important and Christians aren’t always great at it. I remember in college I was sharing with a guy he was an atheist, he didn’t believe in God, he didn’t believe in the Bible, and I was with a guy and when this man that we’re sharing with said, “You know, I don’t even believe in the Bible, like there’s no way that stuff is all true.” This friend who was with us go, “You don’t believe the Bible is true? Well, let me read you a verse.”

2 Timothy 3:16 he said, “All Scripture is God-breathed,” and he just kind of looked at this atheist like, “There you go.” And I was like, “Dude, what is wrong with you? That is not how you don’t prove that the Bible is right by reading the Bible. You gotta find some kind of common ground. And there are ways to do that, right? I mean, you can say things like, you know, it’s interesting that, you know, Bible reports that when Jesus died darkness came over the earth for a period. And did you know that there’s a Roman historian who actually writes about this unexpected eclipse or darkness that came in Judea right at the time that Jesus died? You know, that Roman governors were conversing about that? Like, that’s common ground, that’s a place you start. And then this is what Nicodemus does is he looks for that common grounds for this conversation. So when he looks around at his group and you, know this is a group that’s hyper-focused on the Old Testament, hyper-focused on the Bible. That’s the place to start and so he says, “Hey guys, you know, the law, our law, I’m with you,” doesn’t it say that you can’t condemn somebody without hearing directly from them? So here’s a crazy idea. I mean, I know it’s out there, but maybe we should do that, maybe we should go listen to him.

And of course, at this point, the religious leaders go, “Boy, that’s a good idea.” I’m just kidding. Verse 52, they replied, “Are you from Galilee, too?” Look into it and you’ll find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee. And what you need to understand is that for the elite, for the movers and shakers, and first century Israel, Galilee was kind of...it was redneck country. And I don’t mean that to be an insult, I mean it because usually as people use the word “redneck,” it is kind of an insult, right? It’s a dismissive derogatory term for people that they don’t, you know, they don’t have...
much to offer. And so people in New York will look at people from parts of the country and they’ll go, “Yeah, that’s the sticks, it’s a backwater, there’s nothing there.” Well, that’s how they thought about Galilee, and the idea that somebody important would come out of Galilee, not even prophet.

One of, you know, a man of God would come out of Galilee, that would have been for them like talking about a redneck pope. Just like that doesn’t make any sense. And so when they accuse or they sort of sarcastically asked Nicodemus this question, “Are you from Galilee, too?” They’re like, “What are you, a redneck, too? Are you one of those unimportant people, too?” They’re dismissive to him. And what you need to understand is that what we’re seeing happen here is we’re seeing their prejudices show, but it’s not just that we’re seeing what their prejudices are, we’re also seeing how their prejudices are blinding them to the truth.

Because the interesting thing is they don’t just say, you know, we don’t like people from Galilee. Well, they don’t just say people from Galilee can’t be important. What they end up saying is look into it and you’ll find that a prophet doesn’t come out of Galilee. They say, “Look into it” which is code for read your Bible. Dude, read your Bible and it’s pretty clear from God’s Word that prophets don’t come from Galilee and the crazy thing is they’re wrong. Prophets do come from Galilee. If you actually read the Bible, you say the prophets do come from Galilee. And so they do go and the next thing that John tells us is that they go and they listen to Jesus for themselves. And to see that, we’re gonna jump down to chapter 8 verse 12.

And of course, we wouldn’t naturally go there I mean, even as I say you’re like, “That’s a little far.” But it happens unexpectedly. It happens in a way that we don’t even catch because we’re not even aware that it’s happening, and so we end up saying, “Yeah, there’s no way that this thing that I don’t like could be something that God uses. There’s no way this place that I don’t like could be a place that God brings something. It just couldn’t happen. So what we have to do is we have to identify those preferences and prejudices, and one of the ways we do that honestly is we pay attention to where we’re uncomfortable. I would say all sarcasm aside, that when you’re reading the Bible and you come across something that makes you uncomfortable, slow down and start asking God, what is it about this? What is it about me that makes this so uncomfortable? If you sense God leading you to something that makes you uncomfortable, slow down, and ask the question, what is it that’s making me so uncomfortable? Our discomfort can very often be an indicator of a place where our prejudices and our preferences are actually becoming a lens that can even distort or blind us to the truth.

Now, I wanna give credit where credit is due, and even though they’re very rude and dismissive of Nicodemus as well as the crowd, the reality is that the religious leaders do ultimately recognize that he’s got a point. This idea of condemning somebody they’ve never heard from, it’s not cool. And so they do go and the next thing that John tells us is that they go and they listen to Jesus for themselves. And to see that, we’re gonna jump down to chapter 8 verse 12.

Now, as you’re doing that, you’ll notice that we’re skipping over some verses here, and what we find in those verses that we’re skipping over is a pretty familiar story you may very well have heard it. It’s a story of a woman who’d been caught in adultery, she was brought to Jesus, Jesus wrote on the ground, took attention off of her. He ended up asking the crowd, you know, which one of you is without sin, go ahead and throw the stone first. And all the stones drop and he looks at the woman and says, “There’s no one left to condemn you.” And she says, “No,” and he says, “Then I don’t condemn you either. Go and sin no more.”

The reason that I’m skipping that story is all of the best evidence suggests this was not part of John’s original flow of thought here, and part of the reason I say that and honestly it’s probably not a surprise because you may have found that whatever Bible you’re looking at that those verses have two things and one they probably have some brackets around them, maybe a line before and afterwards, and maybe a little note that says something like the earliest manuscripts and many other witnesses do not have these verses. And the reason that happens is because the earliest copies of the Gospel of John we have just go straight from 7:52 to 8:12, they don’t have the story.

In fact, the first time we really see the story showing up attached to the Gospel of John, it’s in the 5th century, which is about 400 years after John was originally written. And even then in those later copies when we do see the story attached the Gospel of John, it moves around. It appears here
I'm aware of at least two copies of the Gospel of Luke from the fifth century onward, that have this story attached to them. What that suggests is this was a familiar story that the church knew, but it was an independent story, and it floated around, and then later got attached to the Gospels at different places. Now, I'm not saying that it's a false story, I'm not saying that it's not a true story, what I'm saying is all the evidence suggests that the flow of John's original thought didn't include the story. And as you wanna unpack that a little bit more, if you're interested in like how scholars make those kinds of determinations, it only happens in a handful of places in the Bible. But if you'd like to push into it, I'm actually gonna a Facebook live broadcast on Tuesday at 11 a.m. You can tune in live and ask questions. You can always watch it after the fact by going Facebook/missionhillschurch. But for now, what I want to do is I want to make sure that we honor John's original flow of thought, and what John says basically is that they kind of realized there was truth in what Nicodemus said, and so they went to listen to Jesus for themselves.

And so in 8:12 we're told that when Jesus spoke again to the people he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." And the Pharisees challenged him. See, they're there, they're in the crowd, they're listening from themselves. They challenged him and they said, "Here you are appearing as your own witness, your testimony is not valid." And Jesus answered, "You know, even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I came from and where I'm going, but you, you have no idea where I come from or where I'm going. You judge by human standards. I pass judgment on one, but if I do judge my decisions are true. Because I'm not alone I stand with the Father who sent me. In your own law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true, well, I am one who testifies for myself, my other witness is the Father who sent me."

Jesus makes another big claim, he says, "I am the light of the world," and it's the kind of claim that you really expect to see unpack, like what exactly do you mean by that and Jesus doesn't unpack it here. John doesn't tell us what he means by that claim. Now, not here as we're going to see over the next few weeks, over the next couple of chapters of John, this idea of Jesus being the light of the world, it does get unpacked. But here at this moment, there's no explanation for what he means because the focus isn't on what Jesus has claimed. The focus is on their reaction to it. And they hear this claim and they go, "Okay, do we have to listen to you? We can write you off because your testimony can't be valid. You can't testify for yourself." And then what follows is what looks probably to a lot of people, it looks kind of like a complicated conversation, but that's just because it's a legal conversation. I don't know, does anybody ever listen to a lawyer talk? It's not a lawyer joke, okay? It's not because we need lawyers and we have lots of lawyers, and I love lawyers.

But they're not necessarily the easiest people to follow if you don't have a background in law, or if you've ever read a legal document or something like, "What just happened there?" Well, that's the reason it feels complex because it's a legal debate. And what basically happening is the Pharisees are saying, "Listen, you know, there's a law from the Old Testament that says you can't testify for yourself." And Jesus says, "No, you're wrong that's not what the Law says. I can't testify for myself. The Law says that one person can't be the only witness, the Law says you can't testify on your behalf and be the only witness. You've gotta have somebody else, you have a second witness which makes perfect sense." And he says, "Then I do." He says, "I can't testify before myself, but I have a second witness, that second witness is God." Which doesn't seem entirely fair, right? I mean, if you can imagine trying to play that out in a court of law today, alright? Get a defendant on the stand and he says, "Well, I wasn't in that place I'm testifying that I was not..." "Okay, do you have anybody to back that up?" "I do, God will back me up."

I mean, how does that work? I am pretty sure he's going to jail, right? But you need to understand that Jesus didn't just show up and make claims about himself, Jesus did something very, very important and that is that Jesus showed up and did miracles, and then made claims about himself. Are you with me? He showed up and he did miracles and then there's this very clear association throughout the Gospel of John that the miracles are the evidence that the Father stands with him, that God is with him. That he's not doing the miracles of his own power, but that God is making it possible. In fact, if you just flip a little bit further in John 14:11, Jesus said this. He said, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Believe that we're working together or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves, of the miracles themselves."

And so what Jesus is saying here in John chapter 8, is listen, it's not just that I am making this claim, I'm telling you that God stands with me. He's testifying to the reality of my claims because you've seen the miracles. And at this point, they've seen thousands of people be fed by the miraculous multiplication of the bread and the fish. They've seen the lame begin to walk, they've seen the blind begin to see, they've seen water turned wine, and they've heard all of this stuff. This is common knowledge in Israel. And so what he says is, "I'm not making this claim by myself. I have all this evidence that the Father is with me. You need to deal with that."

But they don't deal with it, instead what they say is this, verse 19, and then they asked him, "Where is your father?" Now, I don't wanna be too picky about details, but you need to notice that when Jesus was speaking, he was talking about the Father, right? He said, "I stand with the Father who sent me." My other witness is the Father, which in ancient Israel was the way you talked about God. They don't ask him about the Father, they ask him about your father which is really their way of basically saying, "Hey, where is your dad?" It's an irrelevant tangent. They're like, well, you mentioned Father like, you know, the whole evidence, miracles business. Do you know what I'd really like to know, where's dad? Which is kind of another way of going, you know, you're from Galilee, right? Is your dad a Galilean and is he also one of those unimportant people? Or, do you know what, I've never even seen your dad, do you even have a dad? Or are you embarrassed of him.

It's their way of basically saying, you know, what's your pedigree? What's your claim to fame? What is it that makes you somebody that we should be paying any attention to all? It's an irrelevant tangent to what Jesus is talking about, but that's your fourth ingredient for spiritual
blindness. Focus on the irrelevant and ignore the important. If you wanna stay spiritually blind you need to focus on the irrelevant and ignore the important. It’s an easy thing to happen. Non-Christians do it, and these conversations where as I said I almost always try to get focus on the resurrection. Let’s talk about the resurrection of Jesus and whether or not it happened and, you know, and I’m in that conversation so often I have people going, “Yeah, yeah, yeah, can we talk about that big fish story? You know, that one that a guy gets swallowed by the fish and then like it threw him up, and so, like, I don’t believe that, like, that’s ridiculous.

Okay, so here’s the thing. Like, these Roman governors, they talk about this darkness. I mean, that’s really interesting historical affirmation of the Biblical accounts and yeah, yeah, yeah. So was it a fish or was it a whale? No, okay. So did you know all the people who followed Jesus, they were executed because they refused to recant. They insisted they really had seen Jesus rise from the dead. Why would people do that when they didn’t really believe it? Yeah, yeah, yeah. So how about that guy? Was it David he had something rock and he killed a nine-foot guy? Yeah, I don’t think people get that big. And there’s this constant sort of attempt to peel off and to focus on irrelevant issues rather than the important ones. And Christians can do the same thing, and they see a church that’s blowing up. They see a church where we’re people coming to Christ and baptisms are happening, and people are stepping out in faith that incredible things are going on and they’re like, yeah, yeah, yeah, where’s the organ? I went through this. Hey, you know what, people are reading their Bible, and they’re sharing the Gospel, and incredible things are happening. Is that pastor wearing jeans? It’s really easy to fix it on the irrelevant and ignore the critical and incredibly important. And what happens is that’s how you stay spiritually blind. That’s how you miss what God’s doing.

Now, if for some reason, some strange reason you’d rather not be spiritually blind then here’s what you need to do for the sarcasm impaired. Be willing to temporarily set aside the irrelevant in order to focus on the most important. I’m not saying you never get to those other questions, I’m not saying you never wrestle with other stuff, it’s important we deal with all that stuff. But sometimes we need to set it aside for a while so we can deal with the real issues, the most important issues. Because it’s only in that way that we really, we really look to see what God might be doing. Unfortunately, this is a group of people who are not willing to do that, and so the story ends in kind of a sad note. Jesus says, “You do not know me or my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put and yet no one seized him because his hour had not yet come. It’s sad. I mean, what happens is that what Jesus essentially says here is he says that those who claim to know God best turned out to be the worst at seeing God in their midst. Those who should have been the first to see what God was doing, because they were the informed, important, and spiritual, they turned out to be the worst at seeing God in their actual midst.

And I think that’s something we have to pay attention to, because I think the truth is that unless we work hard at keeping our eyes open, we will default to a spiritual blindness that will cause us to miss what God’s doing. Just figure out what you think about Jesus, unless you work hard at keeping your eyes open you’re gonna miss understanding who he is, and how much he loves you, and what he wants to do in your life, and what he wants to do through your life. If you’re already a follower of Jesus, you need to understand that God’s not done, and that God has not shown you everything that He wants you to know about Himself. He’s not done everything in your life that He wants to do in your life. He has not given you everything that He wants to pour into you. But if we don’t work hard at keeping our eyes open, we can easily default to spiritual blindness that causes us to miss what God’s doing.

So my question for you is this, which ingredient for spiritual blindness am I most susceptible to? Which one of those ingredients that we see in this group of people? Which one of those are you most susceptible to? And maybe it’s the danger of not listening to Jesus for yourself, maybe you’re content to come to church and go, I just trust that Craig speaks the truth that’s all I need. I wanna do my absolute best to only speak truth, but you need to be checking what I say against the Word of God for yourself. And that’s not just a way to avoid, you know, being taken captive by false thoughts. You’re gonna miss so much of what God has for you if you’re not listening to Jesus for yourself. So pray, Jesus, show me who you are and then read His Word for yourself. Or maybe your biggest danger is that you have a tendency to dismiss those who think differently than you do as being uninformed, unimportant, and unspiritual. You’ve got some way of immediately shutting yourself off that conversation, “I don’t need to listen because there’s no way that God would speak through somebody like that.”

And so maybe you have a list of people that just get dismissed out of hand, and in that way, you’re in danger of a spiritual blindness, or maybe it’s a danger of letting your preferences and your prejudices blind you to uncomfortable truth. Maybe you can easily slip into that place where you go, “I just don’t like this, and if I don’t like it, it can’t be from God.” Or maybe your danger is the danger of focusing on the irrelevant and ignoring the important. I think we all have one or two of these that we go yeah, that’s me, that’s my temptation, that’s where I’m most in danger of just kind of putting on spiritual blinders to keep me from seeing what God’s doing. And as we identify that, the only important follow-up question is this, what am I gonna do to guard myself from that danger? What changes am I gonna make so that I don’t make that mistake?

Would you pray with me? Jesus, we wanna see everything you have for us, and for those that are here today and they’re not even sure what they think about you, they wanna know the truth. And for those of us who follow you, we want more than just the truth or we want everything that you have for us. We wanna know everything that we can know about you. We want everything that you want to bless us with. We want to be part of everything that you wanna use us to be part of. We don’t wanna miss anything from you. But we confess that it’s easy to slip into this place where we miss what you’re doing. And so we ask you to show us what we need to do to make sure that our eyes are wide open. In Jesus’ name. Thank you.