

What Does It Take to See God

by Carter Conlon

To see God, we must be willing to forsake our preconceived notions and be open to his ways and plans, embracing the word of God and being led by the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 51:00

Scripture: Genesis 4:8, 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 23:34, Luke 10:25-37

Topics: "Seeing God"

Description

In this sermon, the pastor emphasizes the importance of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness above all else. He reminds the congregation that Jesus promises to provide for their needs if they prioritize Him. The pastor then refers to Malachi 3, where the Lord speaks of a people who fear Him and meditate on His name. He highlights the significance of an upcoming fast and encourages everyone to participate. The sermon concludes with a discussion on how religious hearts can turn against the revelation of God, persecuting those sent by Him. The pastor also mentions a victorious and discerning people who love Christ wholeheartedly and are filled with His life, even in the face of misunderstanding and ridicule from the world.

Transcript

What does it take to see God? What does it take to see God? Matthew chapter 23. Father, I stand here in need of heaven's touch as always. Every time I stand, O God, I don't want to have to try to reason in any amount of natural ability, because you are the one who makes your vessels much more than we are.

I ask you for a supernatural touch on my mind and heart. I ask you for an enablement to present the living Christ to this congregation. Now, Holy Spirit, you're the only one that can do this, and so I abandon myself to you, and I ask you that the heart of God may be gladdened when this morning is over.

Lord, let your kingdom come with great power, and for those who have not seen Christ, for any amount of time, I pray that there be an eye-saving anointing in this word today, that their eyes would be opened, that they would see him, and a deep and abiding rejoicing would come into their heart. I pray, God, that you protect this church from every work of evil. Keep us, Father, in the coming days.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Now, that's why we're going to be fasting in September, by the way. It's for each of us individually that the words of our mouths, the meditation of our hearts, would be acceptable in the sight of God.

And then, of course, corporately as a church, that the Christ that we are presenting to our generation be Christ, that there be no fly in the ointment, there be nothing that mars the image of God, and that the directions that we take as a church be led by the Holy Spirit. Everything that we do. This is probably a very pivotal and important fast, and I would encourage everyone to mark it on their calendar and come out and be in prayer with us, if you can, September 6th, 7th, and 8th.

What does it take to see God? Matthew 23, beginning at verse 34. Wherefore, Jesus said, Behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes, and some of them you kill and crucify, and some of them you scourge in your synagogues and persecute them from city to city. Now, you have to keep in mind, these are the vessels that God is sending to give revelation of who he is.

God says, I sent these people, but it's amazing that the religious heart, in particular, can come to the point of actually hating the revelation of the God that they are professing to be serving. So much so that they begin to scourge and slander those that are sent by God to present him. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of the righteous Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barakias, whom you slew between the temple and the altar.

Verily, I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chicken under her wings, and you would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.

For I say unto you, you shall not see me henceforth till you say, blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. What does it take to see God? He said in verse 39, you shall not see me henceforth, or in other words, from this time forth. And the word see in the original text means to see beyond with the natural eye.

It means to perceive with the mind. It means to stop and consider what is being placed before you. It means to know intuitively in contrast with to know something or someone experientially.

You see, folks, it can be said clearly in Matthew chapter 23 that God's own people were experiencing his presence. It's true. People can come to you from a supposed revival, a personal time, someplace where there's supposedly a revelation of Christ.

And they can come and say, we have so experienced the presence of God. And it can actually be true. They can have experienced his presence.

And who can say that in this particular time when Christ was walking among his own people, they were, in fact, experiencing the presence of God. God was walking among them. It's undeniable.

But the experience was not bringing them to any understanding of who God is. And certainly they had no knowledge of why he had come. But they were experiencing his presence.

And even soldiers and temple guards were saying, we've never heard a man speak like this, man. He doesn't speak as the religious leaders of our day, the passionless as it is presentation of God. He speaks as a man who has authority, as if he knows what he's talking about, as if within his inmost part is the ability to bring everything he speaks to pass.

Of course, they're hearing the voice of God, but they were not aware of it. It's possible to be experiencing God in a very real way and yet miss the whole reason for the experience. Tragedy, if you're here today

and you're experiencing the presence of the Lord and you walk out and you get 50 feet down the street, you feel very good because you've been in the presence of the Lord, but you missed the whole purpose, the whole reason why you're even drawn into the presence of God or he's chosen mercifully to manifest himself and not even understanding why.

Jesus said it this way in Luke 6, 46 to his own people. He said, why do you call me Lord, Lord? And you don't do the things which I say. I'm bringing you my very heart.

I'm talking about my kingdom and you call me Lord. But there doesn't seem to be an inward desire in you to obey the things that you hear me speak to you. We wonder why.

Why does the human condition gravitate to this form of religion? Why does every church age end up at a time? And we're living in a time where churches now are saying away with the cross. It's an offense. Away with the blood.

Don't talk about the blood. Don't sing about the blood. The very things that are the core expressions, as it is of our redemption, the very love of God, and they're saying away with these things.

They're an offense to us. And we see history now one more time repeating itself. This generation that said away with this Christ.

This is not the Christ that we want. This is not the savior that our hearts are longing for. Away with him.

And we hear that very cry in what professes to be Christendom in our generation. Isaiah tells it this way. And I'll just paraphrase it for you.

In chapter 53, verses 2 and 3, he says, when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. We hid as it were our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not.

It's very simple. Isaiah is saying the way God is choosing or will choose in this time to reveal himself. This is not the way people want to see him.

They have a preconceived notion of who God is and how their lives fit into this relationship with God. And so they are running as it is through and for all throughout the world. And they're looking for this Christ who fulfills their sense of their own destiny, if I can put it that way.

Their self-image and the God that is going to be the one who supports and brings this self-image to pass. And, of course, when Christ comes, this is not much of an image for those who are lusting for political power and preeminence among men. Who love greetings in marketplaces to be called teacher, teacher, rabbi, rabbi.

Those that want the chief seats in the synagogues. Those that are filled with lust and vengeance against the Roman occupiers and want to see a political overthrow. This Christ who comes on the scene is not very palatable for these people.

Because it's not the image of the God that they have fashioned in their hearts. Ironically, they are the people of God, the chosen people of God. But they've so fashioned in their hearts this other Christ, this other God that they feel is going to come and fulfill them.

That when Christ does come, the very manifestation of the heart of God to this generation, they can't see him. They have no knowledge of who he is and they're so offended at God. And how he chooses to manifest himself in their midst that they begin to cry away with this Christ, crucify him.

John says he came to his own in John chapter 1, verses 11 and 12, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. As many as received him, he gave power.

And isn't it ironic that it wasn't those who were supposed to know him? It's those who the religious of the day considered outside of the realm of God. It's the prostitutes, it's the lepers, the drug addicts, the beggars who heard something they'd never heard before. Certainly the religious crowd was not giving this to them.

And they heard and all of a sudden the lame are leaping in the house of God and the blind are seeing. The dumb are giving testimony of the greatness of God. It's amazing if you can really see it.

Their eyes are opened and they see who he is. While the religious of the day is standing on the hillside saying, we don't understand. How could this be and how could that be? But those that are touched by God, those who don't have this preconceived notion in their hearts.

Those who don't have an unfulfilled ambition are seeing him. He said whoever received him and the word in the Greek means to develop a special interest on the part of the receiver or to welcome him. Whoever welcomed him, he gave them power to become the sons of God.

It's an amazing thing, isn't it? Whoever welcomed him, whoever said, well, God, I thought you were this, but obviously you aren't. And whoever you are and however you want to make yourself known to me, I open my heart. You are welcome to come into my heart.

You are welcome into my home. You are welcome to overturn what you don't like, what offends your nature. You are welcome to change me from image to image and glory to glory.

You're welcome to send me to the mission field. And if I die there, I die there. You're just welcome to come into my heart and into my home.

And these people, these people, Jesus said, God gave them power to become the sons of God. He gave them power to rise up above the mediocrity of those who are even attempting to serve God within the confines of their own natural mind and natural ability. He takes them out of the natural and into the supernatural and he gives them gifts and abilities.

That's what excites me so much because I've walked this path. I know what this is about. That's why I preach on it almost every time I stand in this public, because I'm jealous for what God wants to do in every one of your lives.

If you will just simply believe it by faith and say, God, whatever you want me to do, I will do. I will never say no. If you say yes, I will never say it can't be done.

If you say it can't be done, I will never say I won't go. God, if you say go and you begin to walk in this life and realm of the supernatural, your eyes are open. And you begin to see Christ where nobody else can see him.

Jesus said in Matthew 23 that we read a little earlier. He said in verses 37, he said, I've longed to gather you, comfort you, protect you and nurture you. But you wouldn't come.

I've longed to bring you right into the very center of my heart. That's really what he's giving through this expression of a hen as it is gathering her chickens to herself. And he says now, because you wouldn't come, I wanted to draw you.

I wanted to cover you. I wanted to guide you. I wanted to lead you.

I wanted you to know what it is to be close to my heart. I wanted you to hear my inmost thoughts. But because you wouldn't come, he said to his own people, your house is left unto you desolate.

In other words, all that is left to you is a lonely wilderness place of powerless religion, an empty house. It's just an empty house. It has it'll have all the religious trappings for a season, but eventually it will all fall down and not a stone will be left sitting upon another.

In verse 39, he says, now you will not see me from this day forward. Now, remember, we spoke about you. You will not have an intellectual understanding or an experience of what that understanding is to bring you to.

Until you say blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. Now, the word blessed in the Greek is eulogical. And here's what it means.

It means to speak well of someone, to say that God acts for our good by giving us what we need and not what we desire. That's really what it means. You will not see me until you say, God, whatever you send into my life is good.

Wherever I am is where you want me to be. Whatever I'm called to be is sufficient in your sight and it will be sufficient in mine. I will have learned as Paul to be content in all things.

You see, go to Isaiah chapter 55 and stay put a marker in Matthew 23. Isaiah 55, I think in measure, tells us why men can't see God. Now, when I say men, of course, it's generic for men and women, children, young people.

Isaiah 55, verse six. Isaiah says, Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. So there has to be a forsaking before you can fully see Christ. A forsaking of our way and a forsaking of our thoughts.

Folks, the greatest dilemma of Israel is that they had a preconceived notion of how God was going to manifest himself in their midst and what he was going to do subsequent to that manifestation. And this is the dilemma of many Christian people. It's why they can't see Christ.

It's why people are running all over the world looking for Christ now. Can't see him, can't understand him. Because there's a there's this self infusion of thought of who he is, what he's going to look like and what what his presence is going to make my life into.

And anything that doesn't fit some people's image of what they will become because of Christ, they reject it. And subsequently, they can't see him. And let him return to the Lord and he will have mercy on him.

This is verse seven. And to our God, he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts and neither are my ways.

Neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. Settle it, folks, in your heart.

The way we think, God thinks higher than we do. The way we reason, God's reasoning is higher. The plans we have, God's plans are better.

As the rain comes down and the snow from heaven and returns there and waters the earth and make brings it that it may bring forth bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth. It shall not return to me void, but shall accomplish that which I please.

And it shall prosper in the thing where until I send it. God says, if I send my word to you, I have a purpose. If you will open your heart to it and you're going to begin to understand and see when you begin to embrace the word that I sent to you.

And here's what God does in verse 12. You will go out with joy. You'll be led forth with peace.

The mountains and the hills will break forth before you into singing. All the trees shall clap their hands. Hallelujah.

Even nature will rejoice because finally somebody is hearing God. Somebody is hearing Christ. Somebody is not being led by the passions of their own heart.

Somebody is following the Holy Ghost. And God says even as nature itself, Paul says in the book of Romans, that creation groans in itself and awaits the manifestation of the sons of God. Because the creation has been subject to a confusion and a form as it is of emptiness because of the rebellion of mankind.

Even creation is longing for the man, the woman of God who will step out and finally say, Lord, however you choose to reveal your life in me. That will suffice me. That's all I want.

Let me glorify you while I live on this earth. Hallelujah. Instead of the thorn will come up the fir tree instead of the briar, the myrtle tree.

And these are all instead of weeds. In other words, there will be fruit and it shall be to the Lord for a name, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. Never lasting sign of God as we begin to walk with him.

Now consider this for a moment. God was sending his son, the Savior, into the world. Savior was going to come.

And of course, there is no greater. There ever has been a greater manifestation of the love, the life, the character of God, the plan and purpose of God than Jesus Christ. He was an embodiment of God.

He was God in the flesh. Everybody of that generation has a notion of how God is going to come. And if we're honest today, I think many of us here today have similar notions.

We go to prayer, say, oh, God, come to me. Prosper me. Give me a wife, a husband, a new car.

Do this. And we we pray it so long that it becomes almost like a mantra that when God comes, this is what he has to do. This is what he's going to make me.

We're walking and now we're looking for this price that we've actually formulated in our own time. What if he wants to come another way? I think of the prayers that would go up in the synagogue overthrow the Romans, deliver us from our oppressors, take away our spiritual poverty. And all of these things that they thought the Messiah was going to come in and do.

And then finally, the moment comes where the Messiah, God says to his own son, go. He sends the Holy Spirit to prepare the way first through the life of John. And second, the angel Gabriel comes to a virgin whose name is Mary.

And this word becomes very curious because the messenger comes to her and invites her into the life of Christ by offering her in part a place of misunderstanding and the possibility of public ridicule, stoning or at least disgrace. And this is the invitation. Gabriel comes to Mary.

You understand that she's engaged to be married to a man. If she's found to be with child, she could not only be put away by her husband, but be stoned by the community. And this is God's offer to her.

Now, think if you or I had been married. We cannot say, well, Lord, can you not just, you know, ring the bell and have the baby at the doorstep so I can say to Joseph, look what God brought is perfectly formed. If you want to do it that way, do you have to somehow just include me in this disgrace or the possibility of disgrace? Let me put it that way.

Obviously not a disgrace for God to send his son to the life of a virgin. But why do you have to do this and why the invitation into this place of misunderstanding? Why do you have to expose me to disgrace? The whispering, perhaps, that would begin as people count the days on their calendars and perhaps realize that the baby is born before the nine month period has expired. That's only speculation on my part.

But listen very carefully to what I feel the Lord is speaking. Jesus in Matthew 24, nine is speaking to his own disciples and he told them, he said, you'll be hated of all nations for my name's sake. He said earlier in that gospel of Matthew, blessed are ye when men shall hate you and they shall misuse you and you'll be despised and ridiculed and spoken falsely against.

You see, to be invited into the life of Christ is to be invited into the reproach of Christ. The religious, the self-satisfied, the self-justified have always and will always hate the person of Jesus Christ. God says, if you're going to welcome me in, there's going to be a great measure of discomfort.

Perhaps it comes into your life. It's not going to be this success, wealth, health and happiness and status and power and privilege in the world. Oh, you will have that one day.

You will rule and reign with me for all of eternity. But till that day, it could be a season of ridicule. It could be a season of hardship.

It could be a season of misunderstanding. You could even be betrayed, as the scripture says, by members of your own family. It's not necessarily going to be easy to be invited into the life of Christ or let me say to invite the life of Christ into you.

Now, Mary could have clearly refused and think of the consequences had Mary said, no, this is not for me. I appreciate God, if you want to do this, but not through my life. And if she had refused, we'd be reading today of the girl who had the chance to have God within her and turned it down.

And folks think about that for a moment. Think about eternity. Think about this lamb's book where every name is written.

Think about the record of those that ever lived. Think about people who sat in the house of God and had the opportunity no less than Mary had to have God's life virtually within you and turned it down. Turned it down because it meant discomfort.

Turned it down because it may mean a shaking up of some of our plans. Turned it down because the way that God chooses to do it is not the way we personally think it should be done. Turned it down.

And so ending up with a testimony that I heard God speak to me through an angel once, but I refused what God was speaking into my heart. But instead, in Luke chapter 1 verse 38, she said, Be it unto me according to thy word. And this is the key for the Christian life.

This is the blessedness. He said, You'll not see me until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. In other words, and remember the word blessed is that God is giving me not necessarily what I'm asking for, but what God knows that I need and how he will best be glorified through my life.

And so when my heart is opened, she said, Blessed be it unto me according to thy word. And folks, immediately, immediately, if you go to Luke chapter 1, please with me. Immediately she's brought into fellowship where the miraculous power of God is bringing forth new life.

It's amazing. When you have this new life of Christ in you, you will find intuitively, instinctively, you will know who in what life of what person, even in this church, Christ is doing a supernatural work. Folks, it's amazing when you begin to see it.

The hungry find the hungry, the disgruntled find the disgruntled, the rebellious find the rebellious. And they form their own fellowships even within the house of God. But the moment your heart is open and you have this passionate cry, which I believe is in the greater measure of those who attend this church, you are beginning.

You're going to be drawn into a fellowship, a supernatural fellowship, a fellowship that is encouraging. It's not just blind optimism. It is based on a greater reality than anything your natural mind or natural eye can see.

You know, you're changing from image to image and glory to glory. Nobody has to tell you. No preacher has to preach it.

You get up in the morning and beloved, you know it. You know there's a change taking place. You know that the person you just spoke to, there was a love that began to come from your voice and eyes.

That is not your own. You know it. God is beginning to do something in you.

Something is being born inside of you that is so far beyond your own natural ability that all you can do is give God praise. All you can do is come here on Sunday and lift your hands and your voice and begin to thank God for his goodness. Hallelujah.

Luke 139. Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah and entered into the house of Zechariah and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

This phenomenal fellowship beginning to happen here. And she spake out with a loud voice and said, Blessed art thou among women. Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come unto me? For, Lord, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord.

My spirit is rejoiced in God my Savior, for he has regarded the lowest state of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done to me great things, and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. Here's the prophetic word being formed as it is in the heart of Mary. She's saying, God has done a marvelous thing to me, even though there may be many around who are not yet ready or willing to understand this.

But I have received, I'm a recipient of the mercy of God. I'm blessed beyond measure. And I understand that this same mercy is available to everyone who fears him from generation to generation.

And that includes Times Square Church in the year 2005 in Manhattan, New York City. The same mercy that was extended to her life is available to yours life and to mine. Elizabeth says to her in verse 42, Blessed among women, blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Verse 45, Blessed is she that believeth, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And verse 48, Mary says, I am in all generations will be called blessed. Now it's amazing because it's not the same word all the way through this passage.

Now the first two in verse 42 are eulogical, the same word that Jesus said. You'll not see me until you say blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. It's the same word.

And Elizabeth says to Mary, you are blessed in that in the context of the definition of this word. It means you have spoken well of God. And because of it, he has given you what you need.

Hallelujah. She is carrying her own savior. It's amazing.

Hallelujah. And then Elizabeth says to her, blessed is the fruit of your womb. And it also implies a miraculous multiplication.

Now, if you put these two together, she says you have spoken well of God. He has placed within you what you need. And you are now living in a place of miraculous multiplication.

Hallelujah. That is the Christian life, folks. You speak well of God.

You speak well of what he speaks into your life. And he gives you exactly what he knows that you and I need so that our lives may glorify him. And he begins to miraculously multiply us.

Hallelujah. I could stop. Honest to God, I could stop and dance all over this platform right now.

Hallelujah. Because this is the truth of the gospel. This is the Christian life.

When you are living this, you don't have to go anywhere looking for God. You see him. You see him every day.

You understand his work. You are experiencing his inward growth in you every day. You know you are being made into a new creation in Jesus Christ.

You have only one desire. Jesus, glorify yourself through this life. In the measure of the days I have left on this earth, be glorified.

Take me from image to image and glory to glory. And shout to this generation from the mountaintops, in the places of commerce, on the street corners, Oh God, let my life be a testimony of your glory. And blessed is she that believed.

Blessed is another word now in verse 45. It's makarios and it means indwelt by God and fully satisfied. Isn't it amazing? Blessed.

You have spoken well of God. He has given you what you need. You are being miraculously multiplied.

You are indwelt by God and fully satisfied. And then Mary says, all generations shall call me blessed. Amazing.

It's another word. Makarios. It's a fourth, it's actually a third word.

And it means, it's very similar to the blessed in verse 45 but there is a difference. It means pronounced blessed, indwelt and fully satisfied. But this word is only used in the scripture of Mary and the persecuted prophets.

It's used of nobody else. I am blessed. I am indwelt.

I am miraculously multiplied. I am fully satisfied. Even if I have to walk through this world misunderstood and persecuted because of the life of God that is now within me.

Christ is enough. Nothing outside of Christ is necessary to be fully satisfied. I guess the question I have to ask today is, do you really believe this? Outside of Christ, I need nothing.

Christ is my life. Christ is my satisfaction in life. Oh, yes.

You say, well, Pastor, not too quick. I do need food. I need clothes.

I need a place to live. But Jesus said, if you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things will be added to you. All these things will be there because Christ is everything.

Christ says, I will. I commit myself to be everything to you. I commit myself to be your life, your joy.

I commit myself to be your covering. I commit myself to be your testimony. I commit myself to revealing my heart to you before I do something.

The last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, chapter 3, the Lord speaks of a people who in the last days feared the Lord. And they began to think about his name. They began to turn.

They began to meditate on Christ. Again, perhaps to stop and look one more time. The scripture tells us that they were returning and discerning people.

And I believe in all of my heart that in the existing church today, there's going to be a returning, discerning people in the last hour of time. The Bible clearly indicates that in spite of the apostasy, in spite of the wars and rumors of wars, the terror and tragedy that will touch much of a world in rebellion with God, that there is a shout of glory coming. There are a people who are going to be glorifying him in the midst of the fire.

There is a voice. If I had time, I'd go through the Old Testament and prove it to you conclusively. There is a voice of victory that is going to be raised.

There is a returning and discerning people. Christ is everything to them. They love Jesus Christ with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

There's an infusion of that life that is flowing through them now to their neighbor. They're beginning to realize that their true neighbor are the people who are bruised and beaten and wounded and left half dead on the road by the devil himself and society and circumstance and trying to live a life without God. This infusion of Christ's life is beginning to flow through them.

They are misunderstood, but they don't care. They're ridiculed by a dying world. It doesn't matter anymore.

They're moving in this divine power of Jesus Christ, and they are able to discern who is living for God and who is not. They know the difference because Christ is in them. Christ has become everything to them.

They have his life within them. There's a measure of the fullness of his life that he has planted within them, and they are growing from grace to grace and glory to glory. And there's a sweet fellowship that comes from that.

It's a beloved fellowship. Now, all around them may be visionless religion. And the Bible seems to indicate that that's going to be the cup that much of a professing but unwelcoming to Christ's church is going to have to drink.

Visionless, passionless, powerless religion. Knowledge, but the knowledge that they're gaining does not bring them to any understanding of the truth that they're learning. All around them, this visionless religion may be going on, but their eyes are opened.

They are in fellowship with others through the Holy Spirit, and they see Christ, and that's all they need. They see him, hallelujah. They understand him.

They're walking in him. They're willing to obey him. They're willing to do what he asked them to do.

They're willing to be what he asked them to be, to scale any mountain that calls them to climb and walk into any valley and face any deadly giant that is confronting their generation. I think for a moment, if you'll go with me, I'm going to conclude with Luke chapter 2. I think of two people in particular who are living in the temple just a few years prior to these words being spoken over Jerusalem that we started with in the beginning of this message today. Simeon is a man in Luke chapter 2 and verse 25.

It says, and behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. The same man was just and devout, and he was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him. Now, you have to understand, you've got to see this now.

There's a whole religious system now has been established, and it's all been established in God's name. There are big people and little people. You see, this religion will always exalt man, and there's pushing for position and power and authority.

There's this methodical religiousness that's going on in the temple every day. And I see the priest in there, and people are bringing in their babies for dedication, according to the Old Testament law. They're just going through the ritual.

Simeon, what is Simeon to them? Simeon's just an old man. He's just hanging around the temple, and he just has a single focus in his heart. He's waiting for the consolation.

While they're self-consumed, he's consumed that others receive consolation that God has promised. He's looking away from himself. Here's a man who's been in the temple, and he's waiting.

And God says to him, Simeon, you'll not die until you have seen the Messiah, until you have seen the Christ. You see, folks, a lot of people can't see Him because they're self-focused. They're focused on their own agendas.

They're focused on their own gain. They're focused on their own reputations. They're focused on their own appearances, even, of success.

And so when the Messiah comes, they can't see Him. And here's an old man in the temple. And I think of all the nobodies and nothings that are in the house of God that everyone else writes off.

And God says, no, maybe a religious system has written them off, but I haven't. I'm about to open their eyes, and they're about to see me in a way that nobody around them can see me. And in walks Mary and Joseph with this little baby.

And to the priest, it's just an ordinary day. It's just a humdrum routine of religious activity. Even the ritual of circumcision doesn't mean anything to them anymore because they're not set apart for the purposes of God.

They're so incredibly distant from God that everything now is just becoming a repetitious, meaningless, religious practice in the house as they see it of God. And here comes Mary and Joseph with the Messiah. You see, they can't see Him because it's not the Messiah they're looking for.

Their hearts are not open for God to reveal Himself in the way He's about to do it. When we see Him, there's nothing we should desire Him. We want a king.

We don't want a baby. We want to rule now. We don't want to wait for 33 years and then a few thousand years or a couple of thousand years after that.

We want it all now. We want the kingdom here now. We want to rule and reign now.

And so when God comes in and reveals Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, they can't see it. It was revealed to Him by the Holy Ghost, verse 26, Luke 2, that He should not see death before He had seen

the Lord's Christ. And He came by the Spirit into the temple.

And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for Him after the custom of the law, then He took Him up in His arms and blessed God and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel. It's amazing.

Look at the prophecy that's coming. Look at the spiritual understanding. What an offense to even suggest that the gospel should go to the Gentiles.

How offended the high priest or the priest of that day might have been as this old man takes this child in his arms. And the glory of God seems to come into his soul. And he starts speaking things that they've never heard because he sees something they've never seen.

He sees the Christ. He sees the God whose ways are higher than our ways, whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts, who has a plan men may not understand it, but the plan of God is always perfect. He says, now I can depart in peace.

Hallelujah. I've trusted in God's ways. They are content like Simeon to be where God has placed them.

They're not pushing for power. They're not pushing for authority. They have no unfulfilled itch that they're trying to use God's name to scratch.

They're there worshiping God and says, God, just let me see the consolation that You have promised to Your people. Let me see it, God, in my generation. Let me see lives changed.

Let me see hope come into hopelessness. Let me see prison doors open. Let me see blinded eyes given sight and wounded hearts being healed.

Oh, God, let me see it before I die. That's the cry of those that have welcomed Christ. That's the cry that Jesus himself wanted Laodicea to find again.

This last church, the churches of Revelation, he said, anoint your eyes again that you may see. And they depart in peace. They walk through life.

They have no reputation, perhaps, in life. And while everyone else is dying with unfulfilled ambitions, they're walking out of this life in peace. Peace.

Mark the end, the scripture says, of the perfect man. The end of that man is peace. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. I have a secret desire in my heart. It's no secret.

I've shared it here from the pulpit. I guess it's not a secret. But at the end of my days, I've asked God that I can put my feet up in my bed and bless my children and bless my grandchildren and speak about the faithfulness of God and then just die.

It's a desire in my heart, and I know that God has said yes to it. And Anna is the last person I want to speak about. She's a lady who's in the temple.

She's had a very hard life. The scripture tells us very clearly that she lost her husband at a very young age. And she had lived all the rest of her life, really, in God's presence.

And she had been a person of fasting and a person of prayer. And she made some choices in her life. And Anna is the type of a person that serves God in spite of their pain.

In spite of what life has dealt her, she's made a choice. I'm not going to use God to get out of my situation. I'm just going to serve him.

I'm going to pray to him. I'm going to believe him. And he's going to show me.

He's going to show me I'm going to have a vision of Christ. And we see in verse 36, it says, There was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Assur. And she was of a great age, and she had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity.

She was a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she, coming in that instant. Now, you have to understand, Simeon is in the temple.

And Simeon's got the baby in his arms, and he's saying, This is for the Gentiles. This is the glory of Israel. And I can just envision the priests standing there, either totally annoyed or with their mouths hanging open.

I'm not sure which. And here comes in Anna. She's had no reputation in the house of the Lord other than she's just been there, perhaps just doing acts of kindness to people that come in.

Of course, the scripture doesn't tell us. But coming in that instant, she gave thanks likewise unto the Lord and spake of him to all that look for redemption in Jerusalem. I love it.

I love it. I love it. In spite of their pain, those that welcome Christ, those that say, Here's a lady who could conceivably say, You wronged me, God.

You wronged me. I had a plan for her life. I had a wonderful husband.

He only gave him to me for seven years. And then he died, and now I've been a widow in the house of God. I'm now 84 years old, and I've lived my life.

I have this unresolved issue. But no, that's not her case. She chose, she made a choice to serve God in spite of her pain.

She made a choice to believe that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose. And because of it, she had a spiritual vision that nobody else except Simeon around her had. Now, Mary had a glimpse of it.

Scripture says she pondered these things in her heart. And Joseph, I'm not sure where he stood on any of this at this particular point. But I know there were two people in the temple who saw Christ, Simeon and Anna.

And Anna turns, and she begins to preach to everybody who longs for redemption in Jerusalem. Here is the Savior. This is the Messiah.

This is God's plan for redemption. This is the consolation of Israel. Come, everyone who is laboring and heavy laden, and God Almighty, through this child, through this vessel, will give you rest.

Amazing. She has a vision of Christ, and she has an unblemished and an unashamed testimony. She has no reputation to uphold, and neither does Simeon.

And they really, frankly, don't care what people think. They've seen Christ. And nothing can stop them speaking his name.

When will I see God? What will it take for me to see God, some say. It's when you look to heaven. We sang a song.

I thought it was kind of prophetic today. Lift up your heads. The King of Glory shall come in.

It's when we look to heaven, where we live. The life that we have. The pain that we're in.

The bad situations that have come our way. It's when we're willing to drop our self-image. Our ambitions.

And things that we have hoped that Christ would do in us and through us that might, we would never want to admit it, but the truth is, bring us to our own betterment. Or somehow bring us to a place of comfort and ease. Status power.

There's a whole church age now that is lusting for these things, and they have no vision of Christ whatsoever. But it's the person. It's you.

It's me. It's the single mother in this church. It's the widow.

It's the father that's coming out of a life of addiction. Heartache. Has nothing to prove and is not going to use God for their own gain.

Their own betterment. Who lifts up his head. She lifts up her head to heaven.

And says, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hallelujah. God, thank you for the life you've given me.

Thank you for the pain that I've endured because if I had not had it, I would not have found you. If I was raised in a palace with servants all around me, I would not need you. I would not know you.

Oh God, thank you. Blessed you are, oh God. Blessed you are.

Blessed you are. I think of Hudson Taylor when his beloved wife died, whom he loved with all his heart. At her bedside, he reached down and closed her eyes with his fingers and said, the Lord does all things well.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of God. You want to see him? Start thanking him for who you are, where you are, what you are.

Where he has placed you. Start thanking him for what his plans are for you, whether or not you or I agree. It's not an issue of agreement.

His ways are higher. And we open our hearts and say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. God, thank you for speaking your word to me today.

Thank you for speaking your word in this house. Lord, we open our hearts today. And as a congregation, individually and collectively, we want to say, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Jesus, we bless you. We thank you. We acknowledge today, Lord, that you give us not what we desire, but what you know we need.

And what you have to do that your name can be glorified through us. God, thank you that you've given us this kind of a heart. And I pray now for an open heaven for every struggling person in this sanctuary.

The annex is hearing the words that you've given to me. I pray for an open heaven. Lord, where all the counter arguments to truth fall away and all of the trappings of the natural mind and the enemy fall away.

And there be an embracing of the person and the purpose of Jesus Christ for each one of us. Father, thank you for this with all of my heart. Folks, you want to see Jesus? You want to see God? Say, blessed be God, no matter where he leads me, no matter how he leads me, no matter where he places me, no matter what he does to me.

Blessed be God. He is enough. Christ is enough for me.

Christ is my life. Christ is my all in all. Do you think that Simeon or Anna had any idea that we'd be discussing them 2,000 years later? Do you think they had any idea that they'd be in the Bible? Do you know what the name of the high priest was that day doing the circumcision? Of course not.

His name is not here. Nobody much cared. I want to give a very simple altar call in the main sanctuary and the education annex.

Freedom comes when you can say, blessed be God. Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord. This is Jesus Christ.

When you can say it, your eyes will open and you will have a vision of Christ. You will see him. And I don't know who I'm speaking to today, but I know for sure there's a lot of people here that you need to start thanking God for your situation.

And he'll show you how he intends to be glorified in you through it. Give it all to him. Just give it all to him.

Don't try to use him for a way out. Yield to him in the middle of it. And you're going to see the glory.

You're going to see Christ like you've never seen him before. That's a promise that the scripture makes to you. You will not be living in an empty religious house any longer.

Lift your hands with me, will you? And pray with me. Lord Jesus. You are blessed.

I love you. And I thank you for the plans and the purposes that you have for my life. I welcome you to do whatever you want and whatever way you choose in my life.

All I ask is to be glorified in me and that my eyes and my heart may always behold you in all things. I trust you. I love you.

Oh, God, I will declare you as you work within me. My life will be a declaration to my generation of the faithfulness of almighty God. Jesus, I declare you before this whole audience to be a faithful God.

You are faithful to me. You've given me what I need. Now I say be glorified.

Be glorified in me. Be glorified in my life. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Be glorified! Be glorified! Be glorified! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Blessed is he who comes! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! I welcome you, Jesus! I welcome you, God! I welcome your work into my life! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah, Lamb of God! I welcome you! We welcome you, Lord! We welcome you! We welcome you! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Father! Now, Father, I pray in Jesus' name that there be an open heaven given to those who have received you, Lord, in the manner that you have revealed yourself.

Jesus, thank you. Let there be a song and a shout of joy all through their day and week, O God, through the months and years ahead, a song of peace and joy in spite of what life deals that cannot be taken away by circumstance or adversity. Lord, be glorified in us.

Be glorified, O God, is the cry of our hearts. Be glorified, Jesus. Father, we thank you for this.

God, we thank you. Hallelujah!

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