

Detective stories, like Knives Out, Sherlock Holmes, Nancy Drew, Psych.

We have a detective who's able to solve mysteries and crimes that the police cannot solve. Edgar Allen Poe founded the detective genre. Poe wrote the very first detective story in 1841 about the detective C August Dupin, which preceded Sherlock Holmes by 45 years.

Poe wrote a trilogy for Dupin that included: The murders in Rue Morgue, the mystery of Marie Roget, and The Purloin letter.

The purloin letter means the stolen letter. And it's about a letter that the Queen of France had stolen from her by a guy called Minister D.

Minister D uses the letter to blackmail the queen, so she has the police search Minister D's apartment for the letter, and they search everywhere.

They're searching in the ceiling, the walls, behind furniture, and they even dig up the cellar floor trying to find maybe a secret safe or some hiding place of Minister D. He is known to be a very brilliant and cunning man. The police search for three months with no luck of finding the letter.

The police, exhausted by their searches, decide to go to Detective C Auguste Dupin. Dupin knows that the letter must be close to Minister D and has to be in that apartment somewhere.

So he goes to the apartment to search for the letter. The letter that the police cannot find who turned the place upside down, searching for it. He finds the letter sitting in plain sight all along. The letter was sitting in the letter box in the middle of the room.

Minister D was so cunning that he knew the best place to hide the letter was in plain sight, where the police were not expecting to find it.

Now, it's a fun story, but if you like me, it explains your life. as in I can be looking in the pantry specifically for something, and cannot find it even though it's right in front of my face.

Or when you say, all right, I got to look under the couch for my phone and you're using the light on your phone.

This is called inattentional blindness. It's when we fail to see something in plain sight because our brains are focused on something else.

It's best known and best explained by a video where there are people wearing red shirts and people wearing white shirts and they pass a basketball around, and you are given the task to count how many times people in the red shirts pass the basketball around.

And when it's over, they'll ask you how many times they pass the ball and you'll give an answer, and then they'll ask, did you notice the dancing gorilla?

They say 50% of people miss the gorilla.

We can get so focused that we miss something right in front of us.

And today we're going to be studying Luke 23. We're going to be looking at the crucifixion of Jesus, Jesus' death on the cross.

We're going to be looking at the entire chapter, because what Luke does as he tells the story of Jesus' death on the cross, he highlights different people and their reactions.

Lets begin by reading **verses 32 - 49**.

Now, as Jesus is on the cross, everybody's sitting there looking at him, and he says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

A beautiful moment, one that has been highlighted by many and shows Jesus' love for the people who are crucifying him and His ability to forgive, but also what Jesus is highlighting there is that most people in the crowd are looking right at him, and they have no idea what he's doing.

He is right in front of them, in plain sight, and they are missing what's happening.

The difference between those who see the cross for what it truly is and those who miss it is most evident by the two criminals crucified on either side of Jesus.

One of them sees Jesus next to him and completely misses Jesus, and the other one sees Jesus, and gets it.

Many people know that Jesus died on the cross, but most don't understand the cross.

The image of the cross is worn and displayed by a lot of people. Most know that Jesus was crucified. It is a historical event.

But a lot of people miss what the crucifixion of Jesus actually was.

It's in front of them in plain sight but they are blind to it.

And if you don't get the cross, if you don't understand what's happening in this moment of the crucifixion of Jesus, then you miss out on the benefits of the cross.

The cross can change your life, but only if you see it for what it is.

So today I want to show you why people are blind to the cross, how you can make sure to see it for what it truly is, and why it can change your life.

So first let's begin with why we may be blind to the cross. There is no reason to try to fix your vision if you are wearing a blindfold.

To understand this, we can look at the people who were at the cross and because we can be blind to the cross today for the same reason people were back then.

People are blind to the cross because they are preoccupied.

The Sanhedrin, Jewish religious leaders, wanted Jesus out of the picture. He threatened their power. They had what they believed was absolute power in the Temple. Jesus was exposing their ways of exploiting the poor and non-Jewish people who wanted to worship God.

They didn't care about his miracles or his message; they wanted him gone.

They bring Jesus to Pilate who was the governor at the time wanting him to have Jesus crucified.

Luke 23:22-24

Pilate sees no fault in Jesus but the Sanhedrin wouldn't give it up.

Pilate didn't care who Jesus was, and he was afraid of a riot. He was already on thin ice, and a riot could cause him to lose his position as governor, so Pilate decides to have Jesus crucified.

Both the Jewish leaders and Pilate were too preoccupied to give the identity of Jesus an honest look.

We can get too focused on what we have and what we don't want to lose that it is best for us to ignore Jesus.

This is Inattentional Spiritual Blindness: Being so focused on ones self that we miss Jesus.

We can be too focused on our success or achievements. On our work, family, or money.

We don't have time for Jesus because he is too much of an interference with what I want to be doing.

That's like when people are making plans and you get invited, but you say "I'd like to, but I just don't have time."

Which is really saying, it is not important enough to me to stop what I'm doing. We make time for the things we care about.

If you want to know what you really care about then look at how you are spending your time.

And this is what we do to Jesus. We see the cross, we see Jesus, we hear about him, but we're so focused on what we're doing, that we don't really have time for him.

Or we try to give him just enough to get him off our backs.

I came on Sunday morning, that's all I can do, Jesus.

Are you so preoccupied that you aren't able to truly see Jesus?

Another way **people are blind to the cross is they are too rigid.**

The crowd that was there staring at Jesus as he was crucified was mixed of Jews and Roman soldiers.

The Jewish members of the crowd wanted Jesus to be their Messiah. Only they wanted him to be the picture of the Messiah they had in their head.

They wanted a Messiah who would lead a revolt against Rome and free them from their rule.

The Roman soldiers heard that Jesus was supposed to be a king. Kings to them were people of power. Power was displayed by force.

Luke 23.35 - 37

Both were mocking Jesus. If you are the Messiah then come down from the cross and begin the revolution against Rome. They aren't supposed to be able to kill you on a cross.

If you are some king then show us your power and save yourself. Are you seriously going to go down without a fight? Not even speak a word? Not even try to defend yourself?

They were not able to understand what they were seeing because they were too rigid in their beliefs about what the Messiah and what a king should be.

And no one today has ever tries to project their personal beliefs onto Jesus...

Jesus has to be my Jesus.

He accepts people I want to accept, and he rejects people I don't understand.

He perfectly agrees with my political party.

You can be looking for Jesus to act like you want him to and miss what he is trying to do right in front of you.

It's like in the purloined letter, when the police expected Minister D to have some secret compartment he was hiding the letter in. They performed their search based on their beliefs of what a criminal would do.

Their confirmation bias blinded them to the letter being right in front of them. How many of them do you think picked it up and moved it during their search?

And oftentimes we can be looking for Jesus, the Jesus that we expect him to be, and we're missing him right in front of us.

Are you morphing Jesus into your image or are you letting him change you into his?

The final group of people I want to highlight are **blind to the cross because they are parasitic.**

Jesus was being crucified between the two criminals.

Traditionally, they're known as thieves, but surely they were criminals on the cross being crucified because they were performing terrorist attacks against Rome. And one of them begins to mock Jesus.

Luke 23.39

This man is experiencing where we get the term excruciating from, and he looks at Jesus and says if you are the Messiah then save us.

If you are the Messiah then get me out of this situation. I'll believe you are the Messiah if you can get me out of this.

He only wants Jesus to save him from his situation. It's a bad situation that no one should be in.

Many people call on Jesus when they are in bad situations. When we are completely out of control we look to our only hope of the one whom we have heard is in control.

But Jesus doesn't help this guy. He knows how bad the pain is, he's experiencing it himself. What kind of God wouldn't help him?

When we run to Jesus to help us in difficult situations, usually the thing we value most is being threatened. Career, marriage, family, an experience.

Jesus I need your help to make sure that I don't lose this because I value it more than anything.

Jesus is not just a savior, he is Lord. He cannot be one or the other. You can't welcome Dylan but reject Armstrong.

Jesus has to be your Lord and Savior not one or the other. You can't ask for saving without making Jesus Lord.

Oh so is Jesus' love transactional? No, the reason Jesus is Lord is because he is Savior.

You can't ask Jesus to save you so you can keep the thing you make your Lord over him when he is supposed to be your Lord.

Jesus I'll make you Lord if you can help me out so I can make this Lord. That is contradictory.

We want to treat Jesus like he's a kind stranger who helped us out one time.

When I was 13 my family went to a water park and for some reason I, a scrawny kid, had a delusional belief in my swimming abilities. I went into the wave pool to the very deep end with no float. Once the waves started going it wasn't long before I was getting shoved under water over and over. I began to panic but thankfully a man who had a float grabbed me and took me back to the shallow water.

I'm very thankful for this man, I don't have a relationship with him.

That's how many of us want our relationship with Jesus to be like. We want him to be a kind stranger to save us from our situations.

We can pass on the relationship and serving him as Lord.

Are you willing to follow Jesus, even if it means your situation doesn't change?

Even if the family doesn't get better, the marriage doesn't get better. You stay single. They stay sick. You stay sick.

Are you willing to follow Jesus even if your situation doesn't change?

That's how one criminal was responding to Jesus, and he was blind to what was right in front of him.

But the other criminal sees Jesus on the cross better than anyone there.

How did he prevent Inattentional Spiritual Blindness?

First, He saw Jesus for who He was

Luke 23.40

He acknowledges Jesus' identity.

To see the cross correctly you have to remember who Jesus is. He's the son of God. Member of the Holy Trinity. The Word of God.

Colossians 1.1 - 17

When you recognize that it's God on the cross it puts into perspective the weight of the situation.

That is different than just some well spoken teacher or healer. That's the creator of the universe getting crucified.

The actions don't match the person. It's like if Jeff Bezos was eating Ramen noodles for lunch.

It doesn't add up.

There's got to be more to the story there.

First recognize Jesus for who he truly is. God the Son.

Then the **criminal sees himself for who he truly is.**

Luke 23.41

He admits that he deserves to be on that cross. He isn't saying that Rome is right to crucify him. He's against Roman rule.

He's at the end of himself. He's recognizing what his real problem is.

It isn't his situation. It isn't Rome. It's not that Jesus isn't who he thinks he supposed to be. He recognizes that he is his problem.

If you keep trying to push open all of the many closed doors in life, the problem might not be the doors. You may need to realize its user error and it's a pull.

It's not always everyone else and your situations. Its you.

To see the cross what it truly is you have to see your brokenness.

Not just yea I mess up sometimes, but see how you can get so preoccupied with yourself that you want to ignore God and everyone else. How you want to make God in your image. How you only want God to help you with the things you can't control.

Lastly the criminal on the cross **asks to be rewarded**

Luke 23.42

The guy admits that he is a terrible person and then looks at Jesus and asks him "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Hey Jesus I'm an awful person, and I deserve to be crucified, so reward me with the kingdom of God.

It seems like a ridiculous question.

You expect Jesus to say you're crazy. You just admitted to why I shouldn't let you through the door.

Luke 23.43

But Jesus' response is Today you will be with me in paradise.

He gives him one even better.

How can this be?

Jesus says you can join me where you don't belong because I've joined you where I don't belong.

(VAMP)

Before Pilate sentenced Jesus to be crucified he gave the crowd the option of who they wanted to be released, Jesus or a guy named Barabbas.

Barabbas was guilty of terrorist attacks on Rome and murder.

The crowd yells for Barabbas to be released and Jesus to be crucified.

Barabbas deserved the cross, but he is set free because Jesus is going to be hung on the cross he deserved.

Jesus was on the cross but that cross wasn't his to be on.

It was Barbbases. It was mine. It was yours.

Jesus was in our place.

1 Peter 2.24

When you see who God is and you see who you are, then its obvious who belongs where.

But when you see why the perfect son of God would be on the cross meant for us, you see the cross for what it truly is.

God taking your punishment on himself.

God putting himself in your place, so that

By his wounds we can be healed.

2 Corinthians 5.21

So that we can be made righteous. God wants to make us righteous because God wants to say you will be with me.

God wants you healed, righteous, and close.

That's what the cross is, God showing you how much he loves you and wants you.

When you see it for what it is and you get it, then everything changes.

Why try to prove your worth through accomplishments? Don't you see what's been accomplished for you. Don't you see how much you already matter?

Why live for everyone's approval when you see how much you are already loved?

Why stress for control, when the one with the most control thinks about you like that?

You can stop searching and turning the world upside down and see what's been right in front of you all along.

The God of the universe doing whatever it takes to be with you.

See Jesus in your place, and now will you accept his?

See him for who he is, see your need, and ask for his place.

If you'd like accept Jesus' place today, to accept the free gift of Jesus' salvation and make him your Lord during the next song we will have prayer counselors in the front and the back of the room.

You can go to one of them and they would love to talk to you and lead you through that. But before that we have the opportunity to see the cross clearly for what it is.

We will take communion together. It is a reminder for us of what the cross really is. It is a gift from God to make sure we don't become blinded to the truth of the cross.

The night before Jesus was crucified, which the anniversary of is coming up this week, Jesus took the bread and said this represents my body broken on the cross, and took the cup and said this represents my blood that will be shed.

Today, as you take communion see the cross for what it truly is, see Jesus in your place as the reason you get to be in his with him.

If you are here and you're not sure about the identity of Jesus and the cross then this isn't for you, but we are glad you are here and want you to be included.

So as you are in a group of people and they take communion, ask yourself what do think of the cross and what might be some potential blind spots that I have preventing me from seeing it like others do.