

“BLESSED ARE THE EYES THAT SEE WHAT YOU SEE”

I. Introduction

- A. In their helpful book, *What Is the Church's Mission*, Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert write the following: “the church acts as a sort of embassy for the government of the King. It is an outpost of the kingdom of God surrounded by the kingdom of darkness.” [127]
1. Those words should cause us to reflect upon what a great blessing it is to be numbered among those who embrace the message that is proclaimed by Christ's church.
 2. Think of all the souls around you who prefer to remain lost in their sin and error.
 3. Think of the many people who curse the light of God's truth because they love the darkness so dearly.
 4. Ask yourself, ‘Why have I responded to the gospel in faith when so many others have not?’
- B. The Scriptures make it clear that the answer to that question is not found in us.
1. Our salvation is a matter of God's gracious will.
 2. It is a blessing freely bestowed by God, not a prize won by us.
 3. Before the foundation of the world, God predestined some to eternal life, and the rest of mankind he passed by and ordained to dishonor.
 4. As Jesus says in our text, God has hidden the things that pertain to salvation from those he leaves to go on insisting that they know what is best, and he has revealed these things to those he chooses

and shows that they are as needy and dependent as little children.

II. Workers for His Harvest

- A. At this point in Jesus's ministry, he was making his way to Jerusalem for the last time, knowing that the cross awaited him there.
1. He knew that his ministry was drawing to a close, yet there were many Jewish towns that he still had to visit.
 2. So he appointed the seventy-two to go ahead of him and preach in his name in the places where he was about to go.
 3. As he sent them out, he used the metaphor of a harvest to describe what they were going to be doing.
 4. They were like workers sent out into a plentiful field to gather in the harvest of crops.
 5. And note that Jesus refers to God as "the Lord of the harvest."
 6. This calls our attention to God's sovereignty over salvation.
 7. It is his harvest because he is the one who enables people to respond to the message in faith.
- B. God is also the one who sends out workers into his harvest.
1. This is why Jesus tells his followers to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out laborers into his fields.
 2. At that point in time, there were not very many people serving as gospel laborers.
 3. Even as Jesus was appointing the seventy-two for their mission, he still deemed this to be an insufficient number.
 4. The reason why it is so important to have gospel laborers is because it is through this labor that God's kingdom is advancing in this

present age.

5. As Michael Horton reminds us, “the most crucial vocation of the church in this present age is the proclamation of the gospel... The kingdom of God in this present phase is primarily audible, not visible.” [Horton, *The Gospel Commission*, 67]
 6. This is why we should always be praying for God to send out more gospel laborers into his harvest fields.
- C. When Jesus sent out the seventy-two, he told them that he was sending them out as lambs in the midst of wolves.
1. He made no attempt to sugarcoat things for them.
 2. Though there was plenty of harvesting to be done, they were going to face opposition and see many reject their message.
 3. This is just as true today as it was in the first century.
 4. Whenever the church is faithful to its God-given task of proclaiming Christ, it will find itself in a vulnerable position before a hostile world.
 5. The world is always trying to silence the church or pressure it to accommodate itself to the spirit of the age.
 6. And though the world finds a significant measure of success in this, it will never completely prevail over the church.
 7. As long as we remain steadfast in our faith, we have nothing to fear from the powers that align themselves against us.
 8. As Jesus assures his followers in verse 19, “nothing shall hurt you.”
- D. Jesus’s instructions to the seventy-two are similar to the instructions that he gave the apostles when he sent them on their mission back at the beginning of chapter 9.

1. He wants these men to carry out their work with haste, not bringing extra supplies or taking the time for the lengthy formal greetings that were typical in that culture.
2. They were to receive support from those who accepted their message and then bestow the blessing of God's peace upon such people
3. But when the seventy-two were not received by a town, they were to shake the dust from their feet as a sign of judgment, communicating that the town was outside of the covenant because it had rejected the Messiah

III. Woe to the Unrepentant

- A. The basic message proclaimed by the seventy-two is that the coming of Jesus means the kingdom of God has come near.
 1. As Jesus's spokesmen, they were announcing the inauguration of God's redemptive rule among the people whom he is building into a new creation in Christ.
 2. This message brings peace to those who receive it and woe to those who reject it.
 3. This is why Jesus pronounced woe on the Galilean cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.
 4. Jesus spent a lot of time conducting ministry in these cities, but all in all he received a poor reception in them.
 5. Because of this, Jesus says that it will be more bearable in the judgment for wicked Old Testament cities like Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon than it will be for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.
 6. This was a shocking thing for Jesus to say.

7. Sodom serves as one of the biblical paradigms for what wickedness looks like.
 8. Yet Jesus says that these cities populated by Jews will fare worse on the day of judgment than Sodom.
 9. The reason why is because these Galilean cities had benefits that Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon did not have.
 10. They were the recipients of special revelation that was delivered by Jesus himself.
 11. They heard the message of salvation and they rejected it.
- B. This calls our attention to the seriousness of rejecting the gospel.
1. Those who despise or ignore or make light of God's gospel will not go unpunished.
 2. On the contrary, they will suffer a worse fate than notoriously wicked people who never hear the gospel.
 3. This is a sobering thought, especially when we realize that we live in a culture in which the gospel has been so thoroughly disseminated.
 4. A dreadful eternity lies in store for multitudes of our neighbors unless they repent.
 5. This should motivate us to pray for them and to look for opportunities to point them to Christ.
 6. It should also motivate us to keep a close watch over our own hearts and make sure that we persevere in faith and repentance.
- C. As Jesus sends out the seventy-two, he also tells them, "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

1. This saying confronts a notion that runs deep in the American mind.
2. Americans tend to be highly individualistic.
3. This makes us prone to think that we can relate to God on our own terms.
4. But Jesus's words in verse 16 directly refute that notion.
5. This verse makes it clear that if you want to know God and enjoy fellowship with him, you have to receive him on his terms.
6. You have to receive him as he comes to you in the gospel.
7. Those who spurn the church as it preaches that gospel and holds people accountable to it are spurning Christ himself.

IV. Written in Heaven

- A. When the seventy-two return to Jesus and report on their ministry, they rejoice over the fact that the demons were subject to them.
 1. Jesus responds by saying, "I saw Satan fall like lightening from heaven."
 2. This tells us that the coming of the kingdom in Jesus's ministry marked the beginning of the end for Satan.
 3. Similar to the way D-Day assured the eventual downfall of the Nazis, Jesus's ministry broke Satan's power.
 4. The miracles that Jesus and his disciples performed were a sign of the downfall of the domain of darkness.
 5. Even the widespread rejection of Christ by the Jews spelled doom for Satan, because it pointed to the approaching mission to the Gentiles.

6. Satan's monopoly on the non-Jewish world was about to come to an end.
 7. The gospel was going to bear fruit in the whole world.
- B. As Jesus saw the seventy-two rejoicing that demonic forces were subject to them, he also told them that it was more important for them to rejoice that their names are written in heaven.
1. It is not that it is wrong to rejoice that Satan's kingdom is falling apart, but there is something that is an even greater source of joy for believers.
 2. The greatest possible ground of joy is the grace that God pours out upon his chosen ones in Christ.
 3. What you rejoice in reveals what is important to you.
 4. What brings you the deepest joy?
 5. Do you rejoice that your name is written in heaven?
 6. Do you rejoice to see others professing faith in Christ and persevering in that faith by following Christ?
 7. We see Jesus rejoicing in these things in this text.
 8. We should rejoice in them as well.
- C. As Jesus rejoices and gives thanks for God's grace to unworthy sinners, he says something that underscores the fact that God is entirely sovereign over salvation.
1. He says to the Father, "you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will."

2. Jesus's point here is that God does not bestow his grace on those who deserve it.
 3. God is not a respecter of persons.
 4. As Paul says to the Corinthian Christians, "not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being may boast in the presence of God." (1 Cor. 1:26-29)
 5. This is something that every Christian needs to recognize.
 6. We are all spiritually destitute before God.
 7. Consider these words from J.C. Ryle: "Nothing so blinds the eyes of our souls to the beauty of the Gospel as the vain delusive idea that we are not so ignorant and wicked as some and that we have got a character which will bear inspection. Happy is the man who has learned to feel that he is wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. To see that we are bad is the first step towards being really good. To feel that we are ignorant is the first beginning of all saving knowledge."
- D. Our text ends with Jesus explaining that his disciples have seen and heard something that saints of old were not able to see and hear.
1. This does not mean that Old Testament believers had absolutely no grasp of Christ as their redeemer.
 2. As Jesus says to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, all of Scripture speaks of him.
 3. The point that Jesus is making here is that while we have received a completed revelation of God's saving purpose in Christ, Old

Testament believers only saw Christ in types and shadows.

4. We have received a blessing that they longed for.
5. We live in the days when God has spoken his final word in his incarnate Son.

V. Conclusion

- A. As Christians, the fact that God has opened our eyes to see the gospel for what it really is can result in our wondering why other people are so thick-headed.
- B. Why can't they see that Christ's offer of forgiveness and a new life and an eternity in heaven is the most wonderful news that has ever been published?
- C. Why are they so blind, so foolish, so content to go on living under the delusion that they will escape God's judgment?
- D. Whenever you catch your self thinking along those lines, let it be a reminder to you that, were it not for God's grace, you would be every bit as witless and daft as those who persist in refusing to receive Christ.
- E. Seize such moments as opportunities to rejoice that your name is written in heaven and to give thanks to God that you have been given eyes to see.