Glory Blindness

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Preacher: Kevin Smith, Senior Pastor

[0:00] Amen. Isaiah chapter 12, I'm sorry, John chapter 12, verses 36.

The second part of verse 36, actually. When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him. So that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. Lord, who has believed what he heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
Therefore, they could not believe. For again, Isaiah said, he has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes and understand with their heart and turn and I would heal them.
Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him.
[1:06] But for the fear of the Pharisees, they did not confess it so that they would not be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

That's the punchline. That is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.
Please be seated. I think all of you have probably heard of snow blindness.
Now, if you've been in Chattanooga all your life, you've probably never experienced it. But snow blindness is real. It's caused because direct sunlight gives off invisible UV rays of energy that reach the earth.
UV rays cause sunburn when you're not using sunscreen or in the shade or clothing to protect your skin. We know that.
[2:20] Snow blindness happens when UV rays damage your eyes. You see, many light-colored surfaces like snow, but not only snow, but like snow, will reflect more UV rays.

I remember being a kid in Philadelphia, and we had snow all the time. Every year we had snow. And big fields of snow, there were times you had to kind of shield your eyes because the sunlight hitting a big, pristine field of snow is blinding.
And it can cause damage to your eyes. Many of you have not experienced snow blindness. Or even that glare.
But all people are born with glory blindness. No matter where you live, no matter where you grew up, you've all experienced glory blindness.
And the thing about glory blindness is it gets worse with time. Glory blindness comes when sin shining off the glory of this world causes a blindness to the glory of Jesus.
[3:40] Sin shining off the glamour, the glory of this world, causes a blindness to our spiritual eyes so that we cannot see the glory of Jesus.

It's like our spiritual eyes can't take his light. In our passage, our Lord shows us the symptoms and the cure for glory blindness.
Or, if you want, spiritual blindness. So, my big question to you this day, do you see the glory? Do you truly see the glory?
John is not going to explain why Jesus must draw us to faith once he is lifted up on the cross. We saw that last week. It is teaching that reflects the sovereignty and mystery of God's saving work. Some get a little bugged out about this teaching. And that's what I understand. Because we don't like it when God is sovereign. We want to be in control.
[4:50] But we're not. You never have been. And you never will be. God is sovereignly in control of all things. Including salvation.

We must recognize, once again, how helpless we are to save ourselves. As Elder Tava likes to say, it's all of grace.

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It's just grace. First of all, glory blindness rejects the truth. Again, I'm going to refer you back to the passage. Notice verse 36 and 37. Jesus departs.
The text says he hid himself from them. And though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him. Jesus goes into hiding. It feels kind of ominous, doesn't it?
That the Lord hides himself from people. That's a scary thought. But he's got a plan here. This section here is the Apostle John's spiritual commentary on the unbelief of the people.
[6:02] It's inspired by God still. But it's his commentary. He's explaining something to us. He's talking about glory blindness. Our Lord goes into hiding because he wants to spend the rest of his time, before his passion, teaching his disciples.

He has things he needs to tell them. Things they need to know and experience with him. But in regard to those who refuse to believe in Jesus, now John gives us some more insight.
They still would not. That's the idea behind verse 37. They would not believe in him.
Would not. It's willful. It's willful. A willful unbelief. The people had seen the miracles, the signs. They'd seen the feeding of the 5,000.
Some had experienced maybe and heard about the wedding of Cana and the miracle of the wine. That was more private. They had seen the raising of Lazarus from the dead.
[7:09] They had seen the healing of the man born blind. These are all done publicly. They had seen the healing of the official son. They had seen the healing of the crippled. And John doesn't even tell us all that Jesus did.

They had seen that and more. John reminds us in the end of his book, in John chapter 20, Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.
But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. It's interesting to me that the language John uses, he says, Jesus did so many signs before them.
So. The soul seems to suggest that he did enough. He did enough for them to believe, but they don't. They won't.
He's proved himself again and again in character and in actions, but they won't believe. And keep in mind, he hasn't even done the big one yet. Rising from the dead.
[8:23] What he had already done was enough. For faith. Including his preaching. In this, they're just like their forebearers.

They're just like their ancient Israelites under Moses. Spent 40 years in the wilderness with Moses. And you know what he says? At the end, at the end of, near end of his life, in Deuteronomy 29, here's what Moses says to the people.
You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs and those great wonders. But to this day, the Lord has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear.
He said, y'all still don't get it. 40 years. Some of them were babies when they first came into the promised land.
[9:30] They grew up in the wilderness. I'm sorry, when they first came into the wilderness, they grew up in the wilderness. This is the second generation. And Moses still says, you know what God did. And still, you don't have understanding.

This is why we must pray when we come to the word of God. Because you can pick up this book, saints, and read the gospels, and read it, and not see it.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. You can read about the Exodus. And you can maybe even give intellectual assent to it.
But still not understand. Still not get it. There are many unbelieving theologians who are experts in the New Testament and experts in the Bible, and they don't believe that Jesus rose from the dead. They don't see it. I've seen some of the books. It's sad. They don't get it. Pray when you come to the word of God. Pray that God would enlighten your eyes and enlighten the text to you that you see the glory.
[10:56] This is how deep spiritual blindness goes. As a matter of fact, it's like the darkness was coming for them.

It's like they were trapped in this deep, deep, sunless, moonless darkness. And it was like it was pursuing them.

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Jesus told them. He told them, the light's going to be with you for just a little while longer. I'm only with you for a little while longer. Verse 36. Beginning of verse 36. We saw this last time.
He told them to be careful that you don't miss it but the darkness is coming.
You know, people will say, yeah, I want to believe. I believe. Ah, you know, I know Jesus is real but, you know, I'm not ready to come to the Lord. I'm not ready to settle, settle down yet. You know, when I get done doing the things I have to do, you know, then I'll settle down with the Lord.
[12:09] Don't bet on it. Don't bet on that. The darkness is deep. And you may find yourself like Esau after he sold his birthright to his brother.

He could not find space for repentance though he sought it with tears. Today is the day of salvation. If you see the light, believe in the light now. They would not. But here's the thing. Glory of blindness is also confirmed by God's judgment.
First of all, they would not. Now Jesus, John's going to show us that they could not. Verses 38 to 40.
So why don't they believe? Why are they choosing not to believe? So that the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled. Lord, who has believed what he heard from us?
[13:13] To whom has the arm of the Lord? He's asking the question. Lord, I've been preaching my brains out. Who's believing it? Therefore, they could not believe.

For again, Isaiah said, he, he, that's God, has blinded their eyes, hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.
That's God's judgment. When people reject the light, they, they see it, but they reject it.
there can come a time where God hardens them. What does that mean anyway?
Some people would think that, does God create unbelief in people's hearts? No way! He doesn't. You're born that way. We're already born that way.
[14:20] And we're doing what we love. But, but, but, but it, but it can come a point where God says, I'm going to, my Dr. Pastor, Dr. Boyce, we talked, helped us with this.

Where time, where comes a time when God might just say, hands off. You want to keep going that direction.
You're not listening. You are choosing. You really like this. I'm going to give you what you want. Hands off. Because, listen, none of us are, are as bad as we could be. This world is not as bad as it could be.
Why? Because God is restraining sin in this world and restraining the devil. All of that, he's restraining. But there can come a time when God looks at a person's life and says, it could be for a time where it could be permanent.
But he just says, you can have what you want. Romans chapter one, it says, God gave them over. Three times. God gave them over.
[15:22] God gave them over. That's what that means. He lets us have what we want. And that's that hardening. Sin hardens our hearts.

Sin makes our hearts insensitive to God. That's hardening. Would not, the judgment could not.
And here's the thing. John is quoting from Isaiah. The test that he quotes from Isaiah. Isaiah 53 was the first one. You know, one of the greatest Old Testament passage that describes Jesus as the suffering Messiah.
But the second one is from Isaiah chapter six. Isaiah chapter six. Here's the full quote of that passage that John is mentioning. Isaiah six, eight through 10.
I heard, and I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us? For us. Then I said, here I am, send me. He said, go and say to this people, keep on hearing, but do not understand.
[16:41] Keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn, and be healed.

That's the full passage that he's quoting from. And what he's saying is that the people of Israel had rejected God, had turned to idolatry, had turned to wickedness, and they said, God, yeah, yeah, we'll put you with the other gods, or maybe we don't need you at all.
Whatever it was, they had rejected the one true God, and God said, these are my people? No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No. No.

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No. No. No. And he sends a preacher to him, a prophet, and he says, your ministry is going to be one of hardening.
You're going to preach my word, and they're not going to believe what you say. That's my judgment. but in that same passage in chapter 6 there's another part to that passage you know where I'm going right before he gets to that place he says something else that you're all familiar with Isaiah's calling to be a prophet in the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne Uzziah had a 40-50 year reign Israel had been blessed and now Uzziah though he was a leper had died and this political chaos people are scared who's going to run the show who's going to lead us now who's going to be a king like Uzziah we're in trouble the nations around us want to kill us we need a leader and then when he died
[18:48] Isaiah sees another king sitting upon a throne high and lifted up and the train of Israel filled the temple above him stood the seraphim seraphim means flame-like beings each had, these are angels each had six wings with two he covered his face with two he covered his feet and with two he flew and one called to another it was in Typhino one was on a group was on that side a group was on that side one side said holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts and the other side said the whole earth is full of his glory then he said holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts and they said over here the whole earth is full of his glory and he sees this and he's singing to the temple of heaven as it were and the thresholds of the temple begin to shake and to tremble and did he hear a voice?

he heard God's voice and he pulled out his iPhone and started taking video pictures no he says woe is me hold it now what are you talking about?
this is what we all want to see God in all of his glory woe is me I'm coming apart I'm being disintegrated I'm being destroyed woe is me why?
for I am lost I am a man of unclean lips I go among a people of unclean lips for my eyes have seen the king the lord of hosts lord have mercy I'm just a sinner what am I doing here?
I'm just as bad as my people he was right he was beholding the unrefracted as it were holiness of God it was more than any man can take and even that I think that was still a little bit lessened so he would he just turned the ash on the spot but then he said when he cried out when he cried out knowing his his his sinfulness when he cried out lord he said oh have mercy God that's what he said oh I'm in trouble here and here's what happens then one of the seraphim flew to me having in his hand a burning coal that the lord that he had taken with tongs from the altar now watch this now this is the picture this angel goes to the altar and he and gets a coal out because you know incense burning so he won't touch the coal he gets tongs he takes it out now what does he do with this tong [22:01] I mean with this coal this is really funny and he touched my mouth I can listen you're not gonna touch it but you're gonna put it on my mouth I can't imagine Isaiah was going but he touched my mouth and said behold this has touched your lips your guilt is taken away your sin atoned for that's a picture of Christ by the way it's a picture of the work of Christ you gotta go there because nothing can take away our sins but the blood of Jesus he's cleansed the lips reflect the heart Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks that's why he's touching the mouth what you say comes from somewhere takes it takes it away he's seeing the glory now watch this having received the grace of God having be held the holiness and the glory and the majesty of God what is his response and I want to ask you a question is this you here am I send me you see when you see the glory that's the response so in the key ways you know you're no longer spiritually blind you gotta hear am I send me spirit

I'm sad to say that too many are so calculating about how much time how much money how much sacrifice they will give to God always asking God in the church what are you doing for me and doing for mine is that what we see here he didn't even ask him what the job was see that's what happens when the grace of God shows you the glory of Jesus you say Lord I'll do whatever you want me to sweep the floor I'll sweep the floor you want me to park cars I'll park cars want me to pick up trash I'll pick up trash and don't whatever you want Lord that's when you see the glory I'm not sure many of us have seen the glory glory blindness is cheap with time talent and treasure cheap when you see the glory you want to give and God then God told him his job they're not going to listen to you I wonder if he said could you could you have led with that could you have just told me that first 40 year ministry the man was miserable read Isaiah he's hurting I'm skipping a bunch of stuff here because I want to get to this next point I want to end here the only thing that can deliver us from glory blindness is what Isaiah experienced glory we've got to see the glory by the way John says that was Jesus just point that out real quick John is telling us because he says that Isaiah saw his

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glory he's referring to Jesus that's the only place we can find in Isaiah where he saw the glory of God that is a pre-incarnate picture of Christ the second person of the trinity in all of his glory sitting and reigning
John saw Jesus ahead of the gospels he I mean sorry Isaiah saw Jesus ahead of the gospels he saw the glory here's the problem about glory blindness it focuses on our own glory that's remember I said the punch line the punch line that John was giving us here in chapter 12 nevertheless many of the authorities believed in Jesus him but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it so that they would not be put out of the synagogue for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God this is the punch line this is why this is probably one of the greatest hindrances to true faith in Jesus we're naturally glory hounds we're always sniffing after the glory listen we all want to be significant right we all want to win we all want to make a difference we all want to stand out nothing wrong with that we give praise when we see greatness a beautiful sunset we go wow a beautiful arch amazing we are naturally people who see glory and want it
J.R. Vassar in his book glory hunger says this our glory hunger is not just a desire to see and respond to greatness it's that it's a desire to possess greatness and have others respond to it I possess I possess the greatness and I want you to respond and be amazed at me because after all who wants to be mediocre let me see your hand you want to be mediocre anybody want to be a failure we have a line over here a failure line over here mediocre line over here just go on pick your line nobody wants that and you shouldn't want that you should hold it now but I don't want to pass to Kevin that's not me I don't I don't have to be up front I don't want to be up front I hate I just want to be just do my thing I don't want any you know yeah you know you just want to avoid embarrassment it's okay you don't care about winning the race you just don't want to trip near the finish line and come in last
[29:15] I was so embarrassed I wanted to die you see that's still glory hounding you see your way of seeking the glory is by avoiding embarrassment avoiding failure why because embarrassment and failure diminish your glory so whether you are the person who likes to be up front or to be in the back it don't matter we're all glory hounds and the reason that is because we were made for glory by the way what is glory Hebrew rule for glory is kvot it means heavy it means that which is weighty in the bible it's used metaphorically to speaking of this having significance being impressive greatness even splendor glory this means glory glory in the universe he is ultimately significant he is ultimately impressive his greatness and splendor beyond our understanding he is he is glorious and you've been made in his likeness you were made for glory glory you were made from glory to be glory that's why psalm 8 says this what is man that you are mindful of him the son of man that you care for him yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor you have given him dominion over the works of your hands you have put all things under his feet when we were made in the image of

God we were made with glory we were made to reflect the glory and bring the glory of our creator to the earth you've been made for glory but here's the problem sin enters and when sin enters now we want the glory without the glory giver we still want the glory because that's part of the image of God but we're fallen and now we don't want the glory giver we just want the glory we want to be praised we want to be exalted we want to be honored we want to be we want to get as many likes as we can we hunger for it we want to find and so we find our significance now in the glory itself not in the God who gives the glory we are impressed with ourselves that's the authorities they were rulers they had they had glory earthly glory but they knew if they if they professed
Jesus publicly if they came if they came out and said hey Jesus is right Jesus he's the Messiah if they came out and owned Jesus they knew they would lose the glory was it just them or do we have the same problem we want to honor Jesus as long as it doesn't cost us any glory as long as there's no price as long as my glory before the world is not diminished as long as people won't dislike me or I won't lose something
I want did they really see the glory is my question if they could so easily say they own him but didn't disown him did they really see the glory did they really see Jesus for who he is did they really see his majesty and splendor and honor that they really understand who he is they couldn't have because once you see truly see the majesty and glory of Jesus and watch this keep seeing it there's nothing this world can give you that will make you turn away there's nothing
I mean you know you don't be you know there's nothing they can hold up whatever they want before you if it's against Jesus you're like no thank you because nothing compares with that glory

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nothing compares with the glory he gives you now God wants to glorify you too give you significance give you greatness he he is destined you his child that you would reign with Christ family don't you understand God has given us glory in Jesus and there's nothing else out there that compares stop selling your birth right don't trade a greater glory for a lesser well what are we going to do what are you going to do with this we got decisions to make every day when you're being tempted to settle for the glory of this world or the glory of
[36:08] Jesus so that means I have this is Kevin Smith now I have to begin my day looking at the glory of Jesus I gotta keep coming back because you know something about being human and where we are right now and we're not glorified in heaven and glory in the new heavens and new earth we're still in the flesh we're still fallen see I get amnesia I get glory amnesia I forget so I gotta keep coming back and looking at the glory of Jesus I gotta keep coming back and beholding his majesty I gotta keep coming back and saying Lord Lord here am I send me because of your glory because of your love because of your grace here am I send me I gotta keep coming back to that because I forget and when I get out in the world I'm in the culture and I see things and I want things and people wanna give me things I gotta make choices here and I'm like oh what am I gonna do see if I hadn't seen the glory already

I'm in trouble the time to see the glory is before the temptation you prepared for the temptation now we open this book I gotta tell you this is much more than just a book it's the word of God and in it there's the glory of God all over it the glory of Jesus just jumps out of it I gotta keep coming back here and then I can look at everything else through that lens of glory when I see his glory I can look at creation and see his glory I can look at you and see his glory I can look at everything anything everything through that lens of his glory and I can rejoice in it and use it rightly and not make it my goal to not make it my greatest desire because I see a greater glory
I have a greater significance because I belong to him I am somebody I'm a child of God I'm a servant of the high king Lord Jesus I am somebody because he made me somebody and remade me in his image in Jesus oh okay practically speaking besides that when your glory blindness is lifted and these four things happen to you you say God wow you're overwhelmed by God's greatness when your glory blindness is lifted you're overwhelmed by the beauty of Jesus he is just takes your breath away two you realize how sinful you are and you repent if you're not repenting you don't see the glory lifestyle of repentance three you realize how loved you are the cross becomes
God's greatest gesture of love to you and now you see his love everywhere you know you're loved when you see his glory you know now you know your sins been atoned for and you are loved and fourth you give yourself to his service it's his way no highway option his way I want his I want his way I did it my way already I did it your way and it don't work it gives me a little lesser glory I'm no it's his way there is no his way or the highway none of that no no no his way no highway option at all it's his way that's where I'm going because he is the glory he is my glory and the lifter of my head Jesus is the image of the glory of God
I there's nothing better his kingdom come his will be done because he is holy he is glorious he is as they sang when they crossed the red sea and Miriam grabbed the tambourine and she led the women and they were rejoicing because the pharaoh's army had been perished in the sea and she grabbed the tambourine and she started singing that God is majestic and holiness awesome and glory working wonders is that your song so do you see the glory are you still being stingy with God with your time talent and treasure or does he not matter at all because you're totally blind you're totally blind we pray for you that God will lift off the blindness pray for people who don't know
[42:00] Jesus saints that God will lift off the blindness so they can see the glory father help us help us all to behold the glory of Jesus and give ourselves to his glory may we turn away from our own and seek only his in his name we pray amen excuse me mercy took to his

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