

## **DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE? (Hebrews 2:5-9)**

His first name was Noel. He was a Frenchman. As a youth, he was captured by and conscripted into the Nazi army when Germany invaded France in 1940. Eventually, he escaped and joined the French Resistance.

Sometime after the war, Noel moved to New York City. He was a professional musician. While touring, he met and married an American woman named Gloria, who was both a pianist and a composer. They worked together. Gloria would write the lyrics, and Noel would compose the music.

Their most famous song, however, came differently. On that song, Noel wrote the words, shared it with Gloria and asked her to write the music. They had been commissioned to write a Christmas song, but neither was in the Christmas mood. It was October, 1962. That was during the time of the Cuban missile crisis. The Soviet Union was caught putting nuclear missiles in Cuba. The United States demanded that they be removed, and we placed Navy vessels near Cuba to create a blockade and threatened to shoot any Soviet ships that might try to get past. The world's two superpowers were at a standoff. Many feared nuclear war was imminent.

Noel had seen war in Europe. He feared it was coming to his new homeland. It was during this crisis that he happened to see two new mothers pushing their babies in baby strollers on the streets of NYC. He said the babies looked like little lambs. His heart was touched, and he began to write. Both Noel and Gloria were so overcome with the song, neither could sing it without tears flowing.

Their song has been covered by hundreds of artists including Andy Williams, Pat Boone, Jim Nabors, Perry Como, Johnny Mathis, Robert Goulet, Whitney Houston, Anne Murray, Glen Campbell, and Johnny Cash. The one who made it famous, however, was Bing Cosby when he recorded it in 1963. It is the song, *Do You Hear What I Hear?* Written during the dark days of the Cuban Missile Crisis, this song has become a Christmas classic. Listen to the words:

Said the night wind to the little lamb,  
Do you see what I see,  
Way up in the sky, little lamb?  
Do you see what I see?  
A star, a star, dancing in the night;  
With a tail as big as a kite,  
With a tail as big as a kite.

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy,  
Do you hear what I hear,  
Ringing through the sky, shepherd boy?  
Do you hear what I hear?  
A song, a song, high above the trees;  
With a voice as big as the sea,  
With a voice as big as the sea.

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king,  
Do you know what I know?  
In your palace warm, mighty king,  
Do you know what I know?  
A Child, a Child, shivers in the cold;  
Let us bring Him silver and gold,  
Let us bring Him silver and gold.

Said the king to the people everywhere,  
Listen to what I say;  
Pray for peace, people everywhere!  
Listen to what I say;  
The Child, the Child, sleeping in the night;  
He will bring us goodness and light,  
He will bring us goodness and light.

That song asks three questions: *Do you see what I see? Do you hear what I hear? Do you know what I know?* Then, it makes one imperative: *Listen to what I say.* This morning, I want you to listen to what I say because I'm going to tell you what God's word says. It is that first question, however, that I am going to borrow as the title for today's message: "Do You See What I See?" That word *see* shows up a couple of times in our text—Hebrews 2:5-9. Our text tells us what we don't see, what we do see, and makes clear what we will see. It is those three things that we will look at today.

### **What We Don't See Is God's Intention for Us**

In the verses preceding our text, the author of Hebrews had been showing that Jesus is superior to the angels. He goes on to say in v. 5 that God has not subjected the world to come to angels. In other words, there is a Kingdom coming, and it won't be governed by angels. The New Living Translation renders this verse, "The future world we are talking about will not be controlled by angels."

That causes us to wonder, "Well, who will be in charge of this new world that is coming?" The author of Hebrews doesn't leave us in suspense. He tells us, but he doesn't give us the answer we expect. We think he is going to say, "Jesus is going to be in charge," but he doesn't.

Look at how he begins v. 6. One of the curious habits of the author of this letter is that whenever he quotes from the OT, he doesn't specify who wrote the book he is quoting. For instance, in chapter 1:5-14, we find seven quotations from the OT. Five of those seven come from Psalms, one from 2 Samuel, and one from Deuteronomy. At no time does the author say, "This is what David or the psalmist tells us." Nor does he ever write, "This is what the prophet so-and-so said." Nor does he say, "This is what Moses wrote."

When he writes in v. 6, "It has been testified somewhere," he knows good and well that what he is about to write came from Psalm 8, a psalm of David, but he doesn't write that because his focus is on what God's word says not who wrote it down.

Psalm 8 reminds us that when go outside on a clear night and look up into the sky and

see the starry host, we get a sense of our smallness, and yet God has given us a big task. I love the way Eugene Peterson paraphrased Psalm 8. Listen to a portion of the psalm from *The Message Bible*:

- 3-4 I look up at your macro-skies, dark and enormous,  
your handmade sky-jewelry,  
Moon and stars mounted in their settings.  
Then I look at my micro-self and wonder,  
Why do you bother with us?  
Why take a second look our way?
- 5-8 Yet we've so narrowly missed being gods,  
bright with Eden's dawn light.  
You put us in charge of your handcrafted world,  
repeated to us your Genesis-charge,  
Made us stewards of sheep and cattle,  
even animals out in the wild,  
Birds flying and fish swimming,  
whales singing in the ocean deeps.

God placed us you and I here as managers and caretakers of His creation. That is the charge he gave to Adam and Eve before they sinned against Him. Nowhere does it say in this Book that God took back that assignment.

Pastor David Dykes observed that in 1968 when Apollo 8 circled the moon without landing, the astronauts aboard took turns reading the creation story from Genesis 1:1-10. After that mission, the famous atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair sued NASA for having violated the First Amendment.

Remembering that, when Apollo 11 landed on the moon, Astronaut Buzz Aldrin (not Buzz Lightyear but Buzz Aldrin) celebrated communion and read scripture, but he did it under radio silence. He had smuggled onto the lunar lander a small communion set, and he read from John 15:5 and Psalm 8. Some of the first words spoken on the moon after they said, "The Eagle has landed" were words from the Bible. Buzz had them written down on a small card. He read, "Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in Him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without Me." Then he read, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man, that Thou visitest Him?" Then, after they walked on the moon and collected 47 pounds of lunar rocks, they left a capsule on the surface of the moon that contained the text from Psalm 8. So, whenever you look at the moon, you can smile knowing that the words from Psalm 8 are on the surface of the moon.

The verses that Buzz Aldrin read remind us that we are nothing and we can do nothing without Jesus. That took both humility and courage for Aldrin to do that. This was a heady moment. Man had just landed on the moon for the very first time, but Buzz Aldrin says in effect, "Hey, guys, remember, we are here by the grace of God not because we are special in and of ourselves."

The end of verse 8 does two things, First, it summarizes the enormous authority we

were given. Second, it affirms that we haven't realized and achieved what God gave us. In other words, we haven't been in full control. The *him* in v. 8 is not referring to Jesus; it refers to man—you and I.

Whether or not you believe in global warming, you can't deny that man has harmed this Earth of which we're supposed to be caretakers. Pollution can't be denied. Deforestation is real. Listen to what Pastor Kent Hughes wrote:

Man's rule over creation has through the centuries become an ecological disaster. His reign over the animal world is superficial. He achieves it by intimidation: "Obey me, or I'll eat you or wear you!" And sometimes he himself is the feast. The problem is, he cannot rule over himself, let alone others. And the dictum "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" is lived out before the eyes of every generation . . . Chesterton was right: "Whatever else is true about man, this one thing is certain—man is not what he was meant to be."

We do not yet see God's original intention for man being realized. We are not the true masters of this world. Instead, we have been mastered by our sin nature.

We will return to God's original intention later in this message. After telling us what we don't see, the author of Hebrews then tells us what we do see.

### **What We Do See Is Jesus' Complete Victory**

Look at 2:9. This is the first time the name *Jesus* is used in Hebrews. Up until now, He is only referred to as *the Son*, but now, His name is emphasized. It is Jesus who is crowned with glory and honor. The author makes clear that it is because of Jesus' suffering and death that He has been exalted by God. He humbled Himself by taking upon Himself human flesh. Jesus stooped down to our level when He became man, but after He died for us and was raised, He took His rightful place upon the throne. He is Lord over all.

The name Jesus shows up 15 times in Hebrews. I want you to notice the last two occurrences of the name. They are found in a prayer of benediction in the last chapter of the letter. Look at Hebrews 13:20-21. It is through Jesus that you and I will be equipped with every good thing we need to do God's will. Do you need help doing God's will? Do you need help in living a life that is pleasing to God? That help is found in Jesus. He is the Shepherd of God's sheep, and He is the One who is to be glorified forever and ever.

I want you to notice the ending of 2:9. After mentioning the suffering and death of Jesus, the author adds, "so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone." The author makes clear the motivation for the action and just what the action was.

Let's look first at what the action was, i.e., what Jesus did. Jesus tasted death for everyone. We use the word *taste* quite differently than did a first century, Jewish man. When we taste something, we nibble it. We sample it. Professional wine tasters swish the wine around in their mouth and spit it out. When I taste wine, I also want to spit it out, but that is only because I think all wine tastes nasty.

Death, however, is not something that you can nibble. It is not something that you can sample. Death is something you experience. When you die, you die. Jesus experienced

death for us all. According to 1 Corinthians 15:56, “The sting of death is sin.” When Jesus died, He took upon Himself the sting of our sin. When a bee stings you, it can only sting you once, and when it does, it loses its stinger. Death stung Jesus with sin, and when it did, it lost its stinger. Jesus removed the stinger from death when He died to pay the penalty of sin. Through His death, He has removed our sin and de-clawed death so to speak.

We call 1 Corinthians 15 the Resurrection Chapter. It speaks of Jesus’ resurrection three days after His death. It goes on to teach about our eventual resurrection when Jesus comes back to this earth. Paul tells us that when that happens, “Then shall come to pass the saying that is written: death is swallowed up in victory.” (1 Cor. 15:54). Because Jesus tasted death, He is able to swallow it up and gain the victory.

Here we see the motivation of grace. By His grace and for our sake, Jesus shares the victory he won. We are victors in Him. Paul loves that phrase “in Him” or “in Christ.” He uses that phrase 169 in the 13 letters he wrote that appear in our NT. Because Jesus is the Victor, we are victors in Him.

Let me tell you about a man named Festo Kivengere. He was called the Billy Graham of Uganda. He was a leader of the Anglican Church in Uganda during the time that Idi Amin was the dictator there. It is estimated that under Amin’s bloody reign, as many as 500,000 people were killed, and religious leaders were among the many groups that were targeted. Festo Kivengere and his family fled Uganda, and only returned after Idi Amin had been removed from power. In 1973, three men from his diocese were to be executed by a firing squad. I want you to pay attention to a story Kivengere told about what happened:

February 10<sup>th</sup> began as a sad day for us in Kabale. People were commanded to come to the stadium and witness the execution. Death permeated the atmosphere. A silent crowd of about three thousand was there to watch. I had permission from the authorities to speak to the men before they died, and two of my fellow ministers were with me.

They brought the men in a truck and unloaded them. They were handcuffed and their feet were chained. The firing squad stood at attention. As we walked into the center of the stadium, I was wondering what to say. How do you give the gospel to doomed men who are probably seething with rage?

We approached them from behind, and as they turned to look at us, what a sight! Their faces were all alight with an unmistakable glow and radiance.

Before we could say anything, one of them burst out: “Bishop, thank you for coming! I wanted to tell you. The day I was arrested, in my prison cell, I asked the Lord Jesus to come into my heart. He came in and forgave me all my sins! Heaven is now open, and there is nothing between me and my God! Please tell my wife and children that I am going to be with Jesus. Ask them to accept him into their lives as I did.” The other two men told similar stories, excitedly raising their hands which rattled their handcuffs.

I felt that what I needed to do was to talk to the soldiers, not to the condemned. So, I translated what the men had said into a language the soldiers understood. The military men were standing there with guns cocked and bewilderment on their

faces. They were so dumbfounded that they forgot to put the hoods over the men's faces! The three faced the firing squad standing close together. They looked toward the people and began to wave, handcuffs and all. The people waved back. Then shots were fired, and the three were with Jesus.

We stood in front of them, our own hearts throbbing with joy, mingled with tears. It was a day never to be forgotten. Though dead, the men spoke loudly to all of Kigezi District and beyond, so that there was an upsurge of life in Christ, which challenges death and defeats it.

The next Sunday, I was preaching to a huge crowd in the hometown of one of the executed men. Again, the feel of death was over the congregation. But when I gave them the testimony of their man, and how he died, there erupted a great song of praise to Jesus! Many turned to the Lord there.

Even in the face of death, and especially during such times, Jesus the Victor gives victory to those who are His. That leads us to a final truth. We noted what we did not see, what we did see, and finally . . .

### **What We Will See Is Our Full Restoration**

We were supposed to rule over this creation. That was the job God gave to us. Because of our waywardness and our rebellion against God, His intention for us has not yet been realized.

We believe, however, that God not only fixes our past, He also perfects our future. In other words, in addition to doing the work of redemption, God will also bring about restoration. God's initial intention for man will ultimately come to pass.

At each stage of creation, God looked at what He made and called it *good*. When He finally completed His creation, He stepped back, surveyed all He had done, and concluded, "It is very good."

Mankind, however, marred God's creation. When we fell, all creation fell with us. The Bible teaches that when Jesus comes back, He will recreate this world. God will undo what we have done by redoing what He first did. This world will once again become a perfect place, and we who are His will become a perfect people. The Bible teaches that we will spend eternity with God not out there, up there somewhere in a place called heaven. No, heaven will come down here to a recreated earth (Revelation 21:1-3).

Saved humanity will share in ruling this new earth. We read in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we will also reign with Him." Paul asks a question in 1 Cor. 6:1, "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?" The NT makes clear that a saint is a Christian, not some special class of Christian. If you are a believer in Jesus, you are a saint.

Revelation is comprised of visions that John the Apostle was given. We read in Revelation 20:4-5, "Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed . . . They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

In the Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The final beatitude is, "Blessed are the persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The third beatitude reads, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” When you are given something, it is up to you to take care of it.

In the world to come, God will restore to us what our first parents lost.

Earlier, I told you about Festo Kivengere, the Ugandan Billy Graham. He was known as a great storyteller. Listen to one of his favorite stories:

One day a little girl sat watching her mother working in the kitchen. She asked her mummy, “What does God do all day long?” For a while the mother was stumped, but then she said, “Darling, I’ll tell you what God does all day long. He spends His whole day mending broken things.”

God does indeed mend broken things—broken hearts, broken families, broken, dreams, and broken people. God is intent on mending whatever in your life is broken. Trust Him to do that very thing. The good news is that He will restore to you that which sin has taken, and He will mend for you that which sin has broken.