

***REDISCOVER JESUS, PART 42: “BEWARE AND BEHOLD”***  
**LUKE 11:29-36**  
**Ps. Eric Yee**

## **Personal Introduction**

Hi everyone. If you don't know me, my name is Eric and I'm a pastor at HMCC of Jakarta, and it's my privilege to preach the Word of God to us today.

## **Sermon Series Introduction**

We're currently in Part 42 of our sermon series called "Rediscover Jesus," where we're going through the Gospel of Luke together.

So let's get right into today's sermon: "Beware and Behold."

## **Sermon Introduction**

Jim Rohn, an American entrepreneur, once said this:

The two great words of antiquity are behold and beware. Behold the possibilities and beware the temptations.

I wonder, what comes to your mind when you hear this quote?

- Perhaps we're thinking, "Behold business opportunities and beware of possible loss."
- Or maybe, "Behold your potential and beware of not living up to that potential."
- Or possibly, "Behold all this world has to offer and beware of missing out."

But as we look to God's Word today, we'll see that it has something to say that is much more significant with much longer lasting implications for us regarding what we ought to *beware* and what we ought to *behold*.

## **The One Thing**

***Beware of cynicism towards Jesus  
and behold him to be full of light.***

## **Scripture Introduction**

Turn your Bibles to Luke 11:29-36.

Just want to give a bit of context before jumping into today's passage.

In the passage immediately before this, Jesus cast out a demon from a man who was mute, so that he is now speaking again. Nobody was denying that a miracle had occurred, and the people marveled. But there were two groups of people who did *not* respond well to Jesus; we can call them the "slandering accusers" and the "insatiable [or I'll never be satisfied] cynics."

The "slandering accusers" were the religious authorities who were saying that it's only by the power of Satan—"the prince of demons"—that Jesus is able to cast out demons so effectively.

In response, Jesus exposed their flawed and inconsistent logic, and then explained the nature of two opposing kingdoms, and whether a person belongs to the kingdom of *Satan* or the kingdom of *God* depends entirely on how a person responds to *him*—the *King* of the kingdom of God. And Jesus ends by saying that “those who hear the word of God [that is, *his* word] and keep it” are blessed.

And so, in last week’s passage, Jesus primarily addressed the “slandering accusers,” but in today’s passage, we’ll see Jesus now turns his attention to address the “insatiable cynics.”

So that’s where we are in the text.

## **Scripture Reading**

Let’s read Luke 11:29-36.

<sup>29</sup> When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. <sup>30</sup> For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. <sup>31</sup> The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

<sup>33</sup> “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. <sup>34</sup> Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. <sup>35</sup> Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. <sup>36</sup> If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.”

This is God’s Word.

## **Overview**

We’ll look at this passage in two parts.

- I. Beware of cynicism towards Jesus (vv. 29-32)
- II. Behold Jesus to be full of light (vv. 33-36)

### **I. Beware of cynicism towards Jesus (vv. 29-32)**

Verse 29 says this:

<sup>29</sup> When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, “This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.

Earlier in verse 16, it says that there were “others,” who “to *test* [Jesus], *kept* seeking from him a sign from heaven.” These were the “insatiable cynics.” They had literally *just* witnessed Jesus cast out a demon from a mute man so that he could speak again right before their very eyes, and nobody was denying that it was a miracle. But it wasn’t good enough for them; they weren’t satisfied. They wanted *another* miraculous sign from Jesus.

And apparently, *after* Jesus addressed the slanderous accusations of the religious authorities, the crowd is now increasing with *cynics*. Perhaps they got more vocal about their cynicism towards Jesus, or perhaps Jesus just knew their thoughts as more people joined the crowd (cf. Luke 11:17).

Regardless, Jesus says something *shocking* to them. He calls them an “evil generation.” *Why* are they an evil generation? Because “it seeks [or *keeps* seeking] for a sign.” No matter how many signs they witness, they’re never satisfied; they *keep* asking for more signs.

And Jesus calls that “evil.” It’s a *wicked* thing to deny who Jesus is and to distrust his word—and then place all the blame for their unbelief on *Jesus*, saying that he just didn’t prove himself enough.

This is reminiscent of the *wilderness* generation in the Old Testament, who had experienced so many signs from God. God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt through sending ten plagues, splitting the Red Sea, providing manna from heaven and water from a rock, and leading them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And yet, despite *all* the miraculous signs the wilderness generation was given, they were still *so* stubborn and cynical towards God. After *all* the miraculous signs that they experienced, they constantly blamed God for *not* doing enough and they just would *not believe* that God is who he says he is and that his word is trustworthy.

And so, Jesus says that he will *not* give a miraculous sign to *that* kind of “evil generation,” who will never be satisfied no matter how many signs that he gives.

Rather, the only sign they will receive is “the sign of Jonah.” And what exactly is “the sign of Jonah”?

Verse 30 says this:

<sup>30</sup> For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

For context, Jonah was an Old Testament prophet that God sent to go to Nineveh, which was an important city of the Assyrian empire.

But given that they were *enemies* of Israel, Jonah gets on a ship and goes in the complete opposite direction. God sends a violent storm upon the ship, the sailors realize that Jonah’s disobedience to God is the reason for it, and so they reluctantly throw Jonah into the sea and the storm immediately stops. As Jonah is drowning in the sea, God sends a fish to swallow him whole, which saves his life. He stays in the belly of the fish for three days, where he repents and declares that “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” The fish spits him out on land, and then Jonah goes to Nineveh to preach that judgment is coming. The Ninevites *believe* Jonah, they call a nationwide fast of *repentance*, and the Lord *withholds* his judgment upon them.

Now with that said, what is “the sign of Jonah”? It says, “Jonah *became* a sign,” so the sign *was* Jonah—or rather what *happened* to Jonah.

The New Living Translation translates this verse as “What happened to him [that is, Jonah] was a sign to the people of Nineveh that God had sent him. What happens to the Son of Man will be a sign to these people that he was sent by God.”

Remember, signs *validate* a person and his teaching. So here, the fact that Jonah was swallowed by a fish for three days and somehow came out alive was meant to be a sign to *validate* to the Ninevites that Jonah was a *legitimate* prophet and that they should *believe* his word.

Likewise, Jesus will go through something *similar* to Jonah, which will *validate* to the *world* that he is who he says he is and that they should believe his Word. And what exactly is that “sign” that will happen to Jesus?

The parallel in Matthew’s Gospel account makes it clear, saying: “For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40).

Just as Jonah’s emergence from the belly of a fish after three days *validated* that he is a prophet and that his message of judgment is true, so Jesus’ emergence from the grave after three days will *validate* that he is the Son of Man and that his message of salvation is true.

The “Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite designation for himself, and it points back to the “son of man” in the prophet Daniel’s vision to whom is “given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him,” where “his dominion is an everlasting dominion” (Dan. 7:13-14). In other words, the Son of Man is the King in the kingdom of God.

And so, the ultimate validation that Jesus is the King in the kingdom of God will be in his death, burial, and *resurrection*. In fact, Scripture puts *everything* on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, saying “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins” and “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:17-18). Basically, if Christ has *not* been raised, then don’t believe a word that he said. But if Christ *has* been raised, then you *must* believe *everything* he said.

Unfortunately, for many of the “evil generation” of Jesus’ day, their cynicism towards him led them to *crucify* him. And even when he *did* resurrect from the grave, it *still* wasn’t enough for them—but they remained in their unbelieving, insatiable cynicism towards him.

Jesus knows their cynical hearts, and so, he gives them two “how much more” examples to help them to see just *how wicked* they are.

Verses 31-32 say this:

<sup>31</sup> The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

For context, King Solomon had asked God for wisdom to lead his people, and God gave him incomparable wisdom unlike anyone before or after him (1 Kings 3:12). Solomon’s wisdom became *so* well-known that “the queen of the South” or the queen of Sheba (which corresponds to modern-day Yemen and Ethiopia) heard of it, and so she traveled to Jerusalem “from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.”

In fact, in 1 Kings 10, it says that “she came to *test* him with hard questions” (1 Kings 10:1). But she was *not* an insatiable *cynic*, but an honest *skeptic*.

After she had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, it says this in...

1 Kings 10:6-9a = And she said to the king, “The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel!”

In other words, once she *saw* the evidence and *heard* the wisdom herself, she was *convinced* and more than *satisfied*—and she began to spontaneously *praise the LORD* for setting Solomon as king over Israel.

We already gave the context for the “men of Nineveh” and Jonah, but there are some other details we should know about them.

[<sup>31</sup> The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. <sup>32</sup> The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.]

Regarding the Assyrians, not only were they a pagan nation who didn’t worship the one true God, but they were also notorious for their utter brutality. Whenever they would conquer a nation, they treated their prisoners with such cruelty. They would cut off legs and arms, noses and tongues, ears and testicles; they would gouge out eyes; and they would burn people alive. If there was ever a people and generation to call “evil,” it was the Assyrians.

And regarding Jonah, he was probably the most half-hearted preacher there ever was. Jonah resented the Assyrians and his message was so curt and lazy and dispassionate; he simply went around saying, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And when the Ninevites *surprisingly believed* his message

and repented, “it *displeased* Jonah exceedingly and he was *angry*” (Jonah 4:1). He wasn’t exactly the kind of prophet that you’d think would be very effective.

Now why is Jesus bringing up these two examples? He’s *contrasting how much more* privileged the Jews in that “evil generation” are compared to these pagan Gentiles (or non-Jews), yet somehow, his *own* Jewish people *fail* to believe and repent as the Gentiles did.

The queen of the South traveled “from the ends of the earth” to come hear the wisdom of King Solomon, but King Jesus—the King of the kingdom of God and the wisdom of God himself (1 Cor. 1:24)—came from heaven to earth and is right in front of them. Yet they do *not* praise him.

The men of Nineveh heard the most half-hearted, lazy preaching from an unmerciful prophet and they didn’t even personally witness the sign of Jonah but only heard of it, but the Jews have just heard the most passionate pleading to choose the kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan from not only a prophet but from the Word of God incarnate, and they literally just witnessed an undeniable miraculous sign right before their eyes. Yet they do *not* repent.

Not only that, but the Jews had access to great spiritual privileges and advantages that the Gentiles did *not* have.

- The Jews had the entire Old Testament Scriptures, which the religious authorities devoted themselves to study;
- they had the entire sacrificial system, which reminded them regularly of their sins that need to be forgiven;
- they were expecting a Messiah King to come, who would come with accompanying signs that Jesus was doing and fulfilling in unprecedented ways;
- they had the person of Jesus and the preaching of Jesus and the signs of Jesus right in front of them and none could deny his power and authority throughout his ministry.

And Jesus gave *no shortage* of signs to them. In fact, thus far in Luke’s Gospel account, Jesus has cast out demons, healed the sick, cleansed a leper, enabled a paralyzed man to walk, restored a man with a withered hand, raised a dead son back to life, calmed a storm, healed a woman who was bleeding for 12 years, raised a dead daughter back to life, fed the five thousand, and so forth—and that’s only what’s *recorded*.

At the end of John’s Gospel account, he writes, “Now there are also many *other* things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25).

All that to say is that Jesus did a LOT of signs, but it was never enough for the cynics. At the end of the day, it wasn’t about the signs. No matter how much they tried to convince themselves that *that* was the issue, at the end of the day, it was really a matter of their *hearts*—they just didn’t *want* to believe Jesus.

And therefore, Jesus basically says to them, “If these Gentiles responded with praise and repentance even though they received so much *less* than what you have received, then *how much more* deserving of judgment are you in this evil generation! And not only that, but these *Gentile* believers will be the ones to condemn you on the final day of judgment.”

I’m sure that comparison *outraged* the Jewish listeners. How could Jesus be comparing them to *Gentiles*, especially those as brutal and wicked as the Ninevite Assyrians? How could Jesus be saying that those *Gentiles* will stand in judgment of *them* on the last day, when they’ve always thought that it would be the other way around? These were *shocking* words that Jesus had for his fellow Jews.

But it doesn’t seem like it makes them stop to think, “Wait, Jesus is giving a really sharp and alarming rebuke to us right now; we should consider the contrast that he is making and reconsider how we have responded to him.” Rather, as we see throughout the rest of the Gospel accounts, *sadly*, they get angrier and angrier, and eventually they have Jesus arrested and crucified.

Now let’s stop to think about all this for *ourselves*.

- We live on the other side of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- We have the entire New Testament Scriptures and the testimony of over 2000 years of church history from the saints that have gone before us.
- We have multiple translations of the Bible and endless commentaries to help us understand God's Word—all at our fingertips.
- We have audio Bibles, sermon podcasts, sermon manuscripts, numerous missionary biographies, and countless articles and books from great Christian ministries.
- We have our brothers and sisters around us who care for us and continue to help us in seeing the love and worthiness of Christ.

We live in a generation of unprecedented access to spiritual privileges and advantages. And so, this is also a warning to *all* of us, especially as we're here today listening to God's Word in the midst of all these privileges.

It's *not* simply a matter of your spiritual environment, but the crucial question is: Are you seeing and responding to Jesus as you ought?

How do you know if that's the case? Begin to ask yourself other related questions:

- Do I abhor my sin as I see the holiness of Christ?
- Do I believe that apart from his perfect life, death, and resurrection on my behalf, I would be left condemned in my sin?
- Do I embrace Christ more than anything else in this world?
- Do I long to follow Jesus more than myself or the patterns of this world?
- Is Jesus my ultimate filter for how I see myself, others, this life, and the world to come?

When we understand that *those* are the questions that *faith* in Jesus *demand*s of us, we're beginning to see why many people do *not want* to believe in Jesus. Cynics are *not* those who don't have enough evidence, but those who do *not want* to believe *despite* the evidence.

If you're *not* a believer in Jesus Christ, how much of your unbelief is because you've examined all the evidence for Christ's *resurrection*, which is the greatest sign that *validates* who Jesus is and all that he taught—and you've discussed it with other believers, and you're honestly *not* convinced? And how much of your unbelief is simply because you don't *want* to surrender your whole life to Jesus even if he really is who he says he is?

And if you're *already* a believer in Jesus Christ, it's easy to look at all that the Jews heard and witnessed from Jesus, and think to yourself, "What's wrong with *them*?"

But just think about the *ramifications* of what Jesus was saying—and what that means for a person. Jesus taught that *he* is the King in the kingdom of God, and he said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

So to *believe* Jesus is a call to die to yourself as king over your own life and to live in complete allegiance to him as King, trusting that *he* is *sovereign* and *good*.

And no matter what kind of access to spiritual privileges we've had concerning God's Word, God's church, or miraculous signs, *none* of us *wants* to give up our *own sovereignty* and our *own* definitions of what is *good* in our lives.

And in that sense, as *sinner*s, we're *all* naturally *cynics*. We don't *want* to believe Jesus—at least *not* in areas that challenge what we think about ourselves.

We want a King that constantly affirms us, who says that there's nothing wrong with us and that all will be well if we just keep doing whatever we want to do. But as soon as he begins to tell us otherwise, our cynicism rises to the surface.

This generation says, "you live your own truth," and that's all that matters. But God says that, as sinners, we all "suppress the truth" and "exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (Rom. 1:18, 25).

For anyone who has ever been lied to, tell me how satisfied you would be if the one who lied to you said to you, “I didn’t lie to you; I was just living *my* truth.”

If God made the heavens and the earth and everything in it, including us, then he is the only rightful one to establish the laws that govern the day and night, and he is the only rightful one to establish the laws that govern our lives.

Our “truth” leads us to oppression and eternal death, but *God’s* truth—the *only* truth that truly exists—leads us to freedom and eternal life, for Jesus says, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

This generation says, “just follow your heart” and “love is love” because what’s most important is just doing whatever makes you happy. But God says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9), and “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10 NIV).

Love is not about indulging our self-centered desires, but it is about imitating the self-sacrificing, self-denying love of Jesus Christ who laid down his life to sanctify his bride—and finding our greatest happiness in his love for us.

This generation says, “you do you.” But God says, “put off the *old* self with its practices” and “put on the *new* self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col. 3:9-10).

In Christ, our motto is *not* “you do you,” but “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Now, you may affirm all of what God says here, but ...

- What do you feel when you’re struggling through suffering after suffering, and you’re convinced that nobody cares about you and that the best thing to do is to just pull away?
- What do you feel when you’re struggling with singleness and there is no spousal prospect in sight?
- What do you feel when you struggle with same-sex attraction, and you see all your friends around you getting married and you feel deprived of such intimacy?

These are times when we can feel our *cynicism* rising to the surface because these are times when we are *challenged* to the *core* of who is *truly* the King of our lives—*ourselves* or *Jesus*. These are times when we don’t *want* to believe him because following him is just *too hard*.

Sam Allberry, a pastor who struggles with same-sex attraction and author of the book *Is God anti-gay?* writes this:

Every Christian is called to costly sacrifice. Denying yourself does not mean tweaking your behavior here and there. It is saying “*no*” to your deepest sense of who you are, for the sake of Christ. To take up a cross is to declare your life (as you have known it) forfeit. It is laying down your life for the very reason that your life, it turns out, is not yours at all. It belongs to Jesus. He made it. And through his death he has bought it.

Ever since I have been open about my own experiences of homosexuality, a number of Christians have said something like this: “*The gospel must be harder for you than it is for me,*” as though I have more to give up than they do. But the fact is that the gospel demands *everything of all of us*. If someone thinks the gospel has somehow slotted into their life quite easily, without causing any major adjustments to their lifestyle or aspirations, it is likely that they have not really started following Jesus at all.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sam Allberry, *Is God anti-gay?* (Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2019), 7, Kindle.

We may *not* be asking Jesus for more and more signs, but perhaps we're constantly looking for *loopholes* to *not really* follow him. Like the Jews of Jesus' day, perhaps we want to belong to the kingdom of God *without* praising him as our unqualified King and *without* true repentance that demands our whole lives.

No matter how covered in spiritual language it may be, that's *cynicism* towards Jesus because it's *still* a *refusal* to believe who Jesus *really* is, and instead, only receiving him as someone *less* than King over our lives—perhaps just a miracle worker.

And Jesus simply won't allow for that.

Now if this first part describes the *wrong* response towards Jesus—cynicism towards him that deserves judgment—then the second part describes the *right* response towards Jesus—beholding him (or seeing him as we ought) in order to be full of light ourselves. It's the “so what?” alternative to cynicism.

So first, beware of cynicism towards Jesus; and second...

## **II. Behold Jesus to be full of light (vv. 33-36)**

Verse 33 says this:

<sup>33</sup> “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.

Here, Jesus gives a general principle that everyone would have agreed with.

In the first century, there was no electricity, so in the deep darkness of night, if you wanted to see, you would light a lamp. This was *not* a light bulb, but it was essentially an open *flame* fueled by oil, like a candle.

But after lighting the lamp, no one in their right mind would then hide it in a cellar (or in a room below the house) or under a basket, which would *extinguish* the flame.

No, if you want the lamp to provide maximum light in the room, you will set it high on a lampstand. That's the only thing that makes sense to do with a lamp. You wouldn't light the lamp for any other purpose except to give light for all to see.

So why is Jesus bringing this up?

In the previous examples of the wisdom of Solomon and the preaching of Jonah, they were in reference to how the people responded to those people and particularly their *word*—and then he ended with saying, “and behold, something greater than [Solomon and Jonah] is here.”

So here, Jesus is referring to *himself* and *his* word. *Jesus* and particularly his *teaching* is the lamp that's meant to be put on a lampstand—it's meant to be *revealed* for *all* to see—but the slanderers and cynics are trying to hide his word in a cellar or put it under a basket, so that *no one* will see.

Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12), but they simply don't *want* to see the light. Or as the apostle John writes, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world... He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:9, 11), and “the light has come into the world, and the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” (John 3:19).

The reality is that, as sinners, we *all* naturally love the *darkness* more than the *light*. When you're lying in bed in the dark of night, and suddenly someone turns on the light in the room, most of our automatic responses will be to close our eyes even tighter and say, “Turn off the light!”

Why is that? Because in those moments, we love darkness more than light. Our eyes get accustomed to darkness, and in that moment, you could even say that our eyes “hate” the light. We close our eyes *tighter*, and we want the light *extinguished*.



That's the natural response of all sinners towards Jesus and his word. Again, we're all natural cynics towards Jesus because we're all accustomed to the darkness. Our eyes have adjusted to the values of this world and seeing ourselves as king over our own lives; we don't *want* the true light of the world to expose the falseness of those values and lead us to surrender our lives to the true King.

So in a sense, though the true light is here in the person and word of King Jesus, we all have a tendency to keep our eyes closed.

Verse 34 then says this:

<sup>34</sup> Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness.

Here, Jesus now talks about the *effect* of seeing and receiving—or the consequences of *not* seeing and receiving—the light of Jesus and his word.

This analogy actually doesn't make sense *physically* because your eye is *not* a *literal* lamp; it does *not* emanate any light. The only thing about your eye that's related to light is that it *receives* light from outside itself; and as the light enters your eye, your eye enables you to see. But the light that enters your eye does *not literally* make your whole body full of light, as if you're *physically* glowing.

So this analogy only makes sense *spiritually*. Jesus and his word are the external light, and when your *spiritual* eye is "healthy" to be able to see and receive the truth of who Jesus is and what his word means, then it completely transforms you from the inside out ("your whole body is full of light").

But when your *spiritual* eye is "bad," and you cannot see and receive the truth of who Jesus is and what his word means, then you remain in the *darkness*. It could be the sunniest and brightest day, but *no light* is coming in, and therefore you remain unchanged inside ("your body is full of darkness").

Jesus came to turn our darkness into light—to completely transform our lives from the inside out—so that we would be "full of light."

But Scripture says that "the god of this world [that is, Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4).

In other words, we see who Jesus truly is in "the light of the *gospel* of the glory of Christ." And Satan will do everything he can to *blind* people to that.

The gospel is that God created us in his image to gloriously reflect and radiate his light in his perfect creation, but we loved the darkness more than the light, and we chose to sin against him—to reject the true light of our Creator. And so, we rightfully deserve to be kept in the darkness of our sin and to ultimately experience the eternal darkness and separation from the light of God in hell. But in love, God came in the person of Jesus Christ to be our substitute—to perfectly live in the light, to experience the utter darkness of separation from the Father that we deserve for our sins on the cross in our place, and to resurrect, so that all who repent of their sins and believe in him—who *turn away* from darkness and *behold* the light of Christ as their Lord and Savior—can be completely forgiven their sins and progressively transformed from being "full of darkness" to being "full of light."

If you're *not* a believer in Jesus Christ, this is the good news of Jesus Christ that Satan would love to blind your spiritual eyes from seeing and receiving. But "God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' [can shine] in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). And I pray that he would do that in you today—that he would give you spiritual eyes to recognize who Jesus is and what his word means, and that you would respond with praise, repentance, and faith in him as your only Lord and Savior.

If you're already a believer of Jesus Christ, seeing Jesus for who he is through his word is *not* just a *one-time* thing, but it's the *entire* Christian life.

Scripture says that “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18). Once you’ve seen Jesus in the truth of the gospel, you can never *unsee* him. You don’t close your eyes to him, but you do all you can to keep your eyes *wide open* to him—you *behold* him. And as you do, you become transformed more and more into the image of Christ; more and more, “your whole body is full of light.”

Verse 35 then says this:

<sup>35</sup> Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.

Here, Jesus says “therefore” to give us his conclusion or “so what?” to everything he has said. In light of Jesus and his word being the lamp that is revealed for all to see, and in light of the necessity of having spiritual eyes to see and receive Jesus and his word rightly in order to be transformed from the inside out, “therefore *be careful* lest the light in you be darkness.”

The “light” here should be read with quotation marks because if the “light” in you is darkness, then it’s really *not* light at all.

The New Living Translation translates this verse as “Make sure that the light you *think* you have is not actually darkness.”

And that basically describes the slanderers and cynics in the crowd. They *think* they’re part of the kingdom of *God*, but they’re really part of the kingdom of *Satan*. They accused the Son of God to be a son of Satan. Even when a miraculous sign that nobody was denying was performed right before their eyes, it wasn’t enough for them. Even when the Messiah King and the Word incarnate is right in front of them, they can’t see who he is and they reject his teaching.

They were totally spiritually blind, but they proudly *thought* that they could see. They *thought* the light was in them, but it was really darkness.

So this is a warning for all of us: Don’t assume that you see rightly.

If you’re a believer in Jesus Christ, you’re *not* spiritually blind, but even though you may have spiritual sight, it’s *not* exactly 20/20.

Scripture says, “For *now* we see through a glass, darkly; but *then* face to face: *now* I know in part; but *then* shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12 KJV).

On this side of eternity, we see Jesus but it’s still distorted as looking through a glass; only when we pass into the world to come will we see him face-to-face perfectly without distortion.

That means that *none* of us sees Jesus perfectly, and therefore, we need the help of our brothers and sisters in Christ to see him more and more clearly.

We all have a tendency to fashion for ourselves an idol version of Jesus that is more to our liking than the true Jesus that we see in Scripture. We tend to truncate Scripture to affirm our version of Jesus, avoiding passages that we don’t like or don’t know what to do with.

And so, God ordained that churches should read the Word, preach the Word, sing the Word, pray the Word, and see the Word in the ordinances. In other words, Word-centered churches are God’s means to enable us to see Jesus more clearly.

And so, in our preaching, we strive to be *expositional*, where the point of the sermon is the point of the text, applied to the life of the congregation, and where Jesus and his gospel are clearly seen in every text (Luke 24:27, 44-47; John 5:39, 46; Acts 17:2-3). We want to *expose*—or make *clear*—what God’s Word has to say, and we allow God’s Word to shape how we see Jesus.

In our LIFE Groups, the center of the community is discussing Scripture *inductively*, where we go through the process of observation, interpretation, and application—or “what does the text say?”, “what does the text mean?”, and “how do I need to respond to the text (in a personal, tangible, and immediate way)?”

In our discipling relationships with one another, where we’re intentionally helping one another to follow Jesus, we don’t just give our own advice or experience, but we help each other understand and apply *God’s Word* in our everyday lives. We *need* one another to see the blind spots and distortions that all of us inevitably have as sinners on this side of eternity.

In *every* part of our life together as a church, we go back to the Word of God as our anchor for how we see Jesus, and thus how we follow him as our King.

Remember, Satan is constantly trying to blind us from seeing “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.” And our own sinful flesh and the world constantly work against us from seeing rightly. So if we’re *not* intentionally about beholding Jesus through his Word, then we’re likely being more and more blinded in our vision.

Verse 36 then says this:

<sup>36</sup> If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.”

This is describing the *ideal* state. It’s when your whole body is completely full of light, with no darkness whatsoever, so every part of your inner being is light. You will be “wholly [or completely] bright,” so that you will be shining like crazy.

And that’s the way that it should be—that you were created to be. When Jesus, the lamp, is filling you to the brim with the rays of his light, *this* should happen. This is describing our *glorification*, when we will be completely without darkness or sin, but we will be who we truly are in Christ—shining in the light of his glory.

God’s Word says that, in the new heavens and new earth, there is “no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its *lamp* is the *Lamb*” (Rev. 21:23). There, we will no longer be looking through a glass, darkly, but we will see our Lord and Savior face-to-face perfectly without distortion.

We’re *not* there yet, but we’re progressively moving in that direction as we continue to behold him through his Word. We see Jesus more clearly for who he is, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do, as we *behold* him in his *Word*.

And as those beholding the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ, we’re getting brighter and brighter, reflecting more accurately the light of our Savior amidst the darkness of our world. And so, as we behold “*the* light of the world” (John 8:12), Jesus says to us, “*You* are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

In other words, as we’re being transformed from the inside out to be more like Jesus, we will *not just* be people who know more *about* Jesus, but we will become those who *resemble* and *reveal* Jesus with our lives and our words to one another and to the world around us as individual believers and collectively as the church of Jesus Christ.

Rather than being spiritually blind cynics who are never satisfied by the signs of Jesus, we *ourselves*, as those who have spiritual sight and who are beholding him through his Word, become bright *signs* that point *others* to Jesus in our world.

And our hope is that, *through* us, they *also* would *beware* of cynicism towards Jesus and *behold* him to be full of light.

## **Life Application**

They're just a few questions for us to reflect on in light of this passage.

1. Where in your life do you need to beware of cynicism towards Jesus?

If you're not sure, think about where you struggle to believe that Jesus' way is *really* the right and best way that is ultimately for your good and his glory. Or think about the passages of Scripture that you tend to overlook or ignore because you simply don't like what they're saying or you honestly don't know how to make sense of them in light of your current understanding of who Jesus is.

2. How can you more intentionally behold Jesus in his Word to be full of light?

- Maybe it's being resolved to make Lord's Day worship with God's people a non-negotiable because you know that you'll be saturated in God's Word as we gather together.
- Maybe it's going to LIFE Group each week even when you don't feel like it because you know that you'll be refreshed and refined by your brothers and sisters' insights into God's Word that will help you to know and love Jesus more.
- Maybe it's starting a Bible reading plan with another brother or sister in our church and sharing what you're learning about Jesus and how you're trying to apply it in your life.

Whatever it may be, as we're more intentionally *beholding* Jesus in his Word, I pray that "the light of the *gospel* of the glory of Christ" would shine more brightly *in* and *through* us, so that the *darkness* of the world would be more and more overcome by the *light* of Jesus Christ.

## **The One Thing**

***Beware of cynicism towards Jesus  
and behold him to be full of light.***

## **Conclusion**

If you're able, can we all stand as we respond to God's Word together?