

Stevland Morris was born blind. That didn't stop him from learning to play the piano, harmonica, drums, and bass. By age thirteen he had a number one hit song. All totaled he has thirty top ten hits and twenty two Grammy awards. With that kind of career he is among the all time best. To say that he's accomplished a lot with a severe impairment would be an understatement. Stevland Morris you may not have heard of, but Stevie Wonder you probably have.

We know that blindness doesn't have to stop people from achieving things they set their minds to. Neither does deafness or the inability to speak. But the Bible does use the picture of blindness to describe people in general, and it does say blindness does hinder people. It's not saying that people are all physically blind. They have eyes and can see but still are blind and can't accomplish anything.

The book of Isaiah uses this picture of blindness. God speaks through his prophet in the section read as the first lesson this morning to us. We might not be physically blind, but our ability to see doesn't mean we can achieve anything spiritually on our own either. Really God through his prophet states that...

**Everyone is blind
Blind to the way of salvation
Blind leading to rejection**

When my sister-in-law found out a year and a half ago that her son was coming premature she did everything she could to stop it. The doctors did everything they could to hold it. They used medications to speed the baby's development and suppress the delivery. But the moment came anyway. As much as they tried nothing could hold it back. God uses the picture of a pregnancy coming to a conclusion to describe himself throughout the long period of time of the nation of Israel. **"For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back."** The Lord describes a long planning time, a time of silence, and restraint that made it seem like he wasn't interested in acting or didn't care. Neither was true.

Sins piled up for a long time while God held back judgment. It was something that the people couldn't see. They simply had no knowledge that God was living with their sinfulness. But he was also not bringing to completion redemption either. When the time came things changed in a big way and quickly. God no longer held himself back. **"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn their darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth."** He started leading the blind down a path they didn't even know existed. They would never have found the paths and the smooth roadways otherwise. God promises that he will make their dark blindness into a light. They will see things for the first time spiritually clear.

If you travel to a place you've never gone before without directions you can drive a long time on roads you can see clearly but you might never get where you want. There are times we see our sins all too clearly. Death and suffering are constant reminders of our sins. We need no reminding that we haven't lived up to God's expectations. We concentrate so hard on how we've failed God that it seems we're lost in blindness never to escape. It's a complete and total blindness that's spiritual darkness of sin. We stumble around looking for a way out but we'll never find the path to heaven ourselves.

Sit in a completely dark space long enough and you'll crave the light. If even just one slight wedge of light pierces into that darkness you'll move towards it almost without thinking. It was the Scriptures that told us we craved the light because of our sinful existence. The light of Jesus wasn't just a barely visible sliver. It was like throwing open the doors and walls and letting the light pour in. God would hold back no longer. Christ Jesus entered our world. **"While I am in the world, I am the light of the world,"** Jesus said. His death pierced the darkness illuminating a pathway to God that was always there we were just blind to it. It's the pathway of free forgiveness that only he offers. The Holy Spirit opened our eyes by faith to its existence.

Having been brought into the light it would be foolish to return to the darkness. Once we can see the path to our salvation in Christ we never want to lose sight of it. Thankfully God says, **"These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them."** Because God hasn't forsaken us we will not forsake him. We can stay on this path that leads home to heaven only through his Word and partaking of his sacraments. Through them we remain with a strong connection to our Savior.

Everyone heard the instructions before the test, but apparently only one group actually listened. Everyone knew they were to answer five of the six questions. Some listened and answered only five. Some didn't listen even though they heard and answered all six. In the world everyone is blind and deaf to God by nature. When God's Word goes out and is heard, everyone is naturally blind to seeing what God wants. Everyone is naturally blind to the path that leads to heaven. But others are blind in another way. They hear and see the message and the path, but they want to remain in their blindness. They're blind leading to rejection.

On a number of occasions in the book of Isaiah the prophet speaks about the servant of the Lord. Most times it's the Messiah, but sometimes not. Context must determine. **"Who is blind like the one committed to me, blind like the servant of the Lord?"** Who is a servant that saw firsthand God's actions throughout history yet didn't see? Who is a servant who heard all about Abraham, exodus from Egypt, and the prophets yet didn't hear? Who is a servant who has **"seen many things, but have paid no attention; your ears are open, but you hear nothing."** The collective people of Israel had been chosen by God. They had a specific task and message. They possessed the truths of God. But they took the Lord for granted. They got bored, inattentive, and indifferent. They changed God's grace into works righteousness. They turned away from the gospel and followed idols. They were supposed to be the servant of the Lord, but they failed because they were blind and rejected.

We've heard and seen how God works in the world. We've seen the deliverance he has provided, the promises he's made, and we've heard the Word of God. We know he's in control of this world but at times we think he doesn't care based on what happens. We know God hates sin. But we openly ignore him and sin anyway. We have at times been inattentive to God's message, indifferent to his messengers, and been in serious danger of rejecting him. We hear but we don't hear. We see but we don't see because we're still blind which can lead to rejection.

Stop closing your eyes trying to return to the blindness. **"It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to make his law great and glorious."** Law there is not the Law of Moses. It's all the teachings, doctrines, and instructions given by God in his Word. It's God's Word, both law and gospel. It's the message that saves us. Don't ignore it or reject it, rather believe it and trust it. The Lord remained faithful to his promises to save us even as we threatened to wander off into the darkness. When he says he'll be gracious, he's gracious. When he says he'll be faithful, he's faithful. When it says he'll save, he saves. Hear and see the Word of the Lord for encouragement and growth in faith. God brings about a glorious change in us to believe in Jesus Christ to his glory.

The list of successful blind musicians is rather short. While blindness need not keep anyone from living a quality life, it does keep many from having a successful music career. Every one of us was born spiritually blind into this world. We were blind to the way of salvation and we were blind leading to rejection of the saving message. God broke through our blindness with the light of the world. God doesn't hold back. His grace saves us in Christ Jesus, the light of the world.