

Seeing is Believing

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[0 : 00] So the sense that we most heavily rely on is sight. We use our eyes to interpret, understand, and navigate the world. And I'm guessing that most of you guys have already used your eyes today.

Anybody has not, maybe? No? Audrey, you've used them. You guys, sorry, you guys are all by yourself over here. This is worth pointing out.

All right. Sorry about that. Have you heard the phrase, seeing is believing? As I was preparing for today, I was really surprised to learn that that's only actually half of the expression.

And I feel like my whole life might be a lie. And I need to just revisit things. So the full saying is, seeing is believing, but feeling is the truth.

And I think that's meant to be taken a little tongue-in-cheek. But it is true that our eyes are incredibly useful and wonderful tools. But it's also true that they have their limitations as well.

[1 : 04] Because we're so reliant on our sight, we can be led to believe that if something can't be seen, then it's not believable or trustworthy. Our eyes can deceive us, though. Hebrews 11.1 tells us that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Jeremy also taught us last week that faith is careful thoughtfulness about God and his promises that nourishes hope and catalyzes obedience. If we're going to be not shrink-backers and have faith that perseveres, then we are going to have to learn how to see the unseen.

How do we do that? All right, I've got an object. Kids, do you guys know what this is? What does this look like? It looks like a camera, but it's something different than just a regular camera.

It can see things that are objectively real, experientially felt, but almost always completely invisible.

Okay, you say. It's a heat sensing camera. Yeah, it's a thermal camera. So this is a tool that lets me see stuff that I can't see with my eyes.

[2 : 17] So we need something like this thermal imaging camera to help us see past our earth-dweller perspective and see the world how God sees it. What we need is faith goggles.

I also just really like the word goggles, so bear with me. I'm going to say it a lot today. Faith is living right now with an expectation that God will make good upon his promises.

It's not blindly trusting, but rather looking backwards and seeing the faithfulness of God through many generations and seasons and reasoning confidently that he is able to deliver on his future promises.

That's what I'm hoping today we can look at. So I'm going to invite Millie up, and you guys can turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 11, and Millie's going to read verse 3 for us.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

[3 : 25] Perfect. Thank you. Thank you. All right. In my life as a carpenter, I have a phrase that helps me orient myself when I start a new job, and that phrase is frame for the finish.

Well, what does that mean? Basically, it means that if I want to ensure a successful outcome, I need to start out at the beginning with a clear picture of where I want to end up.

Each stage, as the job progresses, needs to be done in a sequence that prepares for the next step. I, as you may have guessed, make mistakes occasionally. I'll probably make a few today.

And I have to make small corrections along the way to keep myself on track. God, however, lacks that. He does not make mistakes like me. I believe that God's redemptive plan follows the same frame for the finish path, minus the mistakes.

His end was predetermined before he started. His sovereignty means that no force can make him stray from his path. And everything that happens in between is exactly as he intended without mistake.

[4 : 34] That's providence. So let's look at how God, the master builder, created the universe from things unseen. So to do that, let's look in Genesis 1. In the beginning God, before the starting point of everything God was, that means that God exists outside of time and is not bound or dependent upon anything outside of himself.

This also tells us that all of creation came into being by his will. And even though we cannot see God, we can know some things about, we can know some things about him simply from experiencing his creation.

Paul writes like this in Romans. He tells us, for his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

Have you ever got, I wanted to use a hunting reference, but I didn't. So I strayed from that to be more relatable. So, have you guys ever been out in the country, away from the lights of the city on a clear night, lying on your back, looking up, and just seeing how many stars actually fill the sky?

In my experience, and I'm guessing you guys have had that experience at least once in your life, that's when I start to feel really small and God starts to be really big and I can really feel and experience the majesty and the vastness that God is.

[6 : 04] So he simply spoke and all that was so. That means that God is bigger than you. So back in verse 1, the word that we have created there, it's a unique word and it's a special verb in Hebrew because the subject of the verb is always God.

It cannot be attributed to another person. It's true that people also create things, but the way that people make things is different from how God does in that we make things by taking what already exists and adding it together or reducing it.

But God creates simply by his word from nothing. So this special word is used at the beginning and the end of the creation account and that's to tell us something.

It's that God is able to create in a way that no one or nothing else can. So God's special type of creation is limited only to him.

So we know that God and God alone brought all of creation into being out of nothing and that he's the only one capable of that type of creation. So you guys, the Bible is super cool.

[7 : 14] In one sentence, so many questions are answered. There's, I don't know if they still teach kids this, but when I was a kid, they said if you're looking at stuff, there's five W's.

It was who, what, when, and where. Those four are all covered in one sentence. That's pretty cool, I think. So kids, what's the last W? Do they still teach that?

Yeah. Tim is right. Thank you, children. No. So why did God create in the first place?

We know that our vision or how we see has limitations and that God's does not. Here in Genesis 1, what does it mean when God says, and God saw that it was good?

I just want to take a second and point out that that word good is, in Hebrew, that word is pronounced tov, and that'll be important as we go later on. And I just think that's fun.

[8 : 15] So there you have it, tov. So probably the most popular understanding is that God is giving approval and affirming that his original design and intent for creation is being carried out exactly as he willed.

I think that's perfectly correct and reasonable, but I think there maybe is just a little bit more than that there. And so I'd like today for you guys to consider this.

I think that God's seeing that it was good is meant to show us how God is graciously creating, organizing, and moving creation step by step to a place that's good, or tov, specifically for humanity.

It's the framing for the finish idea. He's seeing to it that everything that humans need to thrive is being put into place, and that his why is to enter into a covenant relationship with humans so that he can, in his triune nature, his fullness, that's Father, Son, and Spirit, that he can share with humans his overflowing love and goodness and grace through all of creation itself.

So don't take my word here for it. Don't take my word for it, but I'd encourage you to think through this maybe after at lunchtime. It'd be good. You could discuss it.

[9 : 35] Find more spots where I think you'll find that this connection comes together. But I'm going to give you two that convinced me that this is a good understanding of what we should see in the text there.

So let's look at day one of creation, and it says that, God saw that the light was good, but made no judgment to the darkness except to name it. Darkness isn't inherently bad, and there's so much more that we could say here, but we're not going to do that today.

Today, I only want to highlight that the darkness is not required for humanity. It's not something that's necessary. So let your mind wander a little bit and consider what we learn in Revelation 21 about the new Jerusalem.

And it says, The glory of God gives it light, and the lamp is its lamb. In the new creation, there will be no night. So it's not necessary. Secondly, let's look at what we have in the language within day two.

I'll just read through that. It says, And God said, Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse.

[10 : 50] And it was so. And God called the expanse heaven, and there was evening, and there was morning, the second day. I'm sure that I've read this passage I don't know how many times.

A lot of times. But I've never really noticed that God does not say that he saw that it was good in that day of creation. It's not that that day of creation, that day two, wasn't perfectly as God had intended, but rather that the necessary step that occurred in the second day of creation was not something that God sees on its own as good for humans.

How are you guys doing? You guys following me? Nobody's sleeping yet? Perfect. So let's unpack this. Let's look at how the three main characters that are introduced here, and the language, and the form of the text, see how God's plan to share his love, and goodness, and grace with creation is going to work out.

So in verse one, we're introduced to two characters. We're introduced to God, and we're introduced to all of creation. We're thinking frame for the finish as we go through here.

Even from the opening words, God is quite literally moving heaven and earth step by step towards his ultimate end. We're only a few steps into his plan, but we can see that he's working even now towards his end.

[12 : 12] In verse two, it starts to unpack and describe our second character, the land. We're told that the whole world was watery, dark, and uninhabitable. The phrase without form and void most likely does not mean what you think it means when you first look at it.

We're probably thinking about some shapeless and empty blob, but we should understand this to be more like a wild wasteland or an uninhabitable wilderness. The important takeaway is that it's a place that people could never live.

The Hebrew here, more Hebrew, super fun kids. This is a fun word. It's actually two words, but it's *tohu vavohu*. So, pretty fun.

You could use it. I'm just saying. Wild wasteland. So that pairing of words only happens in one other spot in the Bible, and that's in Jeremiah 4.

And it describes the condition of the land. It's become uninhabitable, and the people were subsequently sent into exile. So God is describing a sort of uncreation or undoing of the ordering of the promised land that made it good to live in.

[13 : 26] And he's making us think back to this verse that we're looking at in Genesis 1 before God graciously prepared to support human life. The next 22 verses go on, and they focus on creating and ordering a land that is suitable to sustain our third main character, and that's humanity.

It gives us clues as to what this unseen and still unrevealed character God is. His actions and his words testify or tell us just what kind of God he is.

So even though we can't see him with our eyes, we can see that he's a God that transforms, provides, and sustains. We can see that just by looking at how beautiful and complex all of creation really is, simply by his word, he can transform emptiness and nothingness into abundance and life.

This is where those two words come together. This is *tohu* into *tov*. So then we're introduced to our third character, and that's humanity.

Humanity is the crown jewel or culmination of the six days of creation. It's really important to recognize that there's two distinctions that make humans different than all of the other things within creation.

[14 : 41] Number one is that they're the only thing said to be made in the image and likeness of God. And number two, they were given the charge to share in the rule over the land.

So I'm going to read through Genesis 1, 26 through 31, and I want you guys to think about how these ideas are starting to come together and moving towards God's plan to be united in a covenant relationship.

He doesn't use the word covenant here, but we can see in the language that that's what he's working towards. Then God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food and it was so.

[16 : 12] And God saw everything that he had made and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning the sixth day. So God created everything and that culminated in his creation of his people so that God, Father, Son, and Spirit could share with his people his overflowing love, his goodness, and his grace through creation itself.

So all these blessings are so richly poured out on us. How can we do anything but be in awe and majesty and respond in worship of a God that gives so abundantly? As Christians, this is foundationally our purpose in life to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

Paul says it in 1 Corinthians like this. He says, So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. We are like tiny little mirrors that reflect God's glory back to him in praise and worship.

So God provides within creation all that's necessary for us to fulfill that purpose but not so much that we no longer have need of him because God isn't bound by time or space but we most certainly are.

He needs a place for us to exist so that we could interact, so he could interact with us. Creation is a means to that but not simply an end. So I have this fancy chart that was obviously made by me.

[17 : 48] And the last thing I want to do is reduce God's design into a flow chart but in broad and simple terms, I guess that's what I'm doing today. So I think this gives us an idea or an understanding of how this works and how we should be convinced not to get our theology from a cartoon lion named Mufasa.

This is a more complex system but I think we can see this. So basically you can see God's at the top and his creation, he pours out into his creation and he creates humans.

Humans see the beauty and complexity of creation and respond in glory that praise and worship back to God. God on the other side, he also creates the universe which supports and sustains humanity.

humans recognize that and then back in turn worship and glory and praise to God. And I have been thinking about this over the last week and I think there's other smaller loops that are worth exploring also but yeah, not the circle of life.

Definitely better. So as two of Steadfast's favorite Texans might say, we don't always walk this out so well, do we?

[19 : 15] We're prone to fall into the era of assigning meaning in our life to something inside of this good creation that we can see instead of knowing that our meaning truly comes from something that we cannot see with our eyes.

This is how our eyes can betray us. They can lead us to believing in only the things we can see. We tend to place our meaning and hope in things that we can see and measure and not in God that we cannot see.

When that happens, we are essentially saying we have no further need of God and we break off one or more of these arrows and things start falling apart. Where in your life have you been tempted to put your trust in?

Maybe it's marriage. Do you place your trust in a relationship? Maybe it's finances. Is your hope fixed on a comfortable life? Maybe it's community.

Is your comfort in being around people who think just like you? Maybe it's knowledge. Do you find your meaning lies in having all the answers? Maybe it's family.

[20 : 20] Is your purpose to provide a better future for them? Maybe it's work. Is the point of your existence to contribute to society? What happens when your meaning is met with suffering and trial?

When your relationships crumble? When the community you've surrounded yourself with turns on each other and collapses? When it seems like you are no longer valued for your work?

When you thought you were fine with the ice maker on the fridge not working but now when you try to fill a glass of water it sprays across the whole kitchen makes a huge mess almost gets to sink.

That one's really specific and we're working through some stuff. What do you do when the thing you had hoped would get you through this life disappears?

frustration, desperation, loneliness, discouragement. I hate to be a downer but do you guys remember the book of Job?

[21 : 26] What advice does Job's wife give him when he loses almost everything? Then his wife said to him, Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.

In that place what she saw was that all the good had left. There was no longer any reason to live but Job saw things differently.

Let's listen to Job's response. But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God and shall we not receive evil?

In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Do you see that Job recognized that arrow pointing down on the chart? Regardless of what he was given in life, when it was removed, Job was able even in his suffering to see through faith goggles.

What he saw was that his faith was not bound to the good things that he had but rather it was rooted in God who had richly provided them which kept that arrow pointing back up to God continuing to praise God even through the suffering not for the suffering but through the suffering.

[22 : 39] The only thing Job really wanted was to maintain a relationship with God. Job was surely not a shrink backer so how do we then like Job hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering?

So I listened to a talk that Tim Keller gave and he had this quote that I think really hits the nail on the head here and I'll just read it.

It says, If your meaning in life is grounded in anything in this world your meaning in life will not be able to handle suffering any more than a spider web is able to handle a falling rock and therefore ironically only if your meaning in life is rooted in something outside this world will you actually be equipped for life inside this world.

We're easily deceived by our eyes because they don't show us the full picture. What is visible to us is an anemic myopic and small one-sided view of what the fullness of reality really is.

We don't see things the way that God does and we don't have our faith goggles on when we do that. So let's remember what we've learned. Remember that God is bigger than you.

[23 : 52] Remember that God creates in a way that is unique to him and to him alone and remember that God has created all of the universe and shaped the earth and made all that is seen out of things unseen so that you and I can be right here right now.

And he did all of that out of his desire to pour out his endless love and grace and goodness upon us. And that, friends, is how God sees. He's not finished yet but he's always been framing for the finish.

So how do we see things through God's eyes with our faith goggles when we are bound to this earth and only have our small earth-dweller eyes?

It's true that we can't see God right now but the amazing thing is that God has continued to meet us in our weakness and provide exactly what we need. It's not surprising then when we look at how the letter to the Hebrews starts.

It starts out, it says, long ago at many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers by the prophets but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son whom he appointed the heir of all things through whom also he created the world.

[25 : 06] He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. The letter starts by telling us that everything that's true of God is also true of Jesus.

And when the time was appropriate Jesus, the Son of God fully God became also fully man plainly visible to humanity. Finally, we have something that we can see with our earth dweller eyes.

Jesus met us in our weakness of sight. He condescended and put on flesh and the invisible became visible so that seeing could become believing.

Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God. In his time on earth, Jesus taught us and showed us how you live right now like the new creation is already here.

Faith goggles, as it turns out, are Jesus' goggles. Now we've got all kinds of goggles to look through. Is Jesus your Lord and Savior? Have you already put your faith in Jesus?

[26 : 14] If you have, what's your response then? What does that arrow in our chart that points back to God look like? Faith in Jesus recognizes that while we were so short-sighted and narrow-focused, believing that we have all that we need within this visible world apart from God, God changed our hearts.

He changed our vision. He did this through what we could see. Through the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, we can now see that He is the place our hope and purpose is anchored in.

We can see our desperate need for His saving grace. We walk by faith in response to His incredible acts of grace and mercy towards us. As we draw closer and closer to Jesus, we start to live more and more like Jesus did.

We have our Jesus goggles on and we start to see the world the way Jesus did. We start moving from having an ownership mentality to a stewardship mentality. When we are in Christ, we have the Spirit working in us.

The Spirit helps us see things in terms of stewardship instead of ownership. We are able to be radically generous with what we have, what we have been given because we don't actually own it.

[27 : 34] We are only stewards of it for as long as God sees fit. This, I believe, is what Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught us how to live like God's promise of a new creation is already here.

When we live like this, we experience a foretaste of what is to come. If you are believing in Christ right now, how have you experienced the transforming power of Jesus?

How has He changed *tohu* to *tov* in your life? How has He transformed nothingness into goodness? All of the places where we could have wrongly put our hope, we realize with the help of the Spirit are really good gifts and blessings from the founder and perfecter of our faith, Jesus.

Finances, relationships, your time, your career, the way you parent your children, your community, your friends, the list goes on and on. As we draw to a close today, the last words of Jesus recorded in the book of Acts before He ascended was in verse 8.

He says, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

[28 : 50] Until Jesus returns again, His church is to be a visible witness pointing to the invisible God. You, y'all, brothers and sisters, if you are in Christ, you are part of that visible witness, visibly reflecting the goodness and glory of the invisible God.

We bring glory to God through the work of Jesus being guided by the Spirit so that even though God remains invisible through His children, seeing can be believing.

Would you guys join me in prayer? Lord, we are so thankful for the work that Jesus did in His life, in His ministry, in His time on earth.

We are so thankful that our faith is rooted in You and that You met us in our weakness, that You became visible and could be seen so that we could believe in You even more strongly.

Lord, I just pray that You continue to work in us and through us and through Your power given by the Spirit that You would continue to be visible in the world today.

[30 : 02] Lord, we know that You created everything and You sustain and hold it together and I just pray that as we go on today that we would reflect Your glory and goodness.

In Your name we pray. Amen. Amen.