

Monday, December 24, 2018 - Christmas Eve
“We Have Seen His Glory!”

John 1: 14b

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Definition Structure

Adapted from CSL “The Word Became Flesh”

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Our text is from John 1:14, “We have seen his glory.” These five words will change our life. These five words will change our life, forever. “We have seen his glory.” For fifty-one years Bob Edens was blind. Bob couldn’t see a darn thing. His world was a black hole. But Bob Edens graduated from college. Got married. Had a daughter. Even coached little league baseball.

Through it all, though, Bob Edens was blind. Blind as a bat. He felt his way through five decades of darkness. And then, he could see! Bob Edens could see! A surgeon repaired a detached retina and performed a corneal transplant. For the first time in his life, Bob Edens could actually see! He found it overwhelming. “I never would have dreamed that yellow is so yellow. I can see the shape of the moon. I like nothing better than seeing a jet plane flying across the sky leaving a vapor trail. And of course, sunrises and sunsets. Those are my favorite colors—orange and red.”

Let’s be honest. We all suffer from some kind of blindness. It’s amazing, isn’t it? Just because we witness a rainbow a 1,000 times doesn’t mean we’ve seen its beauty. We can plant a garden and fail to see the splendor of its flowers. And we can attend church, sing Christmas carols, feel faithful and festive, hold our candles and still never see him. Him? That would be Jesus.

Tonight God invites us to see, really see Jesus! John saw him. He writes in our text. “We have seen his glory.” John doesn’t say, “We glanced. We glimpsed.” John doesn’t say, “We previewed. We peeked.” John doesn’t stand at the back of the room or listen to someone describe Jesus. John pulls out his bifocals and his binoculars. John gets out his telescope and his microscope. John focuses and fixes his eyes. John sees Jesus. And that’s

what John wants for us tonight—to see Jesus. One of John’s themes in his Gospel is seeing Jesus. John 1:29, “See, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” In John 1:46, Philip invites Nathaniel to Jesus with these words, “Come and see.” The Samaritan woman says in John 4:29, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.” On Palm Sunday John 12:15 says, “See, your King comes to you.” On that same day some Greeks come to Philip and say, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” On Easter morning in John 20:18 Mary is beside herself when she says, “I have seen the Lord!” But the blind man in John 9:24 says it best. And what did he say? “I was blind but now I see.”

Jesus. The prophet from Galilee, who spoke with such thunderous authority and who loved with such childlike humility. Jesus. The one who claimed to be older than time and greater than death. Jesus. The Alpha and the Omega. The Prince of Peace. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The Lion of the tribe of Judah. Jesus! All the splendor of God revealed in a human body. The doors to the throne room were open and God came near.

Jesus! “We have seen his glory.” What’s that mean? I mean “his glory”? Just what is his glory? It’s not what we think it is. When we hear the word “glory” most often we think of beauty and power and majesty and might. We think of Jesus walking on water. Jesus feeding the 5,000. Jesus raising Lazarus. Jesus healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and making crippled people whole. Christ’s glory must mean that he was always walking just an inch above the ground, right? Christ’s glory must mean that he was always emitting a glowing, heavenly light. Right? Wrong.

Dead wrong. In John’s Gospel Christ’s supreme and ultimate glory is his suffering and death. How so? On Palm Sunday, with his face set like flint towards the cross, Jesus says in John 12:23, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” In the upper room, right after Judas Iscariot leaves to betray him for 30 pieces of silver, Jesus says in John 13:31, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” Just before his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus says in John 17:1, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son.” Get it? Christ’s glory in John’s Gospel is his bitter suffering and God-forsaken death.

There was a legionnaire's whip of leather strips with lead balls on each end, beating his back beyond recognition. There was a crown of thorns leaving deep gashes in his head, caking his hair with blood. There were clenched fists deforming his face. And there were nails disfiguring his body as he twists and turns, writhing in pain. Rome famously called it *moris turpissima crucis*, "the utterly vile death of the cross." Words collapse before the sheer atrocity of it all. Melito of Sardis, who lived in the second century, famously writes, "He who hung the earth in its place hangs there. He who fixed the heavens is fixed there, upon a tree. The Master has been insulted. God has been murdered."

Being honest and moral doesn't help me see him. Being religious and devout doesn't help me see him. And trying harder and being more sincere doesn't help me see him. It's only when I understand that the cradle points to the cross that I see Jesus. It's only when I understand that the cradle points to his death on the cross for me that I see Jesus.

That's because Christ's greatest glory is to love us, forgive us, and come to us right where we are—just here, just now. He is the Jesus of the dying marriage. The Jesus of the divorced and the desperate. He is the Jesus of the bitterly broken. The Jesus of the soiled and the shamed. He is the Jesus of those who are sickened by what they see going on in their lives. Do you see him? Do you see Jesus?

It wasn't enough for the shepherds to see angels. You'd think that angels would have been enough. The night sky filled with light. Stillness erupting in song. And angels! Real angels! A myriad of angels! Angels and archangels! But that wasn't enough. The shepherds wanted to see Jesus.

It wasn't enough for the wise men to see the star. Not that the star wasn't spectacular. Not that the star wasn't brilliant. But the star wasn't enough. They saw the star over Bethlehem, but the wise men wanted to see Jesus.

It wasn't enough for Simeon to see the temple. Now Jerusalem's temple was grand and glorious. It's where priests sacrificed, kings reigned, and prophets preached. But the temple wasn't enough. Simeon wanted to see the Lord's Messiah. Simeon wanted to see Jesus.

Don't settle for angels in the heavens, stars in the sky, or a temple in Jerusalem. And don't settle for a tree, a turkey, some toys, and a little tinsel. Seek the Savior like the shepherds. Worship him like the wise men. Hold him tight like Simeon.

The economy doesn't faze him. Elections don't define him. Diseases don't derail him. Problems don't surprise him. And death will never defeat him. Death will never defeat him. If you can't find the power to face your problems, it's time to face him. If you're overwhelmed with shame and sadness, it's time to take a look. If you need a Savior from sin, a Friend who loves at all times, and a Redeemer who restores and renews, it's time to open your eyes this night and join the faithful in saying—in saying what? “We have seen his glory!” In Jesus' name, Amen.