

“Beholding Him”

Summary

This powerful message confronts us with a fundamental question: what does it truly mean to behold the face of Jesus? Drawing from Psalm 17:15, we're invited into David's declaration: 'As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness.' The teaching unpacks a profound truth—that we will never find satisfaction until we are conformed into Jesus' likeness, and this transformation happens through beholding Him. The sermon challenges our modern distractions, particularly our screen time and the countless things vying for our attention, asking us to consider how much time we actually spend gazing upon Jesus. Through the story of the disciples leaving everything to follow Christ, we're reminded that the real Jesus is so attractive, so beautiful, that encountering Him makes us willing to abandon everything else. The message also addresses a critical barrier: self-righteousness and religious performance that keeps us at a distance from God. Using the tragic story of Absalom, who was allowed back into the kingdom but forbidden to see the king's face, we see how mercy without access breeds rebellion. This mirrors many believers who know they're saved but feel unworthy to draw near. The remedy? Understanding that righteousness comes not through our efforts but through faith in Jesus, who dealt with the justice issue so we could have face-to-face communion with God. The call is clear: cultivate a lifestyle of pursuing Jesus, not as a religious duty, but as a love-struck pursuit of the One our hearts were made for.

Small Group Study Guide – Beholding Him

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Icebreaker Question: Share about a time when someone's love for you changed your behavior without them having to tell you what to do. (Like the Pastor Rob's example of getting ready to see his future wife)

Key Scripture References

- **Psalm 17:15** - "As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with Your likeness."

- **Psalm 27:3-6** - One thing I desire: to behold the beauty of the Lord
 - **Romans 3:9-24** - None are righteous; righteousness comes through faith in Christ
 - **Mark 4:41** - "What manner of man is this?"
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Main Themes & Discussion Questions

1. The Power of Beholding Jesus (15-20 minutes)

Key Point: Every time we see Jesus as He is, something in that moment converts us to become like Him.

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to truly "behold" Jesus versus just knowing about Him?
- Pastor Rob said, "You can't unsee the real Jesus once you've seen Him." Have you had a moment when you saw Jesus in a new way that forever changed you? Share that experience.
- What are the biggest obstacles in your life that keep you from beholding Jesus daily?

2. Righteousness vs. Self-Righteousness (15-20 minutes)

Key Point: We behold His face in righteousness—not our own righteousness, but the righteousness that comes through faith in Jesus.

Discussion Questions:

- How does self-righteousness keep us from drawing near to God?
- Pastor Rob shared the story of Absalom being allowed back in the kingdom but not permitted to see the king's face. How does this picture religious systems that give "mercy without access"?
- Where in your life do you struggle with feeling "not good enough" to approach God? How does understanding Christ's righteousness change that?

3. The Battle for Our Attention (15-20 minutes)

Key Point: "I have set the Lord always before me" (Psalm 16:8) - there's a constant battle over what we're beholding.

Discussion Questions:

- Pastor Rob mentioned screen time versus "beholding Him time." What competes most for your attention and gaze?
- How can we practically "set the Lord always before us" in our daily routines?

- What would it look like to filter your activities through this question: "Is this helping me behold Jesus?"

4. Love as the Fuel for Transformation (15-20 minutes)

Key Point: The motivation for holy living isn't fear of hell, but love for the beautiful Bridegroom.

Discussion Questions:

- How does viewing Scripture as a "love letter" rather than a rule book change the way you read it?
- Pastor Rob said, "If it doesn't make you want to come closer, question whether you're looking at the right Jesus." What does this reveal about the Jesus you're currently seeing?
- How can we cultivate a church culture that draws people closer to Jesus rather than keeping them at a distance?

Key Takeaways

1. **Beholding is becoming** - We are transformed by gazing at Jesus, not by trying harder
2. **Righteousness gives permission** - Understanding Christ's righteousness removes the barriers to intimacy with God
3. **Worship is warfare** - In times of trouble, choosing to behold Him in worship is our remedy
4. **The real Jesus is irresistibly attractive** - Like the disciples who left everything to follow Him, the true Jesus draws us near

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose **TWO** of the following practices to implement this week:

1. Morning Worship Ritual

- Before checking your phone, play worship music and spend 10 minutes beholding Jesus in song

2. Scripture as Love Letter

- Read one passage each day (Psalms or the Gospels) as if it's a personal love letter from Jesus to you. Journal what you hear Him saying.

3. The Apple of His Eye Exercise

- Find a quiet place and imagine yourself close enough to Jesus to see yourself reflected in His eyes. What do you see? How does He look at you?

4. Worship in the Storm

- When trouble comes this week, immediately turn on worship music or begin praising God before trying to "fix" the problem

5. Screen Time Audit

- Check your screen time report and compare it to your "beholding Jesus" time. Make one specific adjustment.

6. Level-Setting Prayer

- Daily ask: "God, am I seeing myself the way You see me? Am I seeing You as You really are?"

Closing Exercise (10-15 minutes)

Closing Prayer:

Pray Psalm 17:15 over each person by name:

"[Name], may you behold His face in righteousness. When you awake, may you be satisfied with His likeness."

For Further Study

- Read the story of Absalom (2 Samuel 13-14) and reflect on the danger of "mercy without access"
- Study the theme of "beholding" throughout Scripture (2 Corinthians 3:18, Hebrews 12:2, Revelation 22:4)
- Listen to worship music intentionally this week, focusing on songs about the beauty and face of Jesus

Main Points – Beholding Him

Sermon Summary:

This sermon explores the transformative power of beholding Jesus as He truly is, emphasizing that seeing Him changes us into His likeness. Pastor Rob challenges the congregation to move beyond religious performance and self-righteousness to experience intimate communion with God through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Drawing from the disciples' question "What manner of man is this?" after Jesus calmed the storm, the message emphasizes that we cannot be satisfied until we are conformed to His image. The sermon addresses the battle for our attention in a distracted world and calls believers to cultivate a lifestyle of pursuing Jesus through worship, Scripture, and intentional focus. True transformation comes not from striving to be good enough, but from drawing near to behold His beauty and receiving His love.

Key Points:

- Obedience is better than sacrifice; God desires our hearts more than our religious performance
- Every time we see Jesus as He is, we become more like Him
- Self-righteousness and religious pride hinder our ability to see Jesus and draw near to God
- No one is righteous in themselves; righteousness comes only through faith in Jesus Christ
- The law was given to expose our need for a Savior, not as a means to earn salvation
- Mercy without access to God's presence produces rebellion in hearts
- We must make intentional choices to set the Lord always before us despite distractions
- Beholding Jesus in worship, Scripture, and prayer is the remedy for spiritual warfare
- God invites us to boldly approach His throne and see ourselves reflected in His eyes
- The Bible is a love letter from God revealing His heart for us

Scripture Reference:

- Mark 4:41 - "What manner of man is this?" (Primary text for the sermon series)
- Psalm 17:15 - "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness"
- Psalm 17:8 - "Keep me as the apple of your eye"
- Romans 3:9-24 - No one is righteous; righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ
- Psalm 27:3-6 - One thing I desire: to behold the beauty of the Lord
- Psalm 16:8 - "I have set the Lord always before me"
- Matthew 9:12-13 - Jesus tells the Pharisees to "go and learn what this means"

Discussion Questions – Beholding Him

Pastor Rob shared a story about God asking him to give five dollars but he gave ten instead. How does this story challenge our understanding of obedience versus generosity, and why might God value obedience over what we consider a 'better' sacrifice?

The sermon emphasizes that 'beholding is becoming' - that when we see Jesus as He is, we become like Him. What practical steps can you take to increase your time beholding Jesus rather than being consumed by screens, news, or other distractions?

David said he would 'behold God's face in righteousness' (Psalm 17:15). How does understanding righteousness as a gift through Christ rather than self-achievement change your permission to draw near to God?

Pastor Rob described how Absalom was allowed back into the kingdom but not permitted to see the king's face, which bred rebellion. In what ways have you experienced 'mercy without access' in your spiritual life, and how has that affected your relationship with God?

Romans 3 declares that 'none are righteous, no not one.' If our good deeds cannot save us, why do so many Christians still believe living a good life is the path to heaven, and how can we shift from self-righteousness to Christ's righteousness?

The sermon suggests that religious spirits and self-righteousness create distance between us and God. What are some signs that religion rather than relationship is driving your spiritual life?

When the disciples saw Jesus calm the storm, they asked 'What manner of man is this?' What aspect of Jesus's character or power have you recently encountered that left you in awe, and how did it change you?

Pastor Rob compared falling in love with his wife to our pursuit of God, noting that no one had to tell him to prepare himself to see her. What does this reveal about the true fuel for holy living, and how is it different from fear-based motivation?

Jesus told the Pharisees 'go and learn what this means' because they were unteachable. What areas of your life might you be unteachable in, and what would it look like to become soft-hearted and markable by God again?

Scriptures – Beholding Him

Explicitly Mentioned References:

1. **Mark 4:41** - "What manner of man is this?" (disciples' response after Jesus calmed the storm)
2. **Matthew 9:12-13** - Jesus saying "Those who are well have no need of a physician" and "Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice"
3. **Psalms 17:8** - "Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings"
4. **Psalms 17:15** - "As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness"
5. **Psalms 27:3-6** - "Though an army may encamp against me... One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord... to behold the beauty of the Lord"
6. **Psalms 16:8** - "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved"
7. **Psalms 32** - Reference to "Don't be as the horse or the mule" (requires bit and bridle)
8. **Romans 3:9-26** - Extended passage about no one being righteous, all have sinned, and righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ
9. **2 Samuel 14:24** - Absalom returning to his house but not seeing the king's face
10. **John 8:31-32** - "If you continue in my word, then you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"
11. **John 1:1, 14** - "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"

Alluded to or Paraphrased:

12. **1 John 3:2** - "When we see him as he is, we shall be like him" (theme of beholding and becoming)
13. **Matthew 18:20** - "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst"
14. **Hebrews 4:16** - "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace"
15. **James 4:8** - "Draw near to me, and I will draw near to you"
16. **John 6:68** - "Where else can we go, Lord? You alone have the words of eternal life"
17. **Ephesians 5:14** - "Awake, oh sleeper" (referenced in sermon)
18. **John 11:39** - "By this time he stinketh" (reference to Lazarus)
19. **Acts 17:28-29** - "We are his offspring" (reference to being God's offspring)

Devotional – Beholding Him

Day 1: The Invitation to Draw Near

Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16

Devotional: God's invitation to boldly approach His throne isn't based on our performance but on Jesus' finished work. Like the story of Absalom who was allowed in the kingdom but not permitted to see the king's face, many believers live at a distance from God, knowing they're saved but feeling unworthy of intimacy. This breeds spiritual rebellion and dissatisfaction. Jesus didn't die to keep you at arm's length. He died to bring you face-to-face with the Father. Today, reject every condemning voice that says you're not good enough. By the blood of Jesus alone, you have permission to come close—closer than you've ever been. The throne of grace isn't empty; there's a King waiting to embrace you.

Day 2: Righteousness: The Key to Beholding His Face

Reading: Romans 3:21-26

Devotional: David declared, "I will behold Your face in righteousness" (Psalm 17:15). But whose righteousness? Not our own—Scripture is clear that none are righteous, not even one. The righteousness that grants us access to God's presence is Christ's righteousness, given freely to all who believe. This isn't about living perfectly; it's about receiving perfectly. When you understand that God's anger toward your sin was fully satisfied at the cross, you stop performing for acceptance and start resting in His love. Self-righteousness creates distance; Christ's righteousness creates intimacy. Today, stop trying to earn what's already been freely given. Stand confidently in the righteousness of Jesus and behold His beautiful face without shame or fear.

Day 3: Setting the Lord Always Before You

Reading: Psalm 16:8-11

Devotional: "I have set the LORD always before me" (Psalm 16:8). The Hebrew word for "set" means to level things up—to get on the same page with God. In a world competing for our attention through screens, news, and endless distractions, we must intentionally choose what we behold. David made a deliberate choice: though armies surrounded him, he would fix his gaze on God's beauty through worship and praise. What you consistently behold will transform you. If you spend hours scrolling but minutes with Jesus, what are you becoming like? Create habits that position you to see Him—worship playlists, Scripture reading, moments of stillness. Your screen time report reveals your priorities. Make beholding Jesus your greatest habit, and watch everything else fall into proper perspective.

Day 4: The Love Letter From Heaven

Reading: John 1:1-14

Devotional: Scripture isn't merely a historical document filled with rules and regulations—it's a love letter from your Bridegroom. Just as a journal chronicling affection reveals the heart of a lover, God's Word unveils His passionate pursuit of you. He knew you before you knew Him. He chose you before you could choose Him. The Bible is Jesus wrapped up in text, revealing His heart, His character, His unwavering commitment to you. When you read Scripture today, don't approach it as a duty or a checklist. Read it as the intimate words of Someone who adores you, who dropped you into His hands, who has written your name on His heart. Let His words wash over you, marking your heart with His unfailing love.

Day 5: Awakening in His Likeness

Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

Devotional: "When I awake, I shall be satisfied with Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15). Every time we see Jesus as He truly is, we're transformed into that same image. This isn't about striving to be better—it's about beholding until we become. The world offers countless substitutes for satisfaction, but only seeing Him will truly fulfill the deepest cravings of your heart. You were created for intimacy with Jesus, designed to reflect His beauty. As you consistently gaze upon Him in worship, in Scripture, in prayer, in community, you're being changed from glory to glory. Today, ask God to anoint your eyes with spiritual eye salve. Position yourself to see Him clearly. And know this: once you truly see the real Jesus, you can never unsee Him. That encounter will forever mark and change you.