

Sunday, August 24, 2025 - EYES THAT SEE, EARS THAT HEAR – Pastor John Henry Raskin

Today's message emphasizes the importance of spiritual perception and submission to the Holy Spirit. It begins by discussing the necessity of being "born again" to see and enter the Kingdom of God, as explained by Jesus to the Pharisee Nicodemus.

- We see the Kingdom of God described as a supernatural reality that goes beyond our physical senses and can only be perceived through the Holy Spirit.
- The sermon highlights the contrast between physical and spiritual senses, emphasizing that true understanding and abundant life come from spiritual discernment. It warns against oversensationalizing the supernatural movement of God and encourages believers to recognize the subtle, everyday workings of the Holy Spirit moving in and through them.
- The sermon also addresses the issue of spiritual blindness and deafness, attributing it to hardened hearts rooted in self-interest. Believers are encouraged to cultivate a heart that can see and hear the secrets of the Kingdom by seeking a genuine and humble relationship with God, being open to His wisdom, and staying sensitive to His movements.
- Practical steps are provided to sharpen spiritual perception, including daily prayer, seeking God's wisdom, reading Scripture, staying aware of God's subtle nudges and discussing spiritual insights with other believers.

The sermon concludes with an encouragement to trust in God's timing and remain open to His guidance, recognizing that spiritual growth is a gradual process.

This is our prayer for you...

Colossians 1:3-7, 9-12

3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; 5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth 8 who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.

9 For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; 10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

EYES THAT SEE, EARS THAT HEAR

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

For the last several weeks we've been discussing submission to the Holy Spirit as the answer to allowing the fruit of the Spirit to come out in us in our everyday lives.

Continuing in that vein today I'd like to speak about how we can be assured that we have eyes to see the Kingdom of God and ears that hear from the Holy Spirit so that we can live the abundant life in this place.

As we discussed a couple of months ago the Pharisee Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night was assured by the Messiah that unless one is born again, he cannot see, let alone enter the Kingdom of God.

Once again, I want to remind everyone that when we talk about the Kingdom of God, we are talking about Christ's Kingdom which is not just pie in the sky when you die but the power of God to live the abundant life that you were given and fulfill the purpose for which you were created.

Notice that these things that I'm talking about are very personal and specific, which is why approaching them from a one-size-fits-all religious, traditional or self-interested earthly perspective will never reveal them truly to our spirit.

Proverbs 20:12

**The hearing ear and the seeing eye,
The Lord has made them both.**

While it is true that we have eyes and ears which provide two of our five senses as part of the operating system for our bodies in this place, I want to remind everyone that the abundant life that Jesus speaks of is not a life that can be perceived by the senses but only by the spirit and that through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our physical senses and scientific instruments can only measure the physical world, and the more advanced science becomes, the harder it is to recognize the spiritual dimension affecting everything around us.

But there is an order and purpose beyond our senses or ability to comprehend physically,

that only God, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent knows because He created it, sustains it and in Christ's finished work of the Cross, has redeemed it.

The reality of the Kingdom of God is so beyond the natural world that our senses can perceive, that by its very nature, it is supernatural.

And yet, our view of the supernatural has been so oversensationalized in Christian sermons and novels that many of us may miss the genuine miracles that occur daily while we are seeking after audible voices or physical engagements with angels and demons.

As mysterious and powerful as the supernatural can be, it mostly doesn't come to us that way.

My encounters with the miraculous works of God are far more normal and natural when they happen than most people would think.

Often, it's only when I look back that I am awed by all that God did.

In the retelling, it is easy to embellish and exaggerate stories in a way that causes people to think they are made up and reject the supernatural or discourage them from seeing its movement in their own lives.

That's not to say that some encounters can't be awe-inspiring in the moment, but those are extremely rare by design, and if you're looking for those to be normalized, you will miss just how His Spirit works.

There are no rituals or principles, even biblical ones, that can replace a life of perceiving and responding to His daily work in you once you are born again.

Jesus described it this way to Nicodemus.

John 3:8

8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

When we are truly born again the wind of the Spirit blows across our lives every day inviting us beyond the world that is temporal, and fraught with pain, illusions, and selfishness.

The Spirit is always inviting us to anchor our hearts in the kingdom that is eternal, unshakeable, and true.

Learning to sense His movements around us will lead to a growing fullness of His presence and our immediate purpose as well as provide the courage and wisdom to navigate any difficulties we face.

The Spirit can show you what He wants you to know, feel the emotions God wants you to feel, and ensure that you see what you need to see to know how to respond to what's going on around you.

Jesus told His disciples how blessed they were to be able to understand His words, and that the Pharisees eyes and ears were ineffective because of the hardness of their hearts...

Matthew 13:16-17

16 But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

What an amazing gift we've been given to see the world around us as God sees it. That hasn't always been true for humanity.

Before Jesus's redemption on the cross that removed the power of Satan's hold on us, allowing us to rest confidently in His presence, people could not truly know Him.

Still, even for us who have received the gift of that redemption, spiritual blindness and deafness can be a problem.

That's why Jesus said things like He said to the disciples when they asked Him why He spoke deep mysteries to the people in parables,

Matthew 13:11

11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

Or when He said to all listening to Him...

Mark 4:23

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

However, it is misleading to conclude that only a select few get to see into the supernatural world.

So if you have the feeling that you are being left out, and question why that is, it is a fair question.

Many don't see Jesus engaging them in a way they can recognize and wonder the same thing.

Looking closer at the scriptures, however, the ability to give the gift of spiritual perception was not in Jesus's hands.

He was aware that the Kingdom realities he was bringing inside the human experience were so incredibly different from the world they lived in that most people would miss them.

It was the one who was truly seeking a relationship with God that would encounter Him and recognize Him as Messiah.

That's what He meant when he said...

Matthew 7:8

8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

But then He also said shortly after...

Matthew 7:14

14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

He wasn't distinguishing between saved and unsaved but recognizing that those who desire to follow Him and experience the abundant life here are going to be few.

That's not to say he would only reveal himself to a select group of people, but that only a few would be ready to see and follow.

I've no doubt Jesus wanted to include everyone, but not everyone was ready to be included.

That is still true today. The Holy Spirit draws us all, but having eyes and ears that can perceive spiritual reality is only available to anyone who is ready to follow.

Tuning into that frequency is where we discover what's true about God, ourselves, and the choices we face.

He wants us to have ears that hear Him and eyes to glimpse into that world so that we can live freely in His truth.

In these days of information overload and relative truth, we need to be more sensitive to Him than ever.

So how do we cultivate a heart that can see and hear the secrets of the kingdom?

For context, Let's look at how Jesus spoke of the problem.

Matthew 13:15 NIV

For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

He said those who could not see had “callused hearts”, quoting the Prophet Isaiah.

By that he meant their hearts were hardened to what's true because they had lived so long by their own wisdom and desires, even using the Scriptures to make doctrines of their own preferences.

So, while seeing, they couldn't really see, and hearing, they couldn't really hear.

They interpreted everything through the lens of their own self-interest.

Thus, Jesus disguised his words in parables. It was a way of peaking their interest.

Each time they ignored His leading, the calluses grew thicker. Those who were ready, those who were truly seeking Him, He pulled aside for more detailed explanations.

He does the same today.

This same problem impacted the early believers, which is why Paul warned them, that in the days to come, hardened hearts would embrace “a form of godliness but deny its power”.

It's human nature to turn religion into your practice at the expense of His presence.

Paul also warned of false teachers who would lead people who really wanted to know God to hear only what they wanted to hear.

2 Timothy 4:2 NIV

3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

The callused heart or seared conscience seems to result from bypassing the overtures of the Spirit in deference to our own ambitions.

This is not people making honest mistakes, but those who persistently ignore the Spirit's overtures to them until it becomes nearly impossible to recognize Him anymore.

So, if you find yourself unable to sense His presence in and around you, or feel you've been ignoring His softly insistent nudges, you may need to turn back to Him and ask Him to soften your heart.

He forgives so readily and over time you'll begin to recognize His nudges again.

This is where guilt, self-blame, and desperation are not helpful and in Christ Jesus, must disappear.

Merely continuing trying to be "good for God" is not helpful either.

The Lord told His beloved Prophet Jeremiah when he was in a deep, dark dungeon, unable to see or hear...

Jeremiah 33:3

'Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.'

As your pastor it is incredibly important to me that you are able to hear from the Holy Spirit as you desire and are willing to yield to Him.

This is a prayer that Paul prayed for the Colossian church whom he had never met in person but loved intensely.

This is our prayer for you...

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There is so much encouragement in those words.

I have included that prayer in this week's handout.

Let the Apostle's words capture you. Memorize them. Write them on the frontlets between your eyes and on your fingers so that you may truly hear, see and walk out the perfect will of God for your life.

Holding these words in my heart helps me tune my spirit to the Holy Spirit's frequency as I recognize how He is working around me.

Asking Him to reveal Himself to you, and being patient and attentive, will help you discern the spiritual world around you and how His Spirit blows through it.

This is less about miraculous signs than it is about developing a growing discernment of what He is doing around you and how he is revealing Jesus to and in and through you.

Celebrate each nudge you feel, each bit of His wisdom that He puts in your mind and follow where He seems to be leading you.

Try daily journaling as a means of seeing, hearing and remembering what He is doing with you, in you and through you.

Rest and quiet are your friends here. Desperation in prayer or action puts us right back in human-effort mode.

Staying relaxed in Jesus's love allows him to show us what we need to know when we need to know it.

Here are some things that I have found helpful to sharpen my spiritual eyes and ears...

1. Getting alone with God in a quiet place and praying every morning.

You don't have to close your eyes, but there's something about shutting out the earthly distractions and tuning into God's realm that helps us see what He's seeing.

Talk with God as you would a friend about the things that are going on in your life, your hopes, your dreams, your challenges.

2. Asking God for His wisdom.

God's wisdom is multifaceted, and His thoughts and ways are greater than ours.

Ask with a willingness to lay aside your opinions and perspectives and reach for His.

James tells us that "God gives wisdom generously to all who ask, and without reproach"

3. Reading Scripture every day with an open heart to what God is saying to you

God desires to light the pathway for us, and He'll often do that with specific Scripture passages and verses.

As you apply yourself to daily reading of the Word, He will illuminate certain passages that will resonate with things that are happening in your life.

4. Keeping your spiritual antennae up

Nothing spooky here... Just pay attention throughout the day to how the Spirit may be leading you through conversations and circumstances during your season of discernment.

5. Discussing what you're sensing

It's great to have two or three other believers who are seeking the leading of the Spirit as you and to gather periodically for prayer and discussion. God often gives each person a piece of the puzzle and then fits it all together. "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Let me encourage you... If He's not revealing anything to you today, all you need to do is stay open so you are ready when He does.

Trusting Him with His timing will help immensely; begging for answers you want will only distract you. His timing usually isn't anything close to what we'd expect.

Seeing His world in yours may be a slow process with a glorious arc.

Don't pressure yourself looking for quick results. Let him relieve you of unrealistic expectations.

This counsel from Julian of Norwich, who lived in the latter half of the 14th Century, is helpful.

“We need not worry if we cannot “find” God, for we are only responsible for seeking; no formula exists for finding. The revelation of the Divine Presence is always unpredictable and surprising.”

Don't look for special “words”, signals and visions, bells or whistles.

What you're looking for are glimpses into His kingdom in thoughts and nudges that cause you to think differently than your natural inclinations.

As you begin this journey, His Spirit will want to help you discover just how deeply loved by God you are, and free you from shame, guilt, and fear that makes it more difficult to see.

That's how He removes the calluses.

As you awaken further to the Spirit's work, you'll have a growing sense of what's really going on around you and not just what you think might be true.

Seeing into His Kingdom worldview will be a powerful source of comfort, peace, and courage in the face of your most challenging circumstances and give you the awareness that you will need when the “good works that God has prepared beforehand for you to do” arise.

Let’s pray...