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Preacher: Chris Thornton

- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Okay, good morning everyone. Good morning. If you don't know me, my name is Chris. I'm the teaching pastor here at Watermark. It's great to see so many of you coming out.
- Who's coming for the walk? Great. If you haven't put your hand up, somebody will press gang you into coming on the walk with us. Again, kids are going to be staying in this morning, so they've got something to color in with.
- If your kids are kind of running around going crazy, it's fine. Feel free to kind of take them around to the back. We're family, so it's cool. Okay.
- If you've got a bulletin with you, I would like you to take out your bulletin. If you don't have a bulletin, has someone not got a bulletin? Could somebody go and grab some for us so that everyone can get one?
- If you look on your bulletin, you will see inside there is a little rectangle with a cross and a dot there. Can everyone see that?
- [ 1 : 0 6 ]     Yes? Okay. What I would like you to do is, I would like you to close your right eye. Okay? And I'd like you to look at the cross. Okay?
- Still keep the dot in focus, but keep your eye on the cross. And I'd like you to move the sheet of paper as close to you as you can until you see the dot disappear.
- Has everyone found it? Okay. Some of you, it's like not disappearing. Just, okay. Close your right eye.
- Look with your left eye. Okay? Bring it closer. Bring it further away until you find that. Some of you are going, I don't know what's going on here.
- Who hasn't managed to work it out? Okay. A few of you haven't managed to work it out.
- [ 2 : 0 8 ]     Okay. We'll spend a special session with you afterwards in how to do it. What you should realize is that every single one of us actually has a blind spot.
- Where if you focus in a certain way at a certain point, there are things which are actually there, which at some point, physically your eye actually doesn't see them.
- Okay? We all have blind spots. Not just physical blind spots, but blind spots in our lives. And I know some of you are like, the rest of the sermon, you're not going to hear this because you're just kind of going in and out.
- I know, it's terrible to start like that. Control yourselves. Okay. We all have blind spots in our lives. We all have things which are there, which we don't always see because we are focusing on certain things so deeply that actually we miss some of the reality of what's going on around us.
- And one of those great blind spots in our lives is the people around us. People in need around us. And you know, Hong Kong is such a crazy place because it really just draws your focus with all the pressure that we're under in this city so that if you're a student, where does your focus get drawn?

[ 3 : 33 ] It's all on your exams coming up, all on your studies. If you are a worker, where does your focus get drawn? It gets drawn on those deadlines, those projects, those annoying colleagues, the desire for career promotion.

If you're a parent, where does your focus get drawn? It gets drawn all onto the demands of parenting, health, education, all these things which are necessary and realities in our lives.

But the thing is, often what Hong Kong does for us is it pressures us into seeing the things and focusing more on the problems we have in life rather than the blessings that we have in life.

We focus more on what we don't have than on what we do have. And all the resources and the things that God has given us that are available to us that he uses so that we might bless other people.

You see, I was talking to a guy a while ago and he says to me, initially he was looking for a job and he couldn't find a job and then finally he found this job and I came to him and I said, congratulations, it's amazing.

[ 4 : 45 ] And he said, yeah, but I've only got 10 days holiday. I went to somebody else and I said, hey, it's bonus time coming up. And this guy, he got a great bonus from his work and he was really happy and then he looked over to his colleague who got a bigger bonus than him and I met up with him and he was depressed because he didn't have as much as the other person had.

You see, our minds are often focused on what we don't have more than the blessings of what we do have. And when we're like that in Hong Kong, what happens is we tend to focus more on ourselves and we don't see the people around us who we could bless with what he has given us.

You know, 120 years ago, there was a lady called Martha Polster. She was a German Christian missionary. She came to Hong Kong and she saw four visually impaired girls that nobody else saw, that everybody else ignored because they were wrapped up in their problems and their issues.

But she saw them. And she did what love always does. Love sees and then love reaches out. Love sees and love reaches out.

And she knows she started this school 120 years ago. Ebenezer School. And since then, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of children and adults have been transformed through this school bringing hope, bringing dignity, bringing life into them.

[ 6 : 23 ] And the reason that her eyes were open to this was because she saw what this Advent season is all about. She saw that Advent was about the coming of Jesus Christ, the coming of hope, the coming of the one who in this passage we read said this, the spirit of the sovereign Lord of the Lord is upon me and he's anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, to the prisoners, to the blind, to the oppressed.

Do you notice he didn't say I've come to proclaim good news to those that I kind of feel comfortable with. he didn't say I've come to proclaim good news to those who are kind of like me because he wouldn't have had many people then to proclaim to.

He didn't say I've come to proclaim good news to those who haven't made any poor choices in their life. He said I've come to proclaim good news to the poor, to the prisoner, to the blind, to the oppressed, to the people on the margins of society that everyone else doesn't see.

And we know he didn't just come, he was sent because that was his mission in a world which is broken and filled with injustice and pain.

But we know that we are the recipients of that because poverty is spiritual, economic, relational, emotional, it covers all of that.

[ 8 : 05 ] We are all blind in many ways because we're blind to God. We are blind and we are poor in love towards other people and towards God.

We are prisoners to our own ambitions and our own desires and yet Jesus came down to reach out to us because he saw us and he reached out because love sees and love reaches out.

one of the great desires of our hearts is that someone would take an interest in us, that someone would see us in spite of what we're like and they would show grace to us.

That is what Jesus has done for each one of us if we are believers and trust in him. But he also says, Jesus says, as I was sent so I send you.

I send you to go. in this city where we have, we mentioned one in five people live below the poverty line. Every time you go to work you are walking past people who are hopeless, suffering and in despair.

[ 9 : 16 ] And God wants to open our eyes to see who is it that he's calling us to. We are not the savior of the world, Jesus is, but he wants to open our eyes to see the people he has put around us and to reach out to them.

I read this story, a biography, it's a biography called Guailo, about an English boy who grew up in Hong Kong called Martin.

And one day his mom found out that there was a leper colony in Hong Kong. Did you know there used to be a leper colony in Hong Kong? Did you know Hayling Tao, near Land Tao, used to have a leper colony until the 1970s, where the lepers were basically, they were pushed onto this island because nobody wanted to be around them because they could be contagious, it could be, it was just awkward in society.

And so they were put onto this island and kind of left there. And the mother of this boy found out that there was this island there. And she said, I want to go and find out what this is about.

I want to go and see these people. And do you know what her husband said? Her husband said, don't you dare go. Because if you go, like, you don't speak canto.

[ 10 : 36 ] If you go, like, you might get something, it might be dangerous. If you go, well, why should we bother about those guys? We've got enough issues of ourselves. But the mum went with the whole family.

And the dad actually went kind of following on behind because, you know, the mum was pretty strong. And he got to the point where they got to the island. Everybody gets off the boat.

Dad stays in the boat. He's not getting off. But they get off and they see that these people who were this leper colony, they actually realized these are real people. These are not just lepers.

They're human beings who are real. people. And they walked up to them in a frightened way because they were scared of stepping out of their comfort zone to these unknown people.

At one point, they walked up to one and one of the lepers reached out and touched the head of the sun. And they looked into each other's eyes and there was this moment of saying, you have dignity and you have worth and you have value.

[ 11 : 45 ] I wonder how many of us see things in Hong Kong and yet we're not willing to reach out because we're afraid. How many of us are more like the dad who wants to stay in the boat?

But the call of the gospel is not that we're called just to have human compassion on people. It's that we have an incredible message of hope and life, of forgiveness and grace and mercy to bring hope to the hopeless, to bring light to those who are poor, prisoners, blind, oppressed.

That's why we're here as a church and that's one of the reasons why we're doing this walk today because we want to see what would it look like with us who tend to focus so much on what we don't have to remember how much God has given us and then to look out and see what is it that the people God has placed around us.

That's partly why we're starting this love offering. So over the next four weeks we're going to be sharing about the partners who are reaching out into Hong Kong in different ways to think how we can get involved in supporting them financially, in supporting them even by saying, well, could I just go and see?

Could I just go and see? Some of you are already involved and I encourage you to just keep sharing with other people what you're seeing. But the spirit of the Lord is not just on Jesus.

[ 13 : 11 ] The spirit of the Lord is on us as Christians. God has sent us into this world to proclaim good news to people. There is a real cost in going.

There is a cost that Jesus paid. There is a cost, but Jesus paid it for us because he saw us.

So my question is, who do you see? Who do you see? And my prayer is that God would open our eyes, that we would pray, God open my eyes to see who you want me to see this morning.

Who you want me to see so that you might show me how I might reach out. If your kids and you focus on your kids' education completely, and that's all that wraps up your mind, your kids are going to grow up with huge blind spots in their lives.

If you're a worker and all you focus on is just your work in everything in your life and you never see something bigger, you will live a life which is shrunk down like this.

[ 14 : 26 ] Jesus calls us to be part of something bigger, which is his mission. He wants us to see his people that he's called us to reach out to. And he will go with us with his power and his spirit.

He wants us to make him moving forward and driving the core.

He wants us to probe your office to see himself and he is quiere Euzy they as he knows you your husband and and■■■■ils and■■ have so much installed and they have like