

# Matthew 11:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,

## Analysis

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'But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.' Jesus pronounces His disciples blessed (μακάριοι/makarioi, supremely happy, fortunate) because they possess spiritual sight and hearing—God's gracious gift. This beatitude contrasts sharply with verse 15's description of those whose eyes and ears remain spiritually closed. The blessing isn't for superior intellect, moral achievement, or religious effort but for receiving God's revelation. The verb tenses matter: 'they see' and 'they hear' (present active) indicate ongoing spiritual perception. Reformed theology recognizes this as effectual calling and illumination—God opens blind eyes and deaf ears, enabling His elect to perceive and receive gospel truth. This blessing surpasses material prosperity, political power, or worldly success. Those who see Christ's glory, understand His gospel, and hear His voice possess earth's supreme privilege. Yet it's pure grace—they didn't earn spiritual sight but received it as gift. This provides assurance: if you understand and believe, God has opened your eyes and ears. It also cultivates gratitude: spiritual perception is privileged gift, not natural human capacity.

## Historical Context

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Jesus addressed His disciples—the Twelve and perhaps wider circle of followers (see Matthew 5:1, 13:36)—distinguishing them from crowds and religious leaders who heard but didn't understand. The disciples hadn't achieved superior education or religious status. They were Galilean fishermen, tax collectors, zealots—ordinary people. Yet they received what Pharisees, scribes, and Israel's elites missed: they

recognized Jesus as Messiah, understood His teaching (with help—see Matthew 16:16-17), and followed Him. This pattern—God revealing truth to the simple while hiding it from the wise—runs throughout Scripture (Matthew 11:25-26, 1 Corinthians 1:26-29). It continued in church history: God used uneducated preachers to spark revivals, simple believers to advance gospel, ordinary people to shame philosophical elites. The disciples' blessedness came not from themselves but from God's sovereign choice to illumine them. Paul expresses similar thanksgiving (Ephesians 1:17-18): prayer that God would give believers enlightened eyes to know Him better—recognition that spiritual sight is ongoing divine gift.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does recognizing spiritual sight as God's gift rather than your achievement affect your pride and gratitude?
2. What evidence demonstrates you have eyes that truly see and ears that truly hear—beyond intellectual assent to heart transformation?
3. How should this blessing shape your prayer for those who remain spiritually blind and deaf?

## Interlinear Text

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Τίνι δὲ ὁμοιώσω τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην ὁμοία ἔστιν  
whereunto But shall I liken G3588 generation G3778 like G3664 It is  
G5101 G1161 G3666 G1074 G3778 G3664 G2076

παιδαρίοις ἐν ἀγοραῖς καθημένοις καὶ προσφωνοῦσιν  
unto children in the markets sitting and calling  
G3808 G1722 G58 G2521 G2532 G4377

τοῖς ἔταίροις αὐτῶν,  
G3588 fellows G846  
G2083

## Additional Cross-References

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**Mark 4:30** (Parallel theme): And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it?

**Matthew 23:36** (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

**Luke 13:18** (Parallel theme): Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it?

**Lamentations 2:13** (Parallel theme): What thing shall I take to witness for thee? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? for thy breach is great like the sea: who can heal thee?

**Matthew 12:34** (Parallel theme): O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

**Matthew 24:34** (Parallel theme): Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.