

January 3, 2016

## THE EYE

Matthew 6:22-23

A person who has learned the science of healing in medical school, who has come to understand illnesses, their symptoms, their treatments, and their prevention, but who never puts that learning into practice, is like a person who lights a lamp and then hides it under a bushel. Faith is like a light. But here, Jesus, I believe, is referring to Himself. He is the light which God has ignited, and wants everyone to see. It would do no good for those who want to hide His light, to put Him under a bushel. But this is part of what an evil generation that seeks for signs might do. For many, Jesus is not what they expected for a messiah, and so they want Him to prove Himself *their* way in order to show how He *is* the Messiah, the Christ.

The difficult issue of how He is perceived is explained in this parable about how we see things – *The eye is the lamp of the body.*

There is a trap in wanting to be perceived a certain way. A young couple trying to break into high society hosted a dinner party in their home. The guests were enjoying their hors d'oeuvres and cocktails when the caterer reported to the hostess that the cat had climbed up on the kitchen counter and eaten a portion from the middle of the large fish they were going to serve. Not knowing whether or not there even was a pet, the caterer had left the dish uncovered, since it was soon to be served. The hostess went into the kitchen, and, after quickly brainstorming what to do, decided to fill in the eaten portion with some canned salmon and other camouflage. The fish was then served. Later, as the guests were enjoying their dessert the caterer called the hostess into the kitchen and announced, very distressed, "Madam, the cat is dead."

The hostess and her husband didn't know what to do. They decided on telling the truth. Here's the way they put it. "You all said you enjoyed the fish. But the cat had eaten a little portion of the fish and is now dead. We don't know how this could have happened, but we suggest that it might be best if we all went to the hospital to have our stomachs pumped. Hours later, when the couple had returned home, the caterer was just finishing up, cleaning a few things. They asked her where she had put the cat. She replied, "It's still out on the road where the car ran over it!"

The moral of the story is that it's not always best to think the worst.

When we think the worst, we doubt the most. When we think we are failures, we will fail. When we think we are bad persons, we will do no good. When we think the world is lost, we'll have no hope. When we think someone is not living up to our expectations, we will see only their short-comings. The way we think often determines the life we live. There is a verse in Proverbs which says, in the King James Version: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (23:7) The people who wanted Jesus to prove Himself had the wrong expectations of the Messiah.

Jesus proclaims many times that we often think about the wrong things. When we lay up treasures on earth rather than in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21), we are thinking the wrong way. When we are stressed and anxious about what we eat or drink, we should rather think about God's glorious Kingdom and the righteous life (Matthew 6:25-33) And we are thinking the wrong way when we think of others negatively, as when Jesus says that our angry thoughts toward our brothers and sisters are just as bad as killing our brothers and sisters. (Matthew 5:21-22) And certainly, we are not thinking right when we think of others as the objects of our lust. (Matthew 5:28)

The moral of the story is that wrong thoughts keep us from being right.

As a matter of fact, the things we think about, and even the way we think, can sometimes make us sick, physically sick, morally sick, and spiritually sick....sinful.

The way we think can make a difference in the way we live. Our thoughts are like visions projected on the screen of our souls. If we project dark thoughts inwardly, our souls will be shadowed and gloomy. *If your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness!* If we project light onto our souls, we will have a brightness about us, and enlightenment, or, a well-illuminated soul. *If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light!* By looking on the bright side, we will live in the light!

Paul said in his Letter to the Philippians, "*Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things!*" (4:8)

Have you ever become frustrated while you are driving? You could be, like me, the best driver in the world, and still become agitated by the way other people drive. Or, by the street signs that aren't well located. And when you turn that frustration outward by cursing the other drivers, or, by cursing the street sign, it brings a dark cloud over not only yourself as the driver, but over everyone else in the car, and, maybe, other cars!

I need to be able to thank God more quickly because I can still get back to the right road, and, because the other crazy drivers are also souls for whom Jesus died!

But driving is an easy example. What if you are frustrated at work, or, with friends, or, family? What if you get disappointed, discouraged, or distraught? The same sort of darkness comes upon us unless we know how to look on the bright side. There's a beautiful old song that some people still sing. It goes like this:

Look for the silver lining  
Whenever a cloud appears in the blue  
Remember somewhere the sun is shining  
And so the right thing to do is make it shine for you  
A heart full of joy and gladness  
Will always banish sadness and strife.  
So always look for the silver lining  
And try to find the sunny side of life!

What fills your heart? Well what do you look at? How do you see things? "*The eye is the lamp of the body.*" What we look at becomes a vision projected on our soul. If we are looking at a distorted picture of life, or, if we are looking through a distorted lens, a lens of wrong expectations or wrong desires, we will have a distorted vision projected on our soul, and, even as distorted point of view. If we look at Jesus Christ, or anybody for that matter, with some kind of pre-conceived expectations, again, we will be looking through a distorted lens. If we can just learn to look with a faithful attitude, we will feel more illuminated about things, or, so to speak, "*If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.*"

It's not always just *what* you look at that makes the difference, though, but how you look at it. It will not take away the frustrating or disappointing experiences, but they will not need to darken your days.

Look at your hand. It's a miracle. Go like this: Open and close it! Isn't that great!? What's amazing is that God made us able to do that. Our brains think it and our hands do it. The message from our brains follows the nerves and the nerves do exactly what we want them to do, most of the time, for most people.

Think about your sense of touch, your sense of taste, your senses of hearing, smelling, and sight. If you've got just one or two of your senses, you've got quite a lot. You've got something amazing. There is more reason to rejoice just because you can see and touch than there is reason to curse because you get frustrated by some small thing. Think about the color blue. All of a sudden, you'll begin to see blue things! Isn't it amazing? Think of the Kingdom of God and all of a sudden, you'll begin to see signs of its presence! Start looking at the blessings in your life, and they will so outshine the things that frustrate you that it will seem as though your whole body will be full of light. Look at the blessings in the lives of those who frustrate or disappoint you, especially blessings they may not even know, like the fact that Jesus died to save them from their sins and you will see them in a whole new light. If the way you look at others includes the lens of faith, then *you* will be different. *If your eye is sound, then your whole body will be full of light!* If you always look on the bright side, then you'll truly live in the light!