

INTRODUCTION

We are walking together through the Gospel According to Matthew and stopping to talk about every Parable and Miracle of Jesus. Our definition of a parable is when Jesus shares a natural truth, and alongside that He lays down a spiritual truth. This includes metaphors and word pictures like salt, light—and today a human eye. Jesus is telling us, “What you see is what you get!”

The phrase “What you see is what you get” was made popular by comedian Flip Wilson who first appeared on Rowan and Martin’s “Laugh-In”. He played a quirky woman named Geraldine who would flip her hair and explain her eccentric behavior by saying “What you see is what you get, baby.” In the 1980s, computer gurus borrowed the phrase from Flip Wilson to apply it to computers. They reduced the phrase to the first letters of each word to spell wysiwyg (pronounced wizzie-wig). In word processing programs, wysiwyg means once you have finished a document on your screen, the printout will look the same: What you see on the screen is what you’ll get when you print it out. With so many software glitches, wysiwyg also gave birth to the word wysyhyg which stands for “What you see you hope you get!”

“What you see is what you get” was also a song recorded by Brittany Spears. She sang, “What you see is what you get; this is me, hey you; if you want me, don’t forget; you should take me as I am; ‘cause I can promise you; baby, what you see is what you get.” Apparently Kevin Federline decided he didn’t like what he saw!

Jesus employed the metaphor of the human eye to talk about priorities. What we look at—what we stare at—what we focus on the most in our lives is really what we end up getting in life. I could just read the verses 22 and 23 about the eye, but if I did, I would be robbing it of its context. I’ve often said a text without its context becomes a pretext. These verses about the eye are sandwiched between two passages about treasures and money. Let’s read Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:19-24:

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

It’s hard to see if you don’t have any light. A man was walking down a street at night and saw another man searching for something under a street light. He approached the man and asked him what he was looking for. The man said, “I’ve lost my watch, so I’m looking for it.” The first guy started helping him search and after a few minutes he said, “Where exactly were you standing when you dropped it?” The man pointed down the street and said, “Over there somewhere.” The first man was puzzled and said, “Then why are you searching here?” Without looking up he

replied, "Because the light is better here!"

How is your eyesight today? Is your vision full of light, or full of darkness? I'm not asking you if you have 20/20 vision, I'm more interested in what you are looking for and what you are looking at. Because what you look at the most will determine what kind of person you become. What you see is what you get. I'd like to share with you three spiritual principles that can be found in the words of Jesus.

(1) BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU VIEW BECAUSE YOUR EYE IS THE GATEWAY TO YOUR HEART

This simple parable can be summarized in the eight words Jesus spoke, "The eye is the lamp of the body." We usually think of our vision moving out from our eye as we look at things, but Jesus was saying our eyes are really like a gateway to our inner lives—our heart. Our senses are like gates that allow input into our lives. You would never willingly eat poison, because your mouth is the gateway to your stomach. But there are many people who are looking at poisonous sights and scenes and they never stop to consider the poison is damaging their mind and heart.

One of the first songs I learned in Sunday School went like this, "Oh, be careful little eyes what you see; Oh be careful little eyes what you see. For the Father up above is looking down in love, so be careful little eyes what you see." The other verses said, "Be careful little ears what you hear; Be careful little mouth what you say; Be careful little hands what you touch; Be careful little feet where you go; The sequence of those verses are important. It all starts with the eyes. You won't touch anything until you first see it and desire it. You won't go anywhere without first looking to see where you're going. So controlling what enters the eye-gate is of critical importance. That song still offers great advice, especially to adults. When I learned it as a kid, about the most misleading television program I watched was Captain Kangaroo. I never was too sure about Mr. Greenjeans!

In the specific context of this scripture, Jesus is talking about the danger of focusing on laying up treasures on earth. We have all had the experience of seeing something and then wanting it. Ladies, have you ever seen someone wearing a new outfit and you think, "I've got to have that?" Guys, have you seen someone driving a new car and say, "I've got to have one like that?" Young people have you seen someone with a cool new smart phone or some other gadget, and you think, "Wow, I gotta' get me one of those?"

All desire begins with a look. It can be a good desire or a bad desire; it all depends on what you're looking for. We're warned in 1 John 2:16 that we shouldn't love the things of the world, and then it lists the progression of sin: "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world."

The very first sin ever recorded was when Eve ate the forbidden fruit. It started with a look. The serpent only placed the idea before her, and her mistake was looking at it that led to wanting it. Genesis 3:6 says, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." That's the exact progression in 1 John 2. The lusts of the flesh (she *saw* it would be good for food); the lust of the

eyes (it was *pleasing* to her eye); and the pride of life (she wanted to *be* like God and have His wisdom).

Be careful little eyes what you see because every sinful act begins with a look. Earlier in this same Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned that if a man looked a woman with lust in his heart that he has already committed adultery with her! Does that mean we have to walk around with blindfolds on? No. There's nothing you can do when you see an attractive member of the opposite sex. You can even appreciate the beauty of that person without lusting after them. There's nothing wrong with the first look, or the casual glance. But it's that second and third look—the lingering look that can lead to mental adultery. All mental adultery doesn't lead to physical adultery—you can stop the process at that point. Confess it and repent of it between you and God only. However, every case of physical adultery started with a lingering look.

King David is another example of looking in the wrong direction. He should have been out leading his soldiers into battle. Instead he was at his palace, and as he walked on his roof he happened to see Bathsheba taking a bath. He could have avoided a great deal of pain and agony in his life (and in the lives of others) if he had looked away. But instead he continued to look, and then he fantasized. Later that night he sent his servants to bring Bathsheba to his bedroom. What started with a lustful look led to murder, death, ruin and misery.

In verse 23 Jesus said, "If your eyes are bad then your whole body will be full of darkness." Let me be very personal for a moment. Are you allowing evil images to enter your mind and heart through the eye-gate? There are multitudes of men, many of them Christians, who are addicted to internet pornography. When you let those sexually explicit images enter your brain and heart through your eyes, you are filling your heart with darkness, death, and despair. There is a way out from pornography addiction if you want to turn your eyes away from it. You can be a part of our Celebrate Recovery ministry which has a support group for those dealing with pornography and sexual addiction. Or you can go to the excellent website called triple x-church. The address is www.xxxchurch.com. This is a ministry to help people have victory over pornography.

You may be feeling a little pinch of pride because you aren't addicted to porn. Well, what are you letting flood your mind through the eye-gate? Are you addicted to Oprah, reality TV shows, or smutty novels? Be careful of the poison you allow in through your eye-gate.

We have a choice of what we view. We can choose to look at things that rob us of life, or we can choose to focus on things that give us life. The same man who committed adultery with Bathsheba sang these words when he was younger: "I will set before my eyes no vile thing." (Psalm 101:3) The Psalmist also wrote, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." (Psalm 119:18) Would you be willing to make that your prayer every day to God? Why don't you say, "Lord, I won't put any wicked, evil, vile thing before my eyes? Instead open my eyes to focus on your Word because it is full of wonderful things." So be careful little eyes what you see; be careful little eyes what you see; for the Father up above is looking down in love, so be careful little eyes what you see!

(2) TO BE FILLED WITH GOODNESS, KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE LIGHT

Jesus said, "If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light." As I've often said, the best way to deal with sin in your life is NOT by trying NOT to think about that sin. In other words, if you are a slave to pornography, the best strategy is *not* to constantly say, "Don't look at porn, don't look at porn." Because you find yourself focusing on the thing you don't want to do. No, the best way to stop focusing on filthy things is to start focusing on the good. Replace the stinking thinking in your head with thoughts about Jesus. The Bible says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8) Jesus is true, He is noble, He is right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy, so focus on Him.

There is an old proverb, often wrongly attributed to Shakespeare that states, "The eyes are the windows of the soul." The intent of that proverb is that you can often look into a person's eyes and see the condition of their soul. This means the eyes allow the light within to shine out. This is actually the opposite of what Jesus meant when He said, "the eye is the lamp of the soul." He was speaking of the eye letting light in, not revealing what may be there. There's a big difference between a window and a lamp. A window is passive: It merely lets light in or out of a house. A lamp is active: It illuminates a house. But as we learned in the last lesson, we don't generate light, we can only reflect it. Jesus is the light of the world, like the sun. And we are the light of the world, like the moon. So if you want to be filled with God's goodness, you need to focus on Jesus Christ, who is true light that lights every person.

The Bible says, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) At the beginning of the beginning, there was only darkness and chaos and God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. That miracle of new creation is repeated every time a person accepts Christ. God comes to a person living in darkness and chaos and says, "Let there be light!" And at that moment a person is filled with the light of the knowledge that Jesus is God.

Satan's primary desire is to keep people from seeing the light of God's truth. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." It doesn't say Satan blinds the EYES of unbelievers, he blinds the MINDS of unbelievers. How? By filling their minds with the darkness that comes from focusing on the wrong things.

Have you seen the light? Is your heart filled with light or darkness? There's a great old hymn that I love that says, "There is sunshine in my soul today; More glorious and bright; than glows in any earthly sky; for Jesus is my light! Oh there's sunshine, blessed sunshine; while the peaceful, happy moments roll. When Jesus shows His smiling face, there is sunshine in my soul."

And when you see the light, you can't help but want to share the light with others. There is a true story about a little girl named Hannah, who was saved at an early age. A few years after she was saved she said to her mother, "Mommy, I think Jesus has moved out of my heart." With concern her mother asked Hannah where she thought Jesus had gone. She replied, "He has moved to my throat, because all I want to do is tell other people about Jesus."

(3) WHATEVER YOU FOCUS ON MOST BECOMES YOUR GOD

Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters." And, no, Jesus didn't mean a man can't be married to two women! You've probably heard this verse many times, but perhaps you didn't realize Jesus spoke these words immediately after talking about how important it is to *look* at the proper things instead of letting evil things in through your eyes.

You can have two friends, but you can't have two masters. You can cheer for two teams, but you can't have two masters. You can work for two employers, but you can't have two masters. You can even attend two or more churches, but you can't have two masters. You can only have ONE ultimate master—the One to whom you give absolute allegiance.

Remember, the context of this passage is greed. A greedy person hoards treasures on earth. A greedy person worships at the altar of the almighty dollar. The rock group Creed has song entitled "In America." You may find their lyrics disturbing, but I think they express a truth that few people are willing to admit. The song says: "Only in America, we're slaves to be free; Only in America we kill the unborn to make ends meet; Only in America is sexuality democracy; Only in America we stamp our god, 'In God we trust.'" Creed is singing something that few people admit. Money has become the god of America and we have the audacity to stamp "in God we Trust" on our false god of Money.

Are you a greedy person? Greed is a subtle sin. If you're a Roman Catholic you can go into a confessional and confess your sins to the priest. We don't have confessional booths here, but through the years people have come to me and confessed all kinds of sins and shortcomings. Of course, you don't have to confess your sins to another person, but sometimes it helps to bring someone into the circle of your confession to help you find forgiveness. I've heard almost every sin you can imagine: I've stopped being surprised. Of course, I never reveal these sins. I'm taking so much with me to the grave, that it will probably require 20 pallbearers when I'm buried. But in over 30 years of being a pastor, I've never had one single person come to me and say, "Pastor, I'm guilty of the sin of greed." Greed is a subtle but sinister sin.

There are two things you can look at in this life. You can look at all the visible, tangible things that surround us: houses, land, cars, boats, and clothes. And if you spend your life focusing on those things and desiring them, you will get them, because what you see is what you get. But there is something else you can focus on: the Kingdom of God. It's invisible, but it is more real than the ground beneath your feet.

So you've got to make your choice. What you focus on the most becomes your god. That's why the Bible says, "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18)

CONCLUSION

What are you looking at right now in your life? If you focus on climbing the ladder of success so you can have more money to buy more toys, you'll probably get it, but what will you have? I've

known people who spent the best years of their life scaling the ladder of success only to discover toward the end of their lives that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall! There is something more to life than just this physical existence, and if you focus your eyesight and attention on knowing Jesus, then that's what you'll get as well. What you SEE is what you get.

You may be facing a difficult life challenge now. You may be sick, or someone you love is sick. Where are you looking for help? It may be you're facing a personal crisis that has to do with your marriage or your family. Where are you looking? Others of you are facing a financial challenge right now. You expected money to be there for your retirement, but now your pension or 401k has lost much of its value. "Honey, I shrunk our retirement." Where are you looking? Your focus will determine how you make it through these life-challenges.

The Psalmist says, "I will lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2) Your outlook will determine your outcome!

Many of you know and love Pastor Charles Stanley. He became pastor of First Baptist Church Atlanta in 1971 and his first few years there were full of turmoil, criticism, and opposition. He followed a long-time, popular pastor, and many of the members didn't like some of his new ideas, which included a 30-minute television program on a local station. Dr. Stanley struggled to deal with the opposition along with the other demands of ministry. He was so discouraged, his ministry there almost ended soon after it began.

In the midst of this difficult time, an elderly church member kept calling him and asking him to stop by her house. He thought he didn't have time to see her so he procrastinated. She persisted however, so to make her stop calling him, Dr. Stanley arranged to stop by her house for a few minutes.

When he arrived she said, "Pastor you need to see this." She showed him a framed print of a famous painting of "Daniel in the Den of Lions." It showed Daniel standing in the lion's den with the lions behind him. There was a window high up on the wall with light coming in, revealing the horror of that terrible place. She said, "What do you see, Pastor?" Charles said rather impatiently, "Daniel in the lion's den. I've seen this picture before." She asked, "What is Daniel doing?" He replied, "I told you, he's standing in the lion's den." She persisted, "But what is Daniel DOING?" Dr. Stanley said that he was growing tired of this game. He needed to be on his way, so he said with exasperation. "Well why don't you tell me what you think he's doing?"

She said, "Pastor, Daniel isn't looking at the lions, he's looking up at the light. Pastor what are YOU doing?" She put her arm around Dr. Stanley's shoulder and gently said, "Pastor, don't look at the lions that are threatening you right now, just keep your eyes on Jesus."

Dr. Stanley said he left that lady's home with tears in his eyes. That visit became a turning point in his ministry, and from that day he stopped looking at his problems and started focusing on the problem-solver, Jesus. What are you doing today? What are you focusing on? Are you looking at the lions or the light?

As we often sing, "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart, I want to see you. I want to see you!" That's a prayer God will always answer because if you are seeking to focus on Jesus, then you will find Him when you seek Him with your whole heart. Remember, what you see is what you get!

OUTLINE

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"I will set before my eyes no vile thing." *Psalms 101:3*

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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes