

Seeing With The Eyes Of Jesus



When God came into the world in human form, He saw **things** as they should be seen. Thus He didn't attach nearly so much importance to money, possessions and their accumulation as humans generally do. He saw **events** as they should be seen. So He didn't worry, fret and lose sleep over the things that tend to bother the rest of us. And He certainly saw **people** as they were meant to be seen. He didn't make the distinctions about gender, race, and social status that have come to be so important to humans.

Much of the teaching of Jesus works subtly to undermine the old ways of viewing things that had become customary to the world He entered. Oh, He sometimes challenged the old ways directly — by telling His listeners not to love and hoard this world's treasures (Matthew 6:19-24), not to worry so much (Matthew 6:25-34), not to judge people by outward appearances and trivial factors (Matthew 7:1-6). But His most effective challenge to these old ways of thinking may have come through the astute and sophisticated subtleties of His teaching and personal behavior.

Jesus both taught and modeled a "ministry of reconciliation" that sees people for their spiritual needs and possibilities rather than for their worldly rank or position. Paul wrote about the phenomenon I am trying to describe with these words:

Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (II Corinthians 5:14-19).

Don't you wish we human beings could learn to see things, events, and people through the eyes of Jesus? Don't you wish we could think and feel as He did? Don't you think that would enable us to act more as He did? This is the challenge Paul addresses in Romans — the challenge to live "by the Spirit" rather than "after the flesh."

The Healing of a Paralyzed Man

One day as Jesus was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law, who had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was present for Him to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralytic on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, He said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to

themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

For now, simply mark the statement "We have seen remarkable things today." We will work our way back to it.

What Happened That Day

Just imagine the scene again. This time, think of it not from the outside and the jostling of the paralyzed man to try to get him to Jesus but from inside the house. More specifically, put yourself in Jesus' situation. You are inside a filled-to-capacity and hot- and-stifling house. You are doing what you're best at doing. And people are listening intently. Then you're interrupted!

Some debris falls on somebody's head. Shielded eyes turn upward and you lose your audience's attention. Again, remembering that you are Jesus, your eyes follow the eyes of your audience toward the ceiling. The debris becomes an opening and a hand comes through. Now another pair or two of hands can be seen — pulling away thatch and tiles, creating an even larger hole in the roof. Why, it's almost big enough for someone to crawl through. Wait. Someone is coming through, but not under his own power. It is a paralytic man to whom at least some of the crowd has tossed an occasional coin. What's going on?

Can you be Jesus in this scene? Can you visualize yourself responding to something this bold, this daring, this presumptuous? Look at what Jesus did — and try to think of yourself doing something comparable.

First, Jesus declared His identity and authority in public. He forgave the man's sins and He offered him physical healing. "Friend, your sins are forgiven," He told the man who had been lowered through the roof. Then, when He was challenged for being presumptuous and acting like He thought He was God, He didn't back down. He asked His critics which they thought was easier to say — notice, **say** — "Your sins are forgiven" or "Get up and walk"? Of course, the truth is that forgiveness is easier to pronounce than healing for the simple fact that the latter is immediately testable. Suppose Jesus said the man was forgiven, but God said He wasn't. Believe whom you will! But the business about getting up and walking would either work or fall flat on its face. If Jesus' words didn't have power, He would be exposed and embarrassed. So everybody would know that this words were backed up by the power of God, He pronounced Him healed and told Him to get up and walk. And He did! Jesus wasn't being presumptuous. He was acting out of the settled assurance of His true identity. Second, a man was made completely whole that day — both physically and spiritually. Third, we were shown how to see people as they deserve to be seen. And, fourth, not only was the healed man's life changed that day but so were those of some of the people who witnessed what had happened.

She of the Twisted Mouth

Now let me come from that ancient time to one more recent. Dr. Richard Selzer was simultaneously a professor of surgery at Yale Medical School and a teacher of writing at Yale University. He wrote several books about his experiences as a surgeon. One of the most touching is from his *Mortal Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*.

Dr. Selzer once removed a tumor from a young woman's face. In the process of excising the growth, it was necessary for him to sever a facial nerve. One side of her mouth was left lifeless and unresponsive. Concerned about how the woman and her husband would deal with her crooked mouth, he tells what happened:

Her husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together, they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight. Isolated from me, private.

Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry-mouth I have made, who gaze at each other, and touch each other generously, greedily?

The young woman speaks: "Will I always be like this?" she asks.

"Yes," I say. "It's because the nerve was cut."

She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. "I like it," he says. "It's kind of cute."

He bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I am so close I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate hers, to show that their kiss still works. I remember that the angels sometimes appeared in Bible times as mortals, and I hold my breath and wonder.

Angels sometimes appear as mortals? Yes. And God himself made such an appearance as Jesus, Son of God, Immanuel! And he adjusted his appearance, his words, his healing touch to our sin-contorted frames! **"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Hebrews 2:14-15).**

Conclusion

Jesus knew how to receive people — people who broke in at awkward times, interrupted Him when He was doing what He did best, people whose situations called for something to be done that could get Him criticized. What about you? Your life has been interrupted before, and it will be again. Someone in your family, class, or workplace has a "twisted smile" or is spiritually lame. Can you accommodate her? Do you know how to deal with him?

Do you know how to reveal the identity and authority of Jesus so someone whose life has intersected yours can be redeemed and made whole? So the people who witness what happens can be changed forever too? Christians and whole churches have too often dispensed judgment and rejection to the people who interrupt our lives. I think it is time we learn to model

ourselves after Jesus and break out of the received traditions of "churchiness" for the sake of doing so. Our task is to love God and our neighbors, to preach the gospel and heal the brokenhearted, to receive the interrupter and to kiss the twisted face.

A preacher friend and 'former' mentor of mine responded to this frequent theme of mine a few years back and asked, "Melva, what would become of our churches if we fill them up with homosexuals and liars, adulterers and thieves?" My immediate reply was this: "We'd have a chance to look like Jesus because those are the people who were drawn to Him during His ministry." He didn't like my answer. What he intended as a rebuke made a biblical truth very clear to me: **When the church is too good for homeless and drunk people or biblically illiterate and doctrinally tainted folk, it is too sophisticated a crowd for Jesus to feel welcome there!**

When you look at the world, see it through Jesus' eyes. When you see the old people, old places and old relationships, see them through fresh eyes. When you are faced with an unexpected interruption, speak the name, authority and redemptive words of Jesus. And be prepared to see the "remarkable things" God will do!