

Oh Say, Can You See?

2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9
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- I. How many of you noticed that I have new glasses?
 - a. If you didn't, that's ok
 - i. My new ones are not much different from my old ones
 - ii. Subtle, not obvious
 1. Different color
 2. Slightly different style
 - b. But it has been something that has captivated a lot of my attention!
 - i. First, just getting something new!
 - ii. But also because one doesn't realize how FADED your vision is until you get new glasses that aren't scratched and foggy anymore!
 - c. I've been thinking a lot about vision lately
 - i. When our vision declines it is often so slowly that we don't notice
 1. Cataracts grow slowly
 2. Things grow fuzzy, slowly
 3. It takes something like new glasses, or an eye test, or something to realize that our vision is in decline
 - ii. My father suffers from Macular Degeneration
 1. Dr. Hensen, my Optometrist, says that I have a very slight indicator of POSSIBLE problems related to MD in the future
 2. So he suggested I start taking the AREDS2 vitamins
 3. \$28 a month!
 4. And they stink like fish oil!
 - iii. But it has made me think again about how precious vision is
 1. How awesome it is that we can see
 2. How God created the eye...

3. How easily it would be to lose one's vision

- II. The image of VISION is a powerful spiritual image
 - a. You SEE it all over the Bible!
 - i. So much so, that you might miss it
 - 1. It is so common
 - ii. The word "see" occurs 932 times in the NRSV
 - iii. The word "eye" 498 times
 - iv. "look" 564 times
 - v. Not counting all the allusions to vision
 - vi. Like our 2 Corinthians passage today
 - b. Only "seeing" once
 - i. Otherwise, there's "veiled" "blinded" "image" "shine and shone"..."
 - 1. But it is all about seeing, vision, sight
 - 2. Spiritually speaking
 - c. Listen (or READ) it again...

2 Corinthians 4:3–6 (NRSV)

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- i. "See" what I mean?!
 - d. We're talking about PERCEPTION, UNDERSTANDING, "Getting it"..."
 - i. Paul is talking about grasping the Gospel
 - 1. And how some people can't
 - a. Or won't

- III. Have you ever wondered why some people just "get it" about Jesus, while others just can't?
 - a. It's like those optical illusions or puzzles some of us like to play with
 - i. Like this one (007.jpg)

1. Look at it for a minute
 2. What does it look like to you?
 3. Do you know that all of the lines in this graphic are perfectly straight?
 4. Does it “look” that way?
- ii. Or how about this (011.jpg)
 1. A triangle of boxes
 2. Which way do they go?
 3. The eye can be deceived!
 - iii. Or this (030.jpg)
 1. Look at it for a moment
 2. Do you see little white or black circles at the intersections of the lines?
 3. There are none there!
 4. It is all an optical illusion!
 - iv. At Disney’s California Adventure...
 1. The main street in the Hollywood Backlot area
 2. Seems to go on and on in the distance
 - a. Until you get closer and see that it is a painting, an optical illusion
- b. Perception often depends on one’s starting point or perspective
 - i. An optical illusion can be deciphered
 - ii. IF you have the right perspective
 - iii. But if you can’t get to that right perspective, you might not ever see clearly or correctly
 - c. And some people are like that with Jesus and things of the Spirit
 - i. No matter how hard you try...
 - ii. Or how long they sit in church...
 - iii. Some people just don’t “see” Jesus as He really is
 1. Or don’t discern the things of the Spirit

I had a woman in one of my churches who had been attending regularly her whole life... say to the church secretary, “Do you really think that prayer works?” She couldn’t “see”!

IV. Spiritual vision does not come naturally, or easily (especially for some)

a. Even Peter, the “rock” upon whom Jesus built the Church, didn’t see immediately what was right in front of him!

i. The story of the Transfiguration...

1. Jesus’ clothing became “dazzling white”

2. Elijah and Moses show up

3. And Peter thinks it is time for a camp out!

“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings (or tents), one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” (Mark 9:5)

4. And it says...

⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

5. And in order for God to clarify things for Peter, James and John,...

⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

6. In order for them to see, God had to bring in a cloud to “overshadow” them!

Luke 10:23 (NRSV)

²³ Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see!

ii. Sometimes we have to stare at a picture for a long time before we can see what is there.

1. The same is true for the things of God

2. Seeing, spiritually, does not come naturally!

3. It takes work

4. First, you have to WANT to see!

a. THEN, you have to practice

b. Spiritual disciplines

i. Prayer

ii. Bible study

iii. Contemplation

iv. Christian conferencing...

5. Those who are “perishing” don’t see
 - a. The Gospel is “veiled”
 - b. The god of this world (Satan) has blinded their minds (eyes)

1 Corinthians 13:12a (NRSV)

¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face.

6. And until “then” we must look intently at Jesus...
 - a. Long and hard
 - b. Concerted effort
 - i. Not casual glancing
 - c. You will “see” in His face the glory of God
 - d. And the Light will shine out of darkness.

(Pray for people to have opened eyes...)