

**The Life of Jesus**  
*Sermon 10: Teaching on the Mountain*  
*“How good are your eyes?”*

Passages: Revelation 3:14-18  
Matthew 6:19-24

Let me start our study of today’s passage from Matthew 6 with a question:  
*How good are your eyes?*

I ask this question because it is the question at the heart of the two central verses of today’s passage (verses 22 and 23). Jesus says, *“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”* (Matthew 6:22-23).

So, tell me, how good are your eyes? How well can you see? Is your whole body full of light?

This question is extremely important. In fact, I believe it’s the key, not only to understanding *today’s passage*, but to understanding *most of the passages which we will be reading over the next few weeks!*

**So, let’s take a moment to pray-**

At first, these two central verses (about our eyes) seem totally disconnected from the rest of the passage. In the verses which immediately precede them, we have the familiar saying about not storing up treasures on earth: *“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 neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”*.  
(Matthew 6:19-21)

Then, in the verses which follow these 2 central verses, we have the equally familiar saying about not serving God and money: *“No one can serve two masters, for 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 God and money". (Matthew 6:24)*

What's abundantly clear is that Jesus' comments **before** and **after** verses 22-23, both deal with *treasure and money*. **But what do they have to do with eyesight?**

Here is what I think Jesus is trying to say: **Without 'good eyes', we will never see beyond the glitz and the allure of 'earthly treasures' to the 'heavenly treasures' of this life.** Without *good eyes*, we will easily get caught up in the immediate gratification of our lusts. Without *good eyes*, money will become all consuming...all demanding; it will even become a god to us, with *it controlling us* instead of *us controlling it*! Without *good eyes*, we will never see that money is only a tool to be used for the good of others, not something to be hoarded for ourselves.

Only when we have *good eyes* will we be able to see beyond money, to the Kingdom of Heaven and the invisible reality of God's love and sovereign kindness towards us. *Only then* will we be able to handle money correctly and use it wisely!

Kim and I went to **the Art Gallery of NSW** on Monday to celebrate her birthday. On show was an exhibition called "*The Hidden Treasures of Afghanistan*", containing many ancient archaeological treasures that were thought to have been lost during the Soviet invasion in 1979 and the rise of the Taliban in 1996. Fortunately, the director and curators of the National Museum took these treasures and hid them in a secret bank vault in Kabul. They were only revealed to the world in 2003.

Now, the objects that are on view in this exhibition have come from *four key archaeological sites* in Afghanistan. *One of those sites* was a burial mound located in the far north of the country, estimated to be from around 100 BC. In this burial mound, a nomadic chieftain was buried with five female members of his household (they were probably his wives or slaves, sacrificed to accompany him on his journey into the afterlife). Also buried with them were thousands of gold objects and ornaments (as in the picture). Many had been sewn onto the burial shrouds and clothing of the deceased. But what intrigued me the most was the fact that several gold coins had also been placed in their

deceased's hands. These coins, so they told us, had been placed there so that the deceased might have the money to *pay their passage into the afterlife*. Indeed, this was a common idea in many ancient civilisations; that the only way you could get into the afterlife was by *storing up your treasures on earth* so that you had enough to pay *the boatman* to take you across *the river* ('Styx') and into the world beyond! It was thought that you needed to amass *earthly treasure* in order to gain *heavenly treasure*!

I hope you can see what I'm driving at! **Most people on this earth have been blinded by all sorts of incorrect ideas about money!** In ancient Afghanistan, they were blinded by the false idea that heaven was a distant journey away, and that you needed to purchase your passage if you were going to get there. And so, what Jesus is telling us in these two middle verses is that "*people all over the world have bad eyes!*" Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve, our eyes have lost sight of the invisible reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. And because we can't see the truth, we falsely elevate money and wealth to a status it was never meant to have. "*Bad eyes*" caused this noble chieftain and his devout followers to sacrifice 5 women, cover them with gold and place coins in their hands, **all for the sake of getting him into the afterlife**. *Bad eyes* led to this evil and self-centred behaviour, rather than using all that gold and wealth for the sake of others... the ones left behind! (And, of course, the irony is that *all that gold never made it to the other side!* It stayed buried; unused; for centuries.)

(Of course, many similarly false ideas about money continue to circulate today because of our *bad eyes*-- only we are far more "*sophisticated*"! We know that we can't take it with us, so we choose to spend it on ourselves before we die!)

As Jesus said, when your eyes are bad, you are actually walking in darkness, bedazzled by the glitz of a consumerist world. You are sleepwalking through life. You are serving money as a slave without even knowing it. You are swallowing lies about money, spun to you by the masters of spin.

**But**, when you have *good eyes*, you can see through the glitz to recognise that greatest treasure of all (what Jesus calls, "**heavenly treasure**") is your **relationship with God!** That relationship far exceeds all the treasure that we could ever amass on earth. It's the only thing that will last eternally; the only thing that won't be eaten by moth and rust. Moreover, when you have good eyes, you will see that heaven is really not far away at all! Jesus said, "**The**

***Kingdom of Heaven is near!*** A relationship with God is possible now; heaven is accessible now! But, of course, it's only when your eyes are "good" that you will see this reality. Only when your eyes are *healthy* will your whole body... your whole perspective on life, and death, and purpose and meaning... be "full of light".

Can you see, now, why this passage about money revolves around the question of "eyesight"? And, can you see why Jesus is so keen to help us move from the blindness of "*bad eyes*" to the glorious vision of "*good eyes*"? Only when our eyes are healthy will we be willing to let go...and begin to use money in wise and selfless ways...for the good of others.

Now, I could stop at this point and say nothing more, for that's where the passage ends. But I believe we need to push our thinking a bit farther to embrace **the wider conclusions** inherent in this passage. You see, although it's about money, **it's not only about money!**

Ever since Jesus began His "Sermon on the Mount", He has been speaking in reference to the ***Kingdom of Heaven***. Indeed, not only is the ***Kingdom of Heaven*** the central theme of the Sermon on the Mount, **it will be the central theme throughout the rest of Matthew's Gospel**. In other words, Jesus will repeatedly call His disciples to reflect on this invisible reality which has come near to us in Christ. And, as He does, He will keep encouraging them to acquire "good"/ "healthy eyes" from Him, in order to live lives that are correctly focused and truly free.

Of course, Jesus advice to them is also His advice to us! Not only must our decisions about **money** be made in the light of the invisible presence of the ***Kingdom of Heaven***, but so must our decisions about **every aspect of life**...from *how we drive our car* to *who we will date or marry*. For you see, it is only with "good eyes"...eyes that see the presence of God's Kingdom with us now... that will we be able to keep a focus on what is important and true and wide and good in this world. Only with *good eyes* will we be able to avoid the evil and painful deceptions of Satan, and instead, make decisions which align with all that the Kingdom is about—namely, for the *expansion of life* and *relationships of love*, in the presence of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour!

But all this begs the question: How can we get these "*good eyes*"? Are they automatically ours when we believe in Jesus?

The answer is both ‘yes’ and ‘no’. Yes, when we are ‘born again’, we are given a new beginning...a new opportunity to begin seeing the world as God sees. And yes, we do get glimpses of the Kingdom of Heaven straight away! I certainly did when I became a Christian back in 1975. But, you know what? That wasn’t enough! For the fact is, ‘*good eyes*’ only come to us as part of **the life-long process of maturing in Christ**. As we grow in Christ, our eyesight improves!

I say this because one of the most important truths of the Scriptures is that **all of us have multiple *blind spots* in life**—we’ve been blinded by all the false ways we are taught to see. Our parents have taught us to see the world in certain ways. Their values have affected our eyesight! Our friends have also affected our eyesight by their values. We are pushed here and there! Then, there are the advertising companies which teach us to see life in certain ways. Magazines and media also teach us to see the world in certain ways. Add to that all our own misfortunes and painful experiences in life which have taught us to see life through a certain lens, and it’s obvious that **none of us see clearly!**

Most seriously of all, **we can’t see that, in Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of Heaven has come, and is now in our midst**. We can’t see that God loves us and that we are precious to Him. Instead, our eyes have been clouded over with false visions of ourselves and our world. It is this blindness that causes us all sorts of problems in life, from greed, to selfishness, to unhealthy desires, all driven by our fears and our pain.

Of course, that’s why we came to Jesus in the first place! We realised that He’s the only One who can truly see. We could see that He's the only One with healthy eyes. And so, we came and asked Jesus to heal us! Like the 2 blind men in Mathew 9, we cried out to Jesus and submitted ourselves to his healing touch.

Perhaps we’ve thought that this first encounter with His healing touch was enough. **But, it’s not!** Unlike physical blindness, our blind spots are so deeply connected to the inner reaches of our fallen personality that *we need Jesus’ healing process to be repeated throughout life*...over and over again! In fact, I would say that, **every day**, we need to come to Jesus and allow Him to anoint us with His eye salve! (Rev 3:18—“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”)

(It's interesting that, just the other day, Kim asked me to point out some of her 'blind spots', as a way of helping herself to grow and mature in life.)

This idea links up with last week's sermon on the three spiritual disciplines of **almsgiving, prayer and fasting**. You see, God has given us these spiritual disciplines as ways of regularly submitting our eyes to Christ's healing balm. For when I **give alms**, I must give purely for the sake of the invisible Kingdom of Heaven. It's the same when I **pray**. When I pray, I must stop and peer into the invisible realm of the Kingdom of Heaven, where the Lord is seated on His throne. And when I **fast**, I seek to train my eyes to see the invisible reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. In other words, these regular disciplines of **almsgiving, prayer and fasting**, help me to submit my eyes to the application of Jesus' ointment that I might see what He sees.

You may not know it, but Kim and I are going to the USA right after Easter. One reason for the trip is to see our grandchildren! But another reason for the trip is to go to a retreat in New York City on "*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*". To prepare for that retreat, we have to read two books whose sole aim is to challenge our *eyesight—to see if our eyes are 'good' or 'bad'!*

Listen to a few paragraphs from a chapter entitled, "**Growing into an emotionally mature adult**":

*"I can't help but experience life with me at the centre of my universe. With my eyes I look out on the world...I naturally want the people around me to give up themselves and become what I want them to be. I prefer those close to me to think, feel, and act toward the world in the same way I do. I prefer the illusion of sameness when really we are very different from each other. I want people's worlds to be like mine. I even act the same way in my relationship with God, walking out my spirituality as if I am the centre of the universe... For this reason, M. Scott Peck argues that we are all born narcissists and that learning to grow out of our narcissism is at the heart of the spiritual journey...*

*If we are to grow spiritually, a Copernican revolution must take place in the way we perceive ourselves in relation to others. When Copernicus removed human beings from the centre of the universe and said we revolve around the sun, not vice versa, it sent shock waves through Western civilisation. To discover the "otherness" of a spouse, friend, boss, child, and co-worker, and to see them as separate, unique human beings—without losing yourself—is also a Copernican revolution of emotional maturity. (Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, pp 180-181)*

How good are your eyes? Are you experiencing this Copernican revolution? Let's test our eyes, shall we? On the screen, you'll see an emotional/spiritual inventory of 10 questions. Answer each question with a number from 1 to 5; 1 being "Not very true" and 5 being "Very true". Be as honest as you can be.

1. I feel confident of my adoption as God's son/daughter and rarely ever question His acceptance of me.
2. I love to worship God by myself, spending regular quality time with Him in His Word and in prayer.
3. I am a vital participant in my local church community, reaching out to everyone with equal enthusiasm.
4. It is clear that my money, gifts, time, and abilities are completely at God's disposal and not my own.
5. I consistently integrate my faith in the workplace and the world.
6. I am willing to explore previously unknown or unacceptable parts of myself, allowing Christ to more fully transform me.
7. I am able to thank God for all my past life experiences, seeing how He has used them to uniquely shape me into who I am.
8. I freely admit when I'm wrong, readily asking for forgiveness from others instead of shifting the blame.
9. Others would easily describe me as approachable, gentle, open and transparent.
10. I am regularly able to enter into other people's worlds and feelings, listening deeply to them and imagining what it feels like to live in their shoes.

How good are your eyes? If you're like me, you still need a lot of healing! With healthy eyes, we will see the invisible Kingdom of Heaven...and the presence of its King, the Living Lord, Jesus... in *every moment* of every day. We will also see the Kingdom of Heaven in other people, in the world around us, and in ourselves.

This the call of Jesus! (Rev 3:18—"***I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.***")

Let's pray.