

I want to thank Xiou for reading our scripture this morning. You did a great job. It was a long portion of scripture and I hope everyone was listening.

Though there were several topics addressed in these verses, I believe that the unifying theme can be found in verse 22 through 23 where we read:

**<sup>22</sup> “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light.**

**<sup>23</sup> 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! <sup>1</sup>**

These verses can be summed up in the question: What do you have your eye on?

We use that phrase to describe the things we value, the things we think are important.

If I say I have my eye on a new car, it means I would really like to have it.

If a girl says she has her eye on a certain boy, it means she wants to get to know him better.

If a family says they have their eye on a certain house, it means they would like to buy it.

If my wife says she has her eye on a certain dress... sigh, I know what we are buying!

Jesus wants to challenge all of us to pay attention to what we have our eyes on, because these are the things we will invest our lives in as we pursue them.

An obituary is a short writing that tells about a person who has died. There once was an obituary for a wealthy woman in London that said she had been the best-dressed woman in Europe, and her wardrobe contained more than 100 fur coats and more than 1000 complete outfits. Sadly, since her eye was focused on gaining clothes, little else could be said about her.

On the other hand, a few years before this woman died, and in the same city where she came from, a man died who owned but one suit. It was a blue suit with a red collar. His name was William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. He had only one suit but he had touched thousands of lives with the message of hope in Jesus. Thousands of people were lifted up out of misery and hopelessness because this man had his eye on the things of God.

Jesus tells us **what not to fix our eyes on**, and what things are **worth fixing our eyes on**.

In verses 19-21 Jesus speaks about worldly treasures. He is speaking about spending your life trying to make more money so you can have more and fancier things. He talks about clothes that can be destroyed by moths. Having nice, fancy clothes is what many people called success. Jesus is saying that is a poor choice. It is okay to dress well, but don't let what you wear be what

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: New International Version\*](#). (1984). (Mt 6:22–23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

defines who you are. You are far more than your clothes – no matter what designer label they may have on them.

Some people have expensive art and collectables, or cars, or jewelry, or a host of other items that thieves can steal and destroy. Again, having nice things is not a sin, but if the pursuit of nice things is what controls your life, keeping you from God, keeping you from church, keeping you from ministering to others, then you have missed the mark. It is worth noting that the word used most often in the New Testament for sin literally means, “Missing the Mark.”

Please note Jesus says “Do not store up FOR YOURSELF treasures on earth...” He does not say, “Don’t be successful in your business,” or “Don’t have nice things.” What if God gave you the ability to make money like Steve Jobs or Bill Gates? Would that be a sin? No. It would be sinful, however, if you could not see what those riches could do to help others, aiding the poor and needy, advancing the Kingdom of God. Of all the millions of dollars Steve Jobs made through the Apple Computer company, he did not take one penny with him into his eternal destiny.

A man had a successful silk manufacturing company, and when he heard that his church wanted to purchase a new pipe organ, he gladly donated \$25,000. The man watched as that great musical instrument was installed, and he learned to truly love the music. Then the Great Depression hit, and the man’s business failed and he lost everything. He eventually got a job as the caretaker at the church where the pipe organ was installed. He was asked if he regretted giving away that \$25,000 for the organ. His response? “Not at all. What I gave away I still have. What I kept I lost.”

In Verse 24 Jesus makes it clear that we cannot have our eye on God’s Kingdom and the things of the world at the same time. As Rev. Randal Denny says, you know who the servant belongs to by watching who he will follow. If two men are walking down the road and one servant is following, you may not know who that servant works for. But if there is a fork in the road and the two men must walk two different directions, you will know immediately who the slave belongs to – the man he follows home.<sup>2</sup>

Who will we follow? Jesus, or our career, or our position, or our possessions, or our ambitions? You can only follow one whole heartedly- which will it be?

Jesus goes on to talk about worry. If our eye is always on “what could be” we will not be able to enjoy life.

A little boy was afraid to go outside and play in his yard. When his mom asked why he was afraid, he said he was afraid that the dog would bite him. “But we don’t have a dog!” his mom said. “Yes,” the boy replied, “but if we did he might bite me!”

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<sup>2</sup> Randal Earl Denny, “Sunny Side of the Mountain” (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1980), p. 51.

Many people deal with life like that, afraid of what might be and therefore not enjoying what there is already in their hands. When confronted by their habit of worrying they say, "I just can't help it."

But Jesus does not suggest we not worry, he makes it a command, "Do not worry." Unless you have some mental health issue that prevents you from being able to let go of things, we ought to listen to Jesus and obey what he says. Stop worrying... start praying!

Jesus wraps this command up in some illustrations. First, he points us to the birds of the air. They are constantly depending on God for food. They do not have fridges or cupboards or credit cards to pick up a snack when they get hungry. They are busy looking and hunting for food, but they do not spend time worrying. They keep searching knowing if they look long enough, they will find something. God provides for them. There is always another worm, bug or insect to eat, or a seed or some fruit. And if God cares for the birds of the air, can't you trust that he will look after you as well?

Then Jesus points to the flowers, and shows how beautiful they are. If God clothes them with such colour and beauty, even though they last only a few days, won't he gladly make sure we have clothes to cover us? In other words, won't he look after our needs?

Jesus says that those who do not believe in the true God, the pagans, run around worrying about what to eat and drink and how to look after themselves. They do not believe their gods will help them with their everyday needs. You want to know why? Because their gods really do not care about them.

But the God revealed in scripture, the God who became flesh and lived among us as Jesus, is the God who is described as loving, kind, merciful and compassionate. He created us, and wants to care for us. Yes, we still need jobs and we must work hard at what he has put before us, but we do not need to worry.

When Lise and I arrived in Nanaimo, the church hoped they could provide us with a certain salary. Unfortunately, there just wasn't enough money. But God provided an opportunity to work at the funeral home which made up what the church could not supply. God was looking out for us. There was a time when the church had to reduce my salary for a time, but at the same time, Lise got a raise at the place where she was working. Over and over again we have seen how God has provided for us. We do not need to worry!

Then Jesus sums up this teaching on what to keep our eyes focused on by saying:

**<sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**

Have you put that scripture to memory yet?

Jesus asks us what will we focus our lives on - the things of this world or the kingdom of God? The things that will bring you happiness for a short time now, or something that will give you happiness for all eternity?

This Pentecost Sunday, we are reminded that there cannot be spiritual life without the work of the Holy Spirit, for Jesus told Nicodemus that a man must be born again before he will see the kingdom of God. This, Jesus says, is a new birth by water and the Spirit. It is only something God can do in us by His Holy Spirit. When we confess our sins – confess that we have been keeping our eyes on the wrong things – and ask Jesus to forgive us, we are born again. We are given a new start in life. The old is gone, the new has come.

There is a story about a Medieval king who was furious that so many of his subjects had become Christians. One day he called for a prominent Christian man to be dragged before the courts. “Renounce your faith in this Jesus!” the king roared.

“I cannot, your Majesty,” the Christian replied.

“Then I will take all your possessions away from you,” the king shouted in anger.

The godly man said, “Take all I have on earth. You cannot take my treasures, for they are in heaven.”

“I’ll have your wife and children taken from you.”

The father answered calmly, “We may be separated on earth, but we will be reunited in heaven.”

In full fury the monarch threatened, “Renounce your faith, or I will take your life from you.”

“This earthly life you can take,” replied the Christian. “But you cannot touch the gift of eternal life that Christ has given to me.”

“Take this man away,” sighed the king. “What can I do with a person like that?”<sup>3</sup>

This is the kind of life Jesus is offering those who will follow him, and will keep their eyes on the prize – fellowship with God through the indwelling Holy Spirit. They will have treasure the world can never give them, and can never take away. They will be filled with the Holy Spirit and the fruit of His presence will be seen in their lives. This is what Jesus is offering his disciples – then and now.

What kind of life do you want to live? One with your eyes fixed on the things of this world – which will all soon pass away? Or with your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith? The choice is yours today.

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<sup>3</sup> Randal Earl Denny, *Ibid*, p. 43.