

Title: Cross-eyed (What you see is what you get)
Text: Matthew 6.22-24
Theme: What you look at is what you will look like.
Series: Matthew #36
Prop Stmtnt: We will become what we focus on.

Read Text:

This fall when the Tigers were in the playoffs, there were many times when we were screaming at one of our batters to just “hit the ball.” Perhaps a few more facts would provide us with some humility and sympathy. In the major leagues, the distance from the pitcher’s mound to home plate is 60 feet and 6 inches. If the pitcher throws a 95 mph fastball (which is about average for a fastball), the ball is traveling at almost 140 feet per second. Since the distance from the mound to the plate is less than half of that, it takes about 4 tenths of a second for the average fastball to reach home plate. ($4/10 = 40/100 = 400/1000$, or 400 milliseconds) If you take a second and you divide it into 1000 equal parts, then that means that a fastball is going from the mound to home plate in only 400 of those 1000 parts of a second. Let’s break it down further. When the pitcher releases the ball, the batter has 80 milliseconds to get a visual lock on the ball. Now, keep in mind that when you just blinked, your blink lasted between 300 and 400 milliseconds. So, in one fifth of the time that it took you to blink, the batter has to see the ball and determine if it is a knuckle ball, fastball, curve ball, slider, cutter or change-up. The batter is seeking to read the rotation of the seams as well as its velocity. In the next 140 milliseconds or about the time of $2/5$ ths of a blink, the batter has to decide whether or not he is going to swing. Is this pitch hittable? He has to make this decision early because if he is going to swing, he has to get the bat moving if it has any chance at all of making contact with the ball. Now, the entire body is brought into motion and the hands, in particular have to direct the bat into the exact spot with the right speed. Since both the ball and the bat have rounded surfaces, an error of a few thousandths of an inch will result in a foul tip, a pop-up or a ground out (or a dreaded double play). This also shows you the importance of a pitcher being able to get “late movement” on his pitches.

Some of you remember Joel Zumaya. He threw the second fastest pitch ever recorded during a game at 104.8 mph. That means that his fastball made it to home plate in around 380 milliseconds, or in less than the time that it takes some people to blink. So, yes, if you blink, you could miss the entire pitch. This means that the amount of concentration that is required on the part of the batter is incredible. He seriously cannot blink. It also helps us realize why some pitcher’s attempt to freeze the batter by seeing how long they can wait before they go into their motion. Each batter has to step into the batter’s box seeking to use every bit of mental concentration he has in order to execute a swing. Often times we will hear commentators say of a batter that “he is just not seeing the ball very well” and we wonder, how can you not see the ball. It’s right there. Where is there? When we see the pitch on TV from the center field camera, it does not look all that difficult. But to the batter, it is radically different. In the blink of an eye, it has already gone by. So, when a guy like Miguel Cabrera has a batting average of .350. We should be truly amazed. It is astounding that this guy can hit that well. His ability to concentrate

on that ball is remarkable. He concentrates on a baseball. What do you concentrate on? Close your eyes and ask yourself this question. “What has occupied most of your attention today? What ruled your vision this past week? What you see is what you get.

Our text is not difficult to understand, but it is an enormous challenge to put into practice. Look at these three verses with me. Do you see what Jesus is saying here and how he is saying it? He starts with his propositional statement. “The eye is the lamp of the body.” Then he tells how this works for good and how this works for bad. Then comes the “therefore” part in v.24. V.24 is the big idea. Since the eye is the lamp for the body and since you can only look at one thing at a time, you cannot follow two masters. You can only follow one. You can only look at one. His point is clear; you either follow God or money (mammon – worldly stuff). You either love God and despise money, or you despise God and love money. Let’s look at the propositional statement.

I. **You will look like what you look at.** (22-23)

“The eye is the lamp of the body.” The eye illuminates the body in the sense that the eye is the means by which the body knows where it is and where to go. Without being able to see, your feet would not know where to walk or what to avoid. Your hands would not know what to hold and what to stay away from. Jesus again, uses an obvious physical reality to illustrate a spiritual truth. David, in Psalm 119 has already made the connection between the eyes and the heart.

Psalm 119.10 “*With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments.*” Eight verses later David expresses a very similar cry.

Psalm 119.18 “*Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.*” You can see the relationship. David is asking for the same thing. He wants to seek God with his whole heart. This means that he wants to look hard and intently at God by looking at God’s word. Let me give you another example.

Psalm 119.36 “*Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!*” In the next verse David says,

Psalm 119.37 “*Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.*” The point is clear. Having a heart that is inclined to the testimonies (statements of truth) of God’s Word means to that instead of looking at worthless things, that David is looking at God’s Word which provides life in the ways of God.

So, we can see now the relationship of this statement, “*The eye is the lamp of the body*” to what Jesus said in the previous verse. Your heart will follow your treasure. What you treasure is what you will put your heart in. What you look at is what you will seek. Or, as Jesus says here, you will look like what you look at, and what you look at will affect your entire being. This is great news!

A. **Good looking leads to light living.** (22b)

“If your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.” If your eye/heart sees clearly and is intensely focused on what is right, then your whole being will be illuminated and will know where you are going. Your whole body will, in that sense, be able to see. There is an obvious spiritual meaning that Jesus is giving here. Just as the physical eye gives illumination to the body, when the eye of your heart, or the eye of your soul is healthy, then your whole being will be full of life and light. How does a person become illuminated? (Big word, eh?) How can your spiritual light be turned on? How can you your soul get spiritual vision? When I ask that question, I am asking the same question as, how can a person become a child of God? How can a person come to faith in Christ? The answer is, God gives us the eyes to see that Jesus is all that he claims to be and is worth our trust, so we believe. If you understand that Jesus came to this earth to live in your place and then died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin, trust Him. Right now, acknowledge your sin before Him, turn away from it, ask God to forgive you and trust in Christ as your King and Savior. You will respond in belief to the sight that God gives you to trust Christ. But I think that it is also obvious that there is a practical physical connection to the obvious spiritual meaning. Here is what I mean.

Jesus is saying that we need to focus our attention upon God. That is clear from v.24. But, how do we focus our attention upon God? We do that by literally at times, looking at God’s Word. Just as we will look like him as we listen to him, we will look like him as we look at him. This is an incredibly powerful and encouraging truth. Some of you are consistently discouraged because there is a particular sin or fear that seems to own you. You live under the condemnation of that sin and not only does the voice of the evil one tell you that you can never change, but your own experience seems to support that. But, it does not have to be that way. What you choose to focus on, will affect you from the inside out. Do not underestimate the power of the Bible. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. The Word is seriously powerful. You need to be looking at and listening to the Word every day. You need to set aside time when you open the Bible and read it, and then talk to God about it. The Word is lamp for your feet and a light for your path, but you have to use it. You have to focus intensely on it. Focusing on God’s Word is one of the primary ways we focus intensely on God. Focusing upon God (His Word) is what enables us to see clearly how to live.

B. Bad vision leads to darkness. (23)

The more that I look at this text, the more it sounds like a proverb. One of the rather interesting things about proverbs is that they are like a precious gem that has been cut well by a jeweler and has a number of different facets. Each facet reflects light a little differently. And so with a proverb, if you turn it this way, it sounds like this, but if you turn it that way, it sounds a bit different, but in a way that complements one another, not in competition with each other. So what is Jesus saying here? Is it that the person who has an “evil eye” is the person who is trying to focus on God and on possessions and therefore has no clear direction (?) or is it that the person with an “evil eye” (or a corrupt eye of the soul) is a stingy person who is therefore, morally and spiritually blind and is

lost? It is probably both. In this context, it is very clear that Jesus is saying that being a member of his kingdom and being stingy are totally incompatible.

This brings up a very practical point. What you see is what you get. You will eventually look like, what you look at. So, seriously, what do you spend your time looking at? What do you give your intense concentration too? If all that you focus on is pleasing yourself, you will be a miserable person. You cannot say, “Hey, I was just looking” as if looking is just looking. “There’s no harm in just looking – right?” Are you kidding me? That is where the battle is usually won or lost.

II. **You cannot look at two things at once.** (24)

My son was born with a condition that in laymen’s terms is often referred to as a lazy eye. His brain simply ignored the fact that he had two eyes, and his condition was complicated by a muscle problem. He appeared to be looking in two directions at the same time. I used to tell him that if we could figure out a way to get that second eye to work by itself without having to coordinate with the first eye, then imagine how great you would be as a point-guard. You could see the entire court and the defense would have no idea what you were looking at. Of course that was the problem. The body has to know where it is going. The body cannot go in two directions at once.

Here is the 2nd major point that Jesus makes regarding money. Remember, he is describing what citizens of his kingdom look like. He is not looking for powerful money people who can make things happen, as we tend to assume. He is warning us that if money owns you, money is your enemy and God is not your love. Your heart follows your treasure (21). If you are focused on money, it is not that you will not be focused on God, but you will hate God (24).

Jesus says that you cannot serve God and serve money. You cannot trust in God and trust in money. Our world champions the serving of money because it believes that money will get you what you want and need. What does it mean to despise money? It means that you despise the lies that money makes because you know that it is making promises that it cannot keep. Prosperity theology champions using God in order to serve money. Jesus says, God or money. You choose. You cannot serve both. Jesus does not say that it is a sin to have money. He says that it is a sin to serve it. If you love God, you will not resent those who have more than you or feel superior to those who have less. If you love money, you will be jealous of the rich and be dismissive of the poor. I have known very wealthy people who are some of the most humble and generous people I have ever met. I have also known some wealthy people who would step on their own flesh and blood if they could make another dollar. I have known poor people who are generous and kind and I have known poor people who would steal everything they could from you if given a chance. It is not a matter of what you have, it is a matter of what has you. Who do you serve? What do you love? (33)

Consider the following questions:

- 1) What three things give you the greatest pleasure?
- 2) If you could have anything right now, what would it be?
- 3) If you could change anything about your life, what would it be?
- 4) If you could do anything that you wanted, what would it be?
- 5) What can you not wait to do?
- 6) What are you known for?
- 7) What are you passionate about?
- 8) What drives you? What gets you up in the morning and keeps you going?
- 9) If you were unexpectedly given \$10,000 what would you do with it? Why?
- 10) If you have an evening free, what do you most likely do?
- 11) If everyone gave to the church in the manner that you do, would we be a generous congregation or would we be a stingy, snarling group of misers?

Here is my challenge. (Only if you are a follower of Christ.) Tithe (give 10%) of your income to the church for the next 3 months, if you are not already in the habit of doing so, asking God to help you put your heart where you put your treasure. I challenge you with this because God is more interested in raising kids than raising money.

Jesus wants and demands your heart. He will have your heart when you look at him. If you want to look like Jesus, you have to look at Jesus. Christ lived with a view toward the cross. The cross was his mission. The cross changed our lives. The gospel (good news of Christ's death and resurrection) is our hope and mission. We are therefore called to live cross-eyed. You cannot be cross-eyed and money-eyed. How can we be cross-eyed. We come to church in order to hear the Bible preached, because accurate preaching of the Bible will put Christ and the cross before us. We set aside time in the day to read God's Word and to pray because we need the gospel to be front and center of our lives and unless we are intentional about pursuing it, we will lose sight of it. The gospel not only puts Christ on display, but as we will see when we resume the Sermon on the Mount, after Advent, that not only can you not serve God and money, you cannot serve God and worry either.