

Looking into a New Year with New Eyes

Thomas Robinson, *Wide-Eyed – Listening to Jesus 1*, January 4, 2015

Matthew 6:19-34 (ESV Adapted)

¹⁹ **“Do not treasure up treasures for yourselves on earth**, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ **but treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

²² **The eye is the lamp of the body.** So, if your eye is healthy (single, generous), your whole body will be **full of light**, ²³ but if your eye is evil (corrupted, envious), your whole body will be **full of darkness**. If then **the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!**

²⁴ **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 Mammon.**

²⁵ **Therefore** I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life** (*psyche*, soul), what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about **your body** (*soma*), what you will put on. Is not life more than **food**, and the body more than **clothing**?

²⁶ **Look at the birds** of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet **your heavenly Father** feeds them. **Are you not of more value than they?** ²⁷ And which of you by **being anxious** can add a single hour (cubit) to his span of life?

²⁸ And why are you **anxious about clothing**? **Consider the lilies** of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if **God so clothes the grass of the field**, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you? **O you of little faith!**

³¹ Therefore **do not be anxious**, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the nations seek after all these things, and **your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.**

³³ But **seek first God’s kingdom** (rule) **and his righteousness** (justice), and **all these things will be added to you.**

³⁴ Therefore **do not be anxious about tomorrow**, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Change your thinking, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”

Matthew 5:8

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

Matthew 7:3-4

³ “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye?”

Matthew 13:13-14

¹³ “This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says: ‘You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive.’” [Isa 6:9]

Matthew 20:32-33

³² And stopping, Jesus called them and said, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³³ They said to him, “Lord, let our eyes be opened.”

Lamp of the Body – What do You See?

Epiphany is the celebration of Jesus' manifestation to the world – Wise men, baptism, etc. But really seeing Jesus goes on calling us to see everything in a new way, to be changed from the inside out so that we learn to see reality as it is, undistorted, without self-deception.

New series: "Wide-Eyed – Listening to Jesus," in Matthew. Jesus speaks simply, full of everyday metaphors, but when you listen, your jaw drops and eyes widen, astonished.

We live in a world with troubles all around, pushed and pulled in so many directions. It's easy to be frustrated, cynical. Jesus is a man who owns little, talking to crowds of laboring poor, often oppressed, suffering people. Yet he calls them/us to life of trust, without anxiety: "Seek first God's rule and justice." God knows your needs. You matter to him. Learn trust.

Notice Jesus' strange saying about the eye as a lamp, an allusion to the typical scientific view of vision in that day: vision shining out from the eyes to see the world. He uses it as a metaphor for "seeing" our world, enabled by who/how we are inside. If our seeing eye is single (centered on God) there's ever-growing light to see everything, physical & spiritual. If it's distorted by an inner darkness ("evil," envy, a false god like Mammon), you're trying to see with darkness; everything is distorted, and the darkness becomes ever greater.

Finding My Own Heart

Jesus surrounds this saying with others about things we value: "treasure," things we love. The first speaks of treasures "on earth" and "in heaven." We tend to read that as "now," "this world," as over against "the future," "after death." But for Jesus, "heaven" means the realm of God, present and pervasive right now. Real but not obviously visible. The "heavenly Father" is feeding the birds and clothing the lilies, right now. You can watch. Delayed gratification is good, but it's not what Jesus is talking about. Rather, what's real.

We struggle, fight, oppress, invest, work for stuff that passes away as fast as we accumulate it. But we and God live in a different, deeper, higher reality. Put your treasure in God's realm. How? With a whole life. The whole Sermon on the Mount, really praying the Lord's prayer.

Jesus says when I clearly see where I am treasuring things, I find myself, my heart. But I need to realize that choices must be made. I cannot serve the temporary god of Mammon/money/power/stuff and also be devoted to the God who calls me to self-giving love. It won't work. Mammon is a god promising to supply all we need and secure our future. But in this world we are always vulnerable. We always want more. The promise expires. We live in anxiety.

Look, Perceive, Trust, Live!

Jesus looks at the working craftsmen, farmers, fishermen, weaving women, laborers around him and says "Don't worry about your life" – about what every one of you worries about. He keeps it basic: food, drink, clothing! Jesus knows how deep anxieties are. He doesn't tell them to stop farming, fishing, weaving. But don't trust your best achievements to secure your life. Don't deny your fears, but look at them, deal with them. Learn reality.

God is real. He is everywhere, providing, caring. God gives the gift of life. Neither I nor Mammon is in control. When I let go of the illusion of my control, know my vulnerability, and learn to trust the God who gives life and all that truly lasts, then anxiety fades away.

Putting God's rule first sets a transforming standard. God fulfills needs not for competition but for the abundance and beauty of life. He knows our needs. We learn to trust his love as Jesus did. Every day has its troubles, but God is there with us. Seek his justice, his rule, and your life is full of light, you see clearly: Jesus says, "*All these things will be added to you.*"