

"The Eyes of the Heart"

Ephesians 1:11-23 & Luke 6:20-31

November 4, 2007

Some years ago the Raleigh, North Carolina News & Observer published an article entitled: "How Do You Measure Up as a Man?" The article stated that some extensive research had been conducted on the 20th century standards for measuring a man. The criteria were quite interesting and I thought that I might list them for the men here this morning just to see how they measure up. 1. His ability to make and conserve money. 2. The cost, style and age of his car. 3. (This is my favorite) How much hair he has. 4. His strength and size. 5. The job he holds and how successful he is at it. 6. What sports he likes 7. How many clubs he belongs to. 8. His aggressiveness and reliability.

It is a really interesting list. As I thought about it, I wondered what would be included on such a list today for women and perhaps, just as interestingly, for young adults. What kinds of things are so important in the eyes of your peers that they use those qualities to judge your standing. Typically the things that we get all caught up in are things like the clothes we wear, the groups of people that we are accepted as a part of, the style of our hair, the number of friends we have on "facebook", the kind of cell phone you have or whether or not you have a cell phone, the car we drive. {ask for input women, what things form the basis on which other women judge you? Kids, what do other kids your age judge you on.}

Think about that stuff for a minute. I am willing to bet that all of us are aware that so much of that which we use as criteria for judging others is very shallow and ultimately unimportant. Yet we do it so easily as we look at our world through eyes that have been shaped by the world.

There is an image that really caught my attention in our second scripture reading for today. The Apostle Paul writes from his prison cell to the church at Ephesus and tells the people about an inheritance that they have as the people of God. The inheritance has to do with the redemption and eternal life that God has planned for His people. If you were listening closely as the text was read perhaps you could hear the depth of Paul's concern for the people to whom he was writing. I can hear Paul longing that the people will be able to see how great God's love is for them. As Paul writes he uses that stunning image - the 'eyes of your heart'. *"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know Him, so that with the eyes of you heart enlightened, you may know the hope"* Have you ever

look at the world with the eyes of your heart? Did you even know that your heart has eyes? You will certainly never find them pictures in any medical book.

There is a tremendous song that is entitled "Open the Eyes of My Heart". It takes the form of a beautiful and haunting prayer. *"Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart. We want to see you. We want to see you see you high and lifted up, shining in the light of your glory. Show us your power and love we sing holy, holy, holy!"*

Have you ever look at the world with the eyes of your heart? Perhaps it is only with the eyes of the heart - the new eyes that we have that come with the gift of faith in God - perhaps it is only with these eyes that we are able to have any vision of God. Perhaps it is only with these eyes of the heart that we are able to see the world in which we live in a different way - the way in which God sees the world - not to mention how God sees you and me.

There is virtually no way for our Gospel text to make any sense if we look at it only with the eyes of the world. With the eyes of our world, blessing comes in being rich, having a really comfortable existence and enjoying the finest foods. It is enjoying life - having lots of laughs with the many friends that want to hang around us. It is having a 'good hair day' and looking fine in the new clothes that help you 'strut your stuff'. None of what Jesus says makes any sense at all.

But perhaps we can look at our world and our lives in new ways. Perhaps Jesus is calling us to look at our lives through the eyes of our hearts. I read an article this week that said: **"Happiness is not at all based upon what we have. True happiness is based upon who we are. Happiness is not based upon the kind of house that we live in; it depends on the kind of people who live in the house. It is not the kind of clothes that we wear, but the person who wears the clothes."**

How different would our lives be if we could see with the eyes of the heart of Christ. Imagine how different our lives would be if we could relate to people on the basis of who they really were rather than because of some arbitrary worldly standard that had to do with silly things like how much hair a man has. - - - - The article that I read went on to remind us that Jesus shared these 'Beatitudes' in our Gospel text only with His disciples. Even though there was a crowd of people around, He took His disciples aside and share these words. The author suggested that the reason He did that has to be because none of what Jesus says would make any sense if you only saw it from the worlds perspective - first there has to be a relationship with God and in faith new eyes are opened.

The eyes of the heart - the eyes through which we see the world and the people in our world through the loving eyes of God can be such a great blessing as we live out our lives. But the eyes of the heart also give a view of the future that is amazing. - - - Today we celebrate "All Saints". I believe that it is really only a celebration that we can understand as we look through the eyes of faith. We can only really appreciate this day as we remember all those who have run their earthly race and finished this course have been upheld and redeemed by the mighty hand of God. The hard reality is that we must remember those who have died - we have had to say good-bye. But with the eyes of our heart enlightened we see even those dark losses in a new way - we see the hope that that we have talked about fulfilled. To look through the eyes of our hearts, filled with faith in a mighty God we can see God's promises fulfilled and our loved ones, now robed in white celebrating in the presence of God.

How I wish that we could always see with God's eyes. How I wish that we could not only see the glorious future God has prepared but the world in which we live, and the people that we encounter through those eyes. And as much as anything I wish that we could see ourselves through those eyes - children of God, forgiven sinners, redeemed and given new life, saints. "Open the eyes of my heart, Lord!"

AMEN