

Title: What are you looking at?
Text: Luke 11.33-36
Theme: The focus of your heart
Series: Luke
Prop Stmtnt: Your affections are formed by what you set your heart on.

This past Wednesday night a 3-year-old boy in our children's ministry told his teacher that he wanted her to have a short lesson and that if she didn't, he would be grumbly. In other words, if I'm grumbly, it is your fault. A few minutes later, his 5-year-old brother pulled her aside and said that he hoped she would teach the longest lesson she could. I would like to think that he really loved to hear God's Word, but I'm afraid he just wanted to see his brother get grumbly and get in trouble. Beloved, this sermon may not be memorable in length. I pray that it will be memorable in impact. At the beginning of this gospel, Luke tells why he wrote this. He wants his readers to have certainty (confident faith) in Christ. The truth of Jesus is intended to change you and cause you to believe him in such a way that you embrace him as Savior and Lord.

Read Text:

Several years ago, I had dinner with 2 seminary presidents. Both of them are very smart (like scary smart) so I did a lot of listening. These guys were smart but not in comparison to Christ. The intellect of Jesus is astounding and of course, his wisdom has no limit. He could explain anything and everything and dazzle the greatest minds in the world, yet he spent very little time in any type of academia settings. In fact, he spent very little time in large urban settings. The most brilliant person ever to live and teach spent the majority of his time with common people and as Mark says (12.37), they heard him gladly. He spoke simply and profoundly.

The Bible is not that difficult to understand. There are parts that are challenging, but the vast majority of the Bible is very clear. When you take the time to mull it over (meditate on it), you realize how insightful and profound it is. Christ taught with simplicity, but it was deep. Such is the case with our text. Jesus often makes obvious statements, but then applies them in ways that force us to think deeply. This statement in v.33 is almost exactly the same thing he said earlier in 8.16. His point is not controversial. When you light a lamp, you don't hide it in a cellar or under a basket. You light a lamp and put it on a stand because...

1. **You need light.** (33)

I do not need to belabor this. But don't miss the obvious point. Why do you turn on a lamp? Because you need the light in order to see, and in this case, so that others who enter in that room can see. Light is necessary for you and for others. So, if you have a lamp, you don't put it in a cellar or in a basket in order to hide it. You put it on a stand so you and others can benefit from it. But now, Jesus takes this simple truth and makes a somewhat surprising point with it.

2. **Your eye is your light.** (34)

“Your eye is the lamp of your body.” Jesus now takes a very simple fact and uses it to make a very important point. We are familiar with Psalm 119.105 that says, *“Your word is lamp to my feet and light to my path.”* But Jesus is making a slightly different but related point. Here he says that your eye is the lamp of your body. Your eyes are fascinating. I was in an ophthalmologist’s office one day and while I was waiting to be “seen” I “saw” a large picture on the wall of an eyeball that showed the various parts of the eye and how they function. (pic)

It was fascinating to me. Simply put, your eye converts light into nerve signals that your brain interprets as images. But the process is not simple. Light enters your eye through your cornea. Your cornea bends the light so that it focuses that light on the retina (2nd layer). The iris and pupil work together in order to control the amount of light that enters the eye. The lens of your eye focuses the light onto the retina where there are special cones called photoreceptors. We often call these rods and cones. They convert the light into electrical signals. These signals are then sent through the optic nerve to the brain which then converts those signals into visual images. So, long before you had a smart phone that took pictures and converted them to pixels that were sent as data, the eye has been doing that for thousands of years.

While I was studying this picture, the doctor came into the room at which point I asked if he thought it was possible that anyone could rationally believe in evolution after studying the intricacies of the human eye. I then found out that he was a believer and we spent a good bit of my appointment talking about the wonders of God’s design for the eye. So, in a literal, physiological sense, the eye is the lamp of your body. The eye takes in light and sends it to the brain. What Jesus says is scientifically true, but that is not the point that Jesus is making. He is not teaching Ophthalmology. He then gives us an idea of what he means by that.

a. Your eye may bring light to your being

“When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light.” (34b) Let’s think about that for a minute. Your eye is the means by which you look at things. In order to look your eye is letting light shine into your brain. “When your eye is healthy” meaning, when your eye is receiving light (vs. darkness) then your whole body is full of light. Your eye is to bring light to your being. The teaching of Christ is not merely information that stays on the surface. The words of Christ are intended to be light-filling and life-giving. They are intended to take over your entire being. The words of Christ explain why you live, how to live and they give you life. However,

b. Your eye may bring darkness to your being

If you have a cataract or an eye disease, your eye does not let the light. Some of you have a degenerate eye condition and you endure painful shots to ward it off as long as possible. Either you cannot see, or what you see is blurry or distorted. Now we understand what Jesus is telling us. If you do not receive the light of Christ’s words into your being, then you will receive darkness and it will take over. Again, there is no middle ground. We know this because back in 1.78-79, Zechariah, prophesied that the Messiah will “give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the way of peace.” When Joseph and Mary

presented Jesus at the temple in chapter 2, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and prophesied that he would be “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” The idea that Jesus is the light is a major point in John’s gospel. We should understand that the light is Jesus and/or the teaching of Jesus. This makes sense from these other passages, and from this context. The teaching of Jesus is light. It is life. It is light giving and it is life-giving. If your eye receives this light then your entire being will be full of light. If you receive the message of Christ, it will illuminate your being. Now, as we have seen and as we will see more and more, Jesus plays for keeps. He will not share his supremacy over you with anything or anyone else. He is not one of many sponsors of your life. He is Lord. He is the sole owner. He is loving, but make no mistake, he is Lord. His words are more than good ideas and truisms. They are absolute. His way is not only good, his way is the only way. Jesus is inclusive in reach, but exclusive in content. He reaches people from all different types of ethnicities and socio-economic and educational backgrounds. But the message of Jesus is also exclusive. The reason why his message is so powerful and effective, light-giving and life-giving is because it is from him and it is true. If you change it, it is not true and it is not light and life-giving.

Why did Jesus come to us? We need to be saved. We need a Savior. We are lost, blind and dead. We need to know the way; we need to see the light and we have to have life. Jesus did not come so we could help him with his message. We are not a focus group for the teachings of Christ. He did not ask us for our approval and for suggestions on how he could get better ratings. Truth is truth. It is what it is. We don’t change the message. The message changes us. And that is good, because we need to be changed. We need to be changed, even as we bristle against it. We struggle with it because the light of the message of Jesus exposes everything in us and there are things in us that we do not like to see about ourselves or things that we do not like to face or talk about. We fear exposure. But we need our sin to be exposed so we can repent of it and be forgiven of it.

Here in Luke 11, there are 3 types of people who are listening to Jesus. 1) The Pharisees and others who scoff at Jesus. They think that they don’t need Jesus because they are the light. They are fine without him. In fact, they believe that Jesus needs them. 2) The crowds who like the benefits of Jesus but are not willing to commit their lives to him. 3) The disciples and others who really believe him and therefore have given Jesus an open invitation to come in and take over their lives. The first group sees Jesus as the enemy. The second group sees Jesus as interesting. The third group sees Jesus as Lord. To the first two groups, Jesus gives a warning.

3. The warning (35)

“Be careful, lest the light in you be darkness.” Unless you see Jesus as your God and Savior and surrender yourself to him, your being will be full of darkness. We see how this plays out in Luke’s gospel. Here are respectable, esteemed leaders who have influence and leverage in the lives of the people. In the near future these men will demand for Jesus to be crucified. Doesn’t that almost take your breath away? It’s one thing to disagree with a person, or to not like a person. But to want another person to be killed? What drives a person to want another person to be slowly tortured so that they die in as much agony and humiliation as possible? What has to

happen to a person to look upon someone else in that dreadful and excruciating condition and be so hardened that one mocks? The capacity to show pity is dead. It seems inhumane. It should be in-human. But it is very much human and can happen to one who is full of darkness.

Turn to 1 John 1. Look at v.5. *"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you."* The apostle John is writing this. He was with Jesus in Luke 11. He heard him. Notice how he explains this. *"God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."* Yes, God is bright. God is a light that shines. But the idea is also that God is light in the sense that he is transparent. There is nothing in him that is shady. There are no closets with God where he hides from you what he is really like. God is transparent. What you see is what you get. The Bible and Jesus are the full disclosure of God. That is why light and truth are bound together. God does not lie. God does not hide. God does not trick or deceive. God does not play you for a fool. You may wake up one day and wonder what happened to your mom or dad, or spouse, or manager, etc. When someone that you thought you could trust, becomes someone you have to fear, it really messes with you. That never, ever happens with God. Part of the very essence of God is light.

So, (v.6) *"If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."* If we claim to be with the light, that means that we are beholding the light. The light is coming in and it takes over our being. However, if we are walking in darkness; that is, if there are parts of our life that we hide from God and we hide from others by not being honest, then we are lying. Girls, what if you are engaged to a guy and claims to love you and be true to you and you are his only one, but won't let you have the password to his phone. Or if you ask to use his phone, he panics? That is not fellowship!

"We lie." Liars are in darkness. When we lie, we do not practice the truth. We are not being honest about what we are and what we have done. When we lie about ourselves, we do so because we think we can deceive others. As crazy as it sounds, we think we can deceive God. Why do we think that deceiving God is even a possibility? Because sin causes brain damage. Sin makes us idiots. We may or may not deceive others. We will never deceive God. But when we lie and do not repent, we deceive ourselves.

Look at v.8. *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."* What happens? We go from hiding our sin, to actually believing that we have no sin. At least when we were hiding our sin, we believed that there was something to hide. If someone is hiding something there is at least some sense of shame. They still have a conscience. But this is what sin does. That is why Jesus is issuing this warning because you cannot manage sin. Sin does not play nice and stay in its corner. Sin is a relentless infection or cancer that is hellbent on destroying its host. And it starts with pretending that you don't have a problem when you do.

Look at v.10. *"If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."* Proverbs 30.20 says, *"This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, I have done nothing wrong."* She removes the evidence of what she has done and declares that she has done nothing wrong. She has become so accustomed to her sin that she is not fazed by it. Culture looks at people who have no conscience as hardened criminals or sociopaths. They

no longer possess the capacity to even know that there is a right and wrong. If God were to say to them, that they were wrong, they would accuse God of being the liar. His word is not in them. They are in complete darkness.

This darkness is a picture of separation from God and this has profound implications. Let me give you one of many examples that we could talk about. We hear a good deal from women and girls who have “daddy issues.” That’s no joke. Every child is seeking to discover who he or she is. We learn a great deal about our identity by those we are like and not like in our immediate family. For example, a little girl is profoundly influenced by her father because there are two important things going on: 1) She came from him and 2) She is different than him. That helps form her understanding of herself. Her identity, security, confidence, discernment and willingness to trust are often profoundly shaped by her relationship with her father. Her father can help her know who she is and he can help her be whole.

That is what God does for us. God is our ultimate Father. We learn who we are in relationship with him. But when we reject God’s Word and God’s influence, we are in darkness. We don’t know who we are. We are lost as persons and our separation from God fractures us as beings. Our lives are like pieces of a puzzle in a box without a picture to help us know where anything really fits. So when we look at people in our world who are so fractured that they are trying new personalities, new genders, new identities, new sexuality, our hearts are full of pity for them. They are trying to put pieces together without a picture and it will only mean more brokenness. There is another way. Praise God there is another way. Back to Luke 11.

4. **The promise** (36)

If you look at and receive Christ and his Word it brings light to your whole body. God’s Word is described in Hebrews 4.12-13 as being a sword that is so sharp that it can cut us so deeply and exposes everything in us. If you were diagnosed with cancer and you had a surgeon who said that he could perform surgery and cut it out and had the technology to find every single cancer cell and remove them and could guarantee that the cancer could never return, you would be so thrilled that you would want that surgery today! That is what God’s Word does. It goes in and finds all of the darkness and it exposes it so that we can confess it and repent of it. We are no match for our sin, but our sin is no match for the cross! Left unaddressed our sin will crush us, but confronted with the gospel, our sin is crushed by death and resurrection of Jesus.

Let’s conclude by going back to 1 John 1. You may have noticed that I skipped some verses. Look at v.7. Verse 7 is the antidote to the person described in v.6 who claims to have fellowship with God but is hiding somethings in his life. *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”* If we walk in the light means that we let the light of God’s Word (Jesus) take over everything and so that there are no hidden parts. Now, because we sin, the light will expose that. So what we do when the light reveals things in our lives that are wrong. We do not hide them. Instead, (v.9) *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* The constant exposure of the light of God’s Word keeps us humble because it

keeps revealing the areas, we need to grow in. The promises of the gospel keep us secure because we know that we are his. The effect is fellowship with God (what you see is what you get from him and from us) and it is fellowship with one another (what you see is what you get).

Do you see the power and the promise this is for us as a church? To be a people who know who they are in Christ and because of that are humble, secure, generous, patient, joyful, faithful, hopeful, loving, gracious, forgiving, God-centered and self-aware is miraculous. But that is what the gospel does.