

Series: Faith in Act!on
Title: Seeing People through Christ's Eyes
Text: Luke 4:14–21
Key Word: Lens
Proposition: Everyone can see people through Christ's Eyes by applying his lens to their eyes.

Good morning everyone. We're delighted that you have chosen to worship with us today. I invite you to take out the sermon handout and review it with me. We're in the midst of a series of messages entitled: "Faith in Action." As a local church we want to be out in the world, not in church building. We're convinced that God calls us to be the hope of the world. So we strive to put our faith into action. Last week, our Director of Discipleship, Matt Reynolds, challenged us to get out of our comfort zones and allow God to take us on a detour, sacrificing our time, energy, and agenda's to help others. I invite you to follow along using the sermon handout to jot down any notes that you wish to take.

How many of you have eye or vision problems? *Try to get the people involved by responding to the question. Ask them what kind of eye problems they have.*

I do. I wear contact lens to correct my nearsightedness. Over a year ago, my optometrist prescribed one of those lenses to correct my far-sightedness.

In addition to far-sightedness and near-sightedness, there are other things that can affect the way you see (or don't see) things. "**Lazy Eye,**" or poor vision in an eye that is physically normal. **Color Blindness** is the inability to distinguish between some colors. **Dry Eye Syndrome** is the inability to produce tears.

Not only do most people suffer from physical vision problems, many people also

have spiritual vision problems too. Some people may have ...**Spiritual “Lazy Eye”**: They may see a problem but don’t do anything about it. Others may have **Spiritual Color Blindness**: They may not pay as much attention to the plight of some people because of their race. (i.e. we may recognize that people in Africa are suffering ... but do we give it as much priority?) Others may have **Spiritual Dry Eye Syndrome**: They may lack compassion, they don’t “cry” for people who are hurting. Others may have **Spiritual Farsightedness**: They may give to overseas missions but don’t see the pain in our local community. Others may have **Spiritual Nearsightedness**: They may not see the pain of people in impoverished countries, whether it’s South America, Africa, Asia, etc. Still others may have **Spiritual Elder Eye**: Their compassion for people may have grown weak as they grow older. Some may have **Spiritual Misaligned Eyes**: They may have their eyes focused on worldly things.

In the eighth chapter, Mark tells the story when Jesus and his disciples came to Bethsaida. Some folks brought a blind man to Jesus and begged him to touch him. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. Then he spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him. Jesus asked him, “Do you see anything. The man looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” So Jesus touched his eyes a second time. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Mark 8:22–25

Jesus’ unusual method restored this man’s sight. I suspect that Jesus could have been cleansing the matt from this man’s eyes. When he did open his eyes, he could see,

but not clearly: he couldn't distinguish people from trees except for the movement. So Jesus touched him again, and he saw everything clearly.

Perhaps many of us are like this man. We have met Jesus, and he has opened our eyes, but we still don't see people clearly. We have a "lens"—assumptions, responses, and judgments that influences how we see the world and other people.

The Scriptures reveal how God sees people. Matthew tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Matthew 9:36

Samuel explains that the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7

So, how can we see like Christ? We have given Jesus our hearts, but now we need to give him our eyes. Luke 4 tells us why Jesus saw people the way he did, and how we can see like he does. After the Spirit had brought him through the wilderness temptations, Jesus returned to Galilee empowered by the Holy Spirit. While He was in Galilee for several months, Jesus performed several miracles, healings, and preached in the countryside. So news about him spread through out the county. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue. And he stood up to read from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

He found the place where it is written: *"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim*

freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he said to them, *“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”*

When Jesus said that, it set people buzzing. Because they knew that this passage applied to the Messiah! Jesus was saying that he was the Messiah. This passage was his personal mission statement.

Friends, the Church is the Body of Christ in the world today. His mission statement is our mission statement. What He did in the world, we can do in this world, because He has given us His Spirit. So, what was the Messiah's mission?

Jesus' mission was to preach good news to the poor. People thought that being rich was a sign of God's favor and being poor was a sign of God's judgment. Jesus said—absolutely not. Jesus turned the tables and gave the poor good news; they were favored by God. Have you felt out of favor with God? Jesus has good news for you. Do you know anyone who feels out of God's favor? Jesus has good news for them

Jesus' mission was to proclaim freedom for the prisoner. Whether you are literally imprisoned or imprisoned spiritually, Jesus has come to set you free.

Jesus' mission was to give sight to the blind. The blind were thought to be blind because of some sin they had committed (or their parents committed). The religious leaders figured they deserved to be blind. Jesus came to heal and show mercy to people who were physically handicapped and spiritually condemned.

Jesus' mission was to release the oppressed. Jesus came to set wrongs right. He came to help the helpless. He came to bring justice to those who experienced injustice.

Jesus' mission was to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. This is a reference to the Old Testament year of Jubilee when slaves were freed and all debts cleared. Jesus came to proclaim that if you are enslaved by and in debt to sin, that you are free and all debts are paid, because of what he would do on the cross.

Jesus' mission was a people-focused mission. It was an outward-focused mission. It was for people outside the walls of the synagogue. It was **compassion-driven mission**. His mission guided his vision. His mission was the lens that made him see people the way he saw them, through the lens of compassion.

The New Testament word for compassion is only applied to one person, Jesus (except for "Good Samaritan"). Scripture tells us that Jesus felt compassion when He encountered the sick (Mt. 14:14), the blind (Mt. 20:34), the demon possessed (Mk. 9:22), those who lost loved ones (Lk. 7:13), the hungry, (Mt. 15:32), the lonely (Mk. 1:41) and the bewildered (Mt. 9:36). His lens of compassion guided his action, reaction, and interaction with everyone he met.

Jesus saw people differently than most of his contemporaries. Luke, a physician and writer of two books in the New Testament, tells the story of a time when a religious leader invited him over for dinner. While they were enjoying the meal a woman who had lived a sinful life brought a very expensive jar of perfume. She stood at his feet weeping. Then she knelt down and began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped

them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. Deeply troubled, the religious leader and dinner host said to himself, “If this man was the prophet I thought he was, he would know what kind of woman this is who is falling all over him.” Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. “Two men were in debt to a banker. One owed him five hundred silver pieces, and the other fifty. Neither of them could pay up, so the banker canceled both debts. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon replied, “I suppose the one who was forgiven the most.”

“That’s right,” Jesus said. Then he turning to the woman, but speaking to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came to your house; you provided no water for my feet, but she rained tears on my feet and dried them with her hair. You gave me no greeting, but from the time I arrived she hasn’t quit kissing my feet. You provided nothing for freshening up, but she has soothed my feet with perfume. Impressive, isn’t it? She was forgiven many, many sins, and so she is very, very grateful. If the forgiveness is minimal, the gratitude is minimal. Then Jesus said to her, “I forgive your sins.” Luke 7:36–

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Jesus and the Pharisee looked at the same person but saw her differently. The Pharisee looked through the lens of judgment. Jesus looked through the lens of compassion.

Everyone has a different lens that influences how they relate to others. By their lens they look at someone and ask themselves a question. For example, if fashion critic

Joan Rivers was looking at me, she would likely be thinking “What are you wearing?”

Or “Why are you wearing that?”

Or how about Osama Bin Laden? What question do you think would cross his mind when he saw me? *Again, give people the opportunity to respond. They will probably say something like “How can I kill you?” “How can I make you a Muslim?”*

Their lens changed their question. Now, what question do you think Jesus asked himself when he saw people? I’m pretty sure he didn’t ask “W.W.J.D?” What do you think he asked?

“How can I help you?” “How can I show you God’s love?” “How can I touch you with grace?” “How can I heal you?” “How can I right a wrong?”

What we believe about our mission in the world affects how we see the world.

When looking at your world, what do you see? A world in need? A world worth saving?

A world worth serving? You will if you are looking at it with the eyes of Christ.

When you see people, ask the same kind of question Jesus would ask. “How can I help you?” “How can I show you God’s love?” “How can I touch you with grace?”

“How can I heal you?” “How can I right a wrong?”

This church is very gifted and there are many places where we can serve Christ by seeing others with the lens of compassion. I encourage you to befriend the divorced or a single parent or serve at our Wednesday night dinners or the Tipp City’s Clothes Line. Write a note to a Tanzanian child. Spruce up a widow/widower’s garden. Work on our room make over. Become a Matthew’s minister and visit the sick in the hospital.

Serve on our Children's or student ministry team. Ask God to touch your eyes so that you can see others the way Christ did. Ask the Spirit to allow Jesus' mission to guide your vision. If you can see people through the lens of Christ's compassion, you will discover practical ways to show them the love of Christ. 2078