

**Introduction:**

- *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”* (John 1:14,16, ESV)
  - What John stresses in these passages is that when the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came into the world, those who had eyes ‘to see’ saw divine glory.
  - Many did not see it. This is why Jesus said, *“**Seeing they do not see**”* (Mt 13:13)
  - My theme for today: We behold his glory full of grace, and *in that beholding* we have received grace upon grace and are transformed.
- Again, I want to lift up Jesus this morning. I want us to see Him as He is and most of all for us to note that as we behold Him we become like Him.
  - But it is also true that what you behold, look at, think about... you become like.
  - In this life we will constantly be looking at or gazing at something. What we look at shapes our thoughts and our thoughts will determine our choices and our choices determine our actions.
- *“**But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”*** (2 Corinthians 3:16-18, ESV)
  - What we gaze at creates images and images impact us and influence our actions.
- Every day your thoughts are shaping your life. *“**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he...**”* (Proverbs 23:7, NKJV)

**I. It Matters What You Behold** (gaze at/look at)

- A. This is why there is a battle for your mind. Keeping your eyes on God, causes your heart to be shaped into His image. Get your eyes off of God and your heart begins to be formed sinning. How you allow your heart to be shaped is dependent upon what you give your eyes/(mind) too. Ie. It is almost like being a potter who shapes clay on his wheel.
  1. Satan will do anything to get your eyes off of God. Satan tempted Eve with fruit that was: good for food, pleasant to the eye, desirable to make wise.
  2. Not everything that is good, pleasant and desirable is good for us. But it would not be tempting if it did not have those three adjectives (good, pleasant, desirable). God gave us these pleasure processors that we might enjoy God and His creation. Even Romans 1 lets us know that we can see God in creation. The problem comes when we go outside the protective borders of instruction that God has given us.
  3. Genesis 3:6 *“**So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it***

*was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*"(ESV) This was probably the same process for every other fruit they tasted in the garden.

4. Satan got their eyes off of God and when he did, they sinned. They worked the process (good delightful, desirable) in the wrong field.
- B. Because of sin, the heart naturally gravitates to evil. I don't ever remember having to teach my boys how to be bad. Something deep in them just said, "MINE! NO!" Something in them knew that if you wanted a toy you busted the person and took it.
1. Genesis 6:5-6 *"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart."* (ESV)
    - a) God was grieved. The heart of God hurts when He sees our heart filled with thoughts of evil.
    - b) Paul exhorts the church not to grieve the Holy Spirit with our evil thoughts. Ephesians 4:30 NKJV *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."* NKJV (Ephesians 5:5 ).
  2. Genesis 8:21 *"...Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention (imagination) of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."* (Genesis 8:21, ESV)
    - a) Imaginations-Hebrew=yeser=to form, or to fashion, framing, purpose, imagination. It is the shaping or forming of the object involved. It is exactly what the potter does. Theological Word Book of OT. He takes the clay puts it on the wheel and begins shaping it. Your imaginations/intentions or thoughts shape your life. Your imagination is the clay on the potter's wheel of your mind.
  3. Our mind is the doorway to our inner man and greatly affects our capacity to love. Much of our life occurs in our mind. The language of the human spirit is images or pictures.
- C. David kept his gaze on God.
1. Ps 27:4 *The one thing I ask of the LORD –the thing I seek most– is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, delighting in the LORD 's perfections and meditating in his Temple (NLT.)*
  2. Have you ever looked at a perfect painting? Sunrise? Sculpture? Mountain in the fall? The beauty captures your attention. A picture does the mountain no justice. It is not until I taste and see that mountain or beach sunrise it is just a picture.
  3. Josiah's reform came from gazing at the Book of the Law. Josiah became a

famous reformer because his gaze was in the Book of the Law. The Word shaped his thoughts, his thoughts shaped his choices and his choices his actions. 2 Kings 22:11-13.

- D. The enemy is working overtime to get this generation's gaze off of the beauty of God. If there was every a generation that was living in a fantasy realm it is this one.
1. We have pornography all around us. We have video games that take us into the fantasy realm. We have facebook, twitter and instagram that allows us to enter into fanciful relationships.
  2. Because of the fantasy realm of our culture many look at Jesus with the same kind of understanding and they never taste and see that the Lord is good. It matters what we behold...next...

## II. The Power of Beholding

- A. Let's look at some Bible figures who beheld Jesus and learn from them. The Apostle Paul saw Jesus. Look at the impact of his beholding the risen Lord.
1. 1 Corinthians 4:11-13 *"To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things."* (ESV)
  2. 2 Corinthians 11:25-27 *"Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."* (ESV)
    - a) What causes a man to go through, endure, or suffer such hardships? He has to see something that has much more value than this, his 'present suffering.' Paul saw something that was more valuable than his present comfort or life. *le. Magazine—Voice of Martyrs. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."* (Romans 8:18, ESV)
  3. So what is a beholder? A beholder is one who sees God and everything in this life grows dim in comparison to who He is. A beholder is one who's eyes are so fixed on Jesus that they will go to great lengths to live for Him.
- B. Stephen was a beholder!
1. Acts 7:55 *"But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God."* (Acts 7:55, ESV)

2. His eyes "were fixed" on Jesus! The next thing you know they stone him and he is asking that God forgive them. That is a beholder! You have to be looking at something glorious in order to not say, "Ouch, or kill'em all God!"
  3. Paul and Stephen had been and were beholding or looking at something that had much more value than their current circumstances. Pain paled in comparison to the worth of Christ in them the Hope of Glory.
- C. Jesus was a beholder. How do we know?
1. He was always praying, up before the sun, like David "*I will awaken the dawn.*" *Psalm 57:8.*
  2. Jesus had his heart set on the Father. Note: Ro 8:30 'we have been glorified'. We have been glorified so that we can give God glory.
  3. John 17:1 *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,* (NKJV)
    - a) He lifted His eyes to behold the Father.
    - b) Yes, Jesus had us in mind—but Jesus saw God, Jesus saw the glory and in light of that glory the cross was made bearable. The pain of Calvary was small in comparison to the Glory of God.
- D. The Church of the Book of Revelation is a beholding church.
1. Why do you think that in the first three chapters Jesus is brought to light in some majestic way 34 different times.
  2. Why do you think that the overcomers of chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation are inspired by 22 rewards (some Bibles will have 20). It is to inspire us to fix our gaze on Jesus because of who He is. And with Him are rewards. He is worth the suffering!

### **III. The Practice of Beholding**

- A. Pray: Ask Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus. Show me the Son of God.
- B. Position yourself to see. Read the Bible, listen to sermon and teachings that reveal God.
- C. Meditate—this is the place of beholding. Parents have the most powerful place in a child's life to make this happen. Do not surrender it! Grandparents, do not underestimate the power of your influence and words. To meditate is to give focus to the things of God in ones thoughts.
  1. Meditation is all about formation of the mind. If the mind is naturally given to evil then we have to work at reforming it. God to Joshua: "*Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.*" (Joshua 1:8, NLT)

2. To meditate is a form imagination. To see God as He is not how we think He should be. To see others as God sees them. Meditation develops your 'spiritual taste buds'. Ps 34:8 "*taste and see that the Lord is good.*"
  - (1) Psalms 63:6 *When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches.* NKJV I start thinking about you when I lie down.
  - (2) Psalms 145:5 *I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty, And on Your wondrous works.* NKJV
- D. Read the gospels and watch how Jesus loved.
  1. Love God! It is the first command. Mark 12:30 *And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.* NKJV
  2. It is all about loving God. God is saying, behold Me! Do it and you will love!
  3. Know that there are four parts to this first command: heart, soul, mind, strength. It means get your whole self involved. When you do that kind of beholding you will come alive!
    - a) Psalms 91:14 "*Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name.* NKJV David made a choice to love God.
    - b) Luke 7:47 He who is forgiven much loves much.
  4. What we do with our mind greatly affects our capacity to love. If we fill our mind with the right things, our capacity to love Jesus increases; if we fill our mind with wrong things, our capacity to love Jesus diminishes.
    - (1) Our mind has such glorious potential and vast power, yet many believers are so casual about what they do with their minds. They fill their minds with entertainment or daydreaming about vanity when they have the Holy Spirit and the Bible.
    - (2) Sermon on the Mount lifestyle. We see as Jesus sees, choose as he choose and act as He acts. Transformation!
    - (3) In beholding Jesus, the Christ, Son of the Living God, we find grace upon grace and are transformed.

**Conclusion:**

- Invitation to receive Christ. It all starts with looking in the right direction—to Jesus. Put your thought on the potter's wheel of your mind and begin a new re-formation today.
- God loves us too much to leave us the way we are. That is why He sent Jesus!