

# Eye of the Beholder

(Sermon Notes)

By: Warren Zehrung 4/1/2017

This is a pre-Passover sermon. We have come to the time of the year when we must **search our souls**. Very soon now we will be taking Passover. And in doing so we will be inviting Jesus anew, to come into us – into our mind, into our heart, into our very being. What kind of dwelling will we be bidding Him into? Will it be clean, white and spotless – as He is?

Please do not answer, “Yes, I’m perfect.” None of us has gotten there – yet. In fact one of the primary reasons we are having our feet washed is because we’ve dirtied them along the way. But, down deep, we want for our heart to be like God’s heart – we want to think, act and rule as God would.

Let’s take a good look at these Scriptures – though we heard them so many times:

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

Matthew 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats:

Matthew 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared for you** from the foundation of the world:

There are two kinds of people. Converted and unconverted. One feathers his own nest, and **looks out for himself** all the time. And the strange thing is that the unconverted man thinks everyone is just like him – doing what is best for themselves.

There are some, however, who are looking out for others – **helping** others get ahead, **taking a stand** for what is right and true – and sacrificing themselves for the benefit of peace and the common good. They are living according to the **rules** of the Kingdom – even now. We serve God when we serve our fellow man:

Matthew 25:35 For I was an hungry, and ye gave me food: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Matthew 25:36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Matthew 25:37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

Matthew 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the **least** of these my brethren, **ye have done it unto me**.

Our interactions – now while we are on earth – are our training ground for the Kingdom. God gives us the **rules** for a better world. He expects **more of us** than to be spoiled-rotten children. God holds us responsible for what we know. With conversion and repentance wrong values and wrong ways should cease from our behavior.

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.

For a converted people, these should be eradicated. Some people believe that the **means justifies the end** and that anything is allowable to bring people to your cartel or group – they will say - "For God's Sake," – and then anything goes. Paul says, don't go there:

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

It will come back on you eventually. A Christian cannot possess a double standard.

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Matthew 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!

Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [worldly self promotion].

We are told to examine ourselves for a very crucial purpose as we approach Passover. Have you ever met someone who was so hard-hearted you **could hardly** stand to be around them? They were too **hard** on people. They **demand**ed too much. They ruled with a **heavy hand** – placing themselves on a **high** pedestal – and using you to wipe their feet on – like a door mat. They were **cruel** and uncaring and unloving.

God does not want that kind of **careless** attitude and **malicious** approach to rule in His Kingdom. Can you imagine a kingdom being run by people like that? Who would want to be there? Let's not talk about them – God tells us to put up with them for now for the sake of peace.

1Peter 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. [Greek '*skolios*' twisted warped]

That is where we get our name for Scoliosis of the spine.

1Peter 2:19 For this is thankworthy [Greek '*charis*' graciousness], if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

The question we should be asking ourselves is this, "Do I ever make someone else unhappy, uncomfortable, unpleasant – even miserable?"

We might say, "Well yes, but I had **good cause** to dump on them." The Kingdom of God is not going to be like that.

Isaiah 11:9 They shall not **hurt nor destroy** in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

But we do hurt and destroy ever so often – and yet we want to be in the Kingdom. We have a dichotomy here – something's got to give – we can't have our cake and eat it too. At Passover God tells us to face up to the fact that our heart is not as right as it should be.

Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weighs the spirits.

We are told to examine ourselves. It is because God knows our hearts, and we do not. Yes, we think that we know ourselves, but it is God who tells us to – think again.

King David had God's Holy Spirit – and he messed up really bad. And for a while he could not admit it to himself. That is what sin does – it deceives the mind. David prayed:

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Only God can perform this intervention. God must be involved in creating a clean heart within us.

Psalms 51:11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

That is the scariest thing I've ever heard – that we could fall away from God's Spirit all together...

It is possible, even very probable that we can be deceived.

Is it possible to deceive yourself? How is it that a person can lie to himself? How is it that a person can deceive himself? The Bible also warns of self-deception:

1Corinthians 3:18 Let no man **deceive himself**. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

We can feed on God's word week after week – but are we really putting God's word into action in our lives?

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Any and every sin in a man causes him to become spiritually complacent and unable to realize that he is missing the mark. As a person grows up – as he matures – as he becomes the fixed character that defines his personality –

...Why do some people become deceived into believing that he measures up – when he is coming so short of God's standard – while others diligently try to be honorable, truthful and just?

This one area – deception-- is the devil's greatest tool to pull people away from Christ; ...into believing they aren't really doing anything wrong. Someone who is deceived has accepted "as true or valid what is false or invalid" The solution to avoiding deception – is to seek the truth, love the truth, obey the truth, abide in truth.

Deuteronomy 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived.

Does that mean that it is no use even trying to properly evaluate our own spiritual condition? No. But it does mean that we cannot casually go about it if we hope to appropriately assess ourselves and see ourselves as God sees us.

1Samuel 16:7 ... for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Paul said:

1Corinthians 11:28 **Let a man examine himself**, and then let him [**take Passover**] eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Has our righteous character developed and matured to the point that we are never offensive to others? Have we come to the point – cultivated Godly character – where God can say of us as He did of Abraham, "For **now I know** that thou fear God." (Genesis 22:12)

So, how do we measure ourselves against the word of God? The important thing is that we do not end up fooling ourselves because Jesus Christ says that if Passover is not observed in its proper manner, damnation is the result.

1Corinthians 11:29 He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Because God tells us,

Proverbs 30:12 There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

...we do not want to be the ones who year after year pat ourselves on the back and give ourselves a passing grade with flying colors.

We are able to see the insufficiency of the natural man in the world to scrutinize himself in the way of salvation, but we have the Spirit of God to instruct us. We are supposed to be doing a whole lot better!

Have we ever wondered why it is that we find ourselves "being sorry" for the same sins that we have been dealing with for a long time? There is something not right there!

Have we decided that since God knows our frame – **how weak we are** – He understands and overlooks our failing? Let's not mistake **God's mercy** in giving us time to repent, for **His approval** of our deeds.

God does not overlook sin – He does not forgive ongoing sin – not ever. Yes, He forgives if we repent and cease sinning. (Luke 17:3)

After a thorough self-examination do we always find ourselves doing, “just fine?” That is like sweeping the floor in the dark – we are likely to miss an awful lot.

1John 1:8 If we **claim to be without sin**, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Let’s understand that God has a lot higher standard of conduct than we might suppose. Sometimes I get the feeling that too many people are satisfied with the status quo – going to church of Sabbath and fellowshiping with some friends. That’s not wrong, but God wants us to be **like Him**.

2Peter 3:11 ...What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation, conduct and Godliness.

The answer is, “We should be striving for perfection.”

Matthew 5:48 “Become you therefore **perfect**, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Hebrews 6:1)

One of the brethren sent me this beautiful story by email this morning after reading today’s Countdown.

“A group of people were watching a silversmith hone and polish a silver plate.

"How do you do that ?" one of them asked.

"I take my time. It takes time and patience and keeping a watchful eye on the product.

I can't polish it too harshly or I'll distort it."

"When do you know to stop ?" they asked.

"When I can see **MYSELF** in the reflection."

Continuing in the email...

“That comment amazed me. I couldn't help but compare that comment to how God teaches us and reveals Himself to us.

God’s looking for our spiritual character to mirror Christ's and His.

WHAT A LONG WAY I HAVE TO GO !!!!!”

How many times have we been warned about our self-serving **carnal** hearts?

Jeremiah 7:24 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their **evil heart**, and went backward, and not forward.

None of us wish to think that Jeremiah 17:9 applies to our own heart. We quickly say that it is someone else who’s heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? We tend to look pretty good to ourselves – but that is in the **eye of the beholder**.

All too often we start with the premise that we are doing everything right in our lives as we begin our self-evaluation. The hardest thing for a human being to do is to admit to himself that he is wrong. So, how can we know that we are looking at ourselves as God sees us? Do we realize that our minds are entirely capable of justifying absolutely everything we think, say, and do?

How can we begin to strip away our self-deception? If we are sincere about our faith, how do we ever get around that obstacle to seeing ourselves as God sees us? How can we get the beam out of our own eye?

We see everyone’s faults but our own. Why won’t we ask ourselves, “How many people have I offended, argued with, hurt, and cut short?”

Can we admit to ourselves that we do not walk as Jesus walked? We must say to ourselves, “I wish I did walk in Jesus’ steps – but I got off track – and therefore I need Passover.”

That is how we begin to get the beam out of our eye so that we may begin to see clearly.

Matthew 7:5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Paul found it necessary to write to the Corinthians again about getting their hearts right for Passover. He was having doubts about their conversion.

This was included in the Scriptural record for our admonition. Paul went so far as to intimate, or even insist that we need to evaluate whether or not we are even Christians!

2Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Let's be more specific in the way we search and try our ways. Let's ask ourselves questions like:

Have I put God first in everything? Have I used God's name in a way that He does not intend we use it? Do I use my religion to get my way? Is the Sabbath day kept holy by me? Have I shown proper respect and obedience to parents and law? Do I allow anger – even hatred – to fester in my heart? Am I faithful to my marriage vow as well as my baptismal vow? Am I guilty of misappropriating the things of others – their time, their parking place, their honor or respect? Have I been careful to avoid all falsehood, lying, alcoholism, dishonesty, meanness, gambling, cruelty...? Do I tend to use my position to take advantage of others? Did I visit any who were sick, elderly or imprisoned? When did I last put my reputation and life on the line?

1 John 3:16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and **we ought to lay down our lives** for the brethren.

Who did I serve in a meaningful way this year? When we have the opportunity to bring something meaningful and helpful to the attention of one of the brethren – and we do **not** do it – We've robbed them of a blessing. Our faith is directly linked to how we serve and interact with others.

Do I remember that it is a false faith that says: "You and Me Lord – forget the others!"

Do we realize that love of the brethren – according to the 10 Commandments – is a salvational issue? God is very straightforwardly telling us that, to attain a place in His Kingdom, we must love one another.

So how can we really tell if we truly love the brethren? We certainly don't want to find out too late! Here is the answer: That is what Matthew 25:40 means...

Matthew 25:40 The King [Jesus] shall answer and say unto them, truly I say unto you, In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

Matthew 25:42 For I was an hungry, and ye gave me no food: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: We do put God first when serving others. We do put God first in our relationships with others. We do put God first when our motivations are based on Godly principles. That is not putting God second.

1John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Did I take a stand against injustice – and make it count? Did I cause peace to cease? When did I actually encourage someone this year? Was I ashamed of the Gospel? Did I take a stand for the Gospel truth at every opportunity?

Jesus said:

Mark 8:38 Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes;

Have I fully submitted my will to God's will? Is my relationship with God sincere and truthful?

1Corinthians 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast [Passover and Unleavened Bread], not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of **malice** and **wickedness**; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Romans 2 yields another source of self-evaluation we might use.

It is deceptively simple. We ask ourselves what really gets on our nerves about other people. Think about the people who you would really like to give a piece of our mind. What is it that they have done that is so upsetting to us? The answer to that question may only be a short list – but it is worth considering. Remember that this instruction comes from God's word – so we had better consider it seriously.

I would like to read from the J.B. Phillips The New Testament in Modern English

Romans 1:28-32 Moreover, since they considered themselves too high and mighty to acknowledge God, he allowed them to become the slaves of their degenerate minds, and to perform unmentionable deeds. They became filled with wickedness, rottenness, greed and malice; their minds became steeped in envy, murder, quarrelsomeness, deceitfulness and spite. They became whisperers-behind-doors, stabbers-in-the-back, God-haters; they overflowed with insolent pride and boastfulness, and their minds teemed with diabolical invention. They scoffed at duty to parents, they mocked at learning, recognized no obligations of honor, lost all natural affection, and had no use for mercy. More than this—being well aware of God's pronouncement that all who do these things deserve to die, they not only continued their own practices, but did not hesitate to give their thorough approval to others who did the same.

Romans 2:1 Now if you feel inclined to set yourself up as a judge of those who sin, let me assure you, whoever you are, that you are in no position to do so. **For at whatever point you condemn others you automatically condemn yourself, since you, the judge, commit the same sins.**

King James Version

Romans 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judges: for wherein thou judges another, thou condemns thyself; for thou that judges **does the same things.**

Suffice it to say our own personal biases towards the shortcomings of others should provide fertile ground in which to begin a thorough self evaluation of ourselves.

We might be saying right now, "I've been in God's Church forever – I certainly have not held a distorted view of myself all this time!" God patiently waited on quite a few people before He actively intervened in their lives to bring them to a point of right evaluation of their spiritual condition.

In a self-evaluation examination prior to Passover we must all readily admit:

Romans 7:14 ... I am carnal, sold under sin.

Do you know what that means, "Sold under sin?" When someone is "Sold under sin," it means that they have given themselves over to conduct and thoughts that are not right in God's eyes—and it applies to all of us.

Until we see everything as God sees it, and until we act on everything as God does, we are "sold under sin" – we miss the mark and we come short.

God's integral and vital involvement is absolutely necessary. We must beseech God for a clean heart to His pleasing. We must ask God to examine us – and then turn us away from evil; change us; lead us to the right way.

As we grow in spiritual maturity, we learn to view ourselves more and more as God sees us. We no longer justify ourselves – but we ask to be justified by the blood of Jesus Christ. That is a picture of Passover.

We ask ourselves how much we have taken on a spiritual resemblance to Jesus Christ our High Priest. And we also ask how much our thoughts and actions compare to His. Are we making progress toward the perfection of the fullness and stature of Jesus Christ?

Could it be that within God's Church we are in danger of making the mistake of speaking religious sounding words but in fact exhibiting very little Christian substance? When we measure that which passes for religious practice in many of our congregations today – it is only a pretense of true Godly faith. Can it be that we are doing just enough to fool only the most superficial of adherents – and ourselves at the same time?

Where is the seriousness, the faith, the urgency, the reconciliation, the mercy, the humility, the zeal, the sacrifice, the honest introspection, the giving, the caring, the integrity, the spirituality, the submission, the yieldedness, the forgiveness, and the crucial concern for our brother and sister? God says:

Ezekiel 36:25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

– That means that we have been imbued with the righteousness of Jesus Christ at our baptism and from then on. We are not to defile the righteousness of Christ that has been imputed to us. We must strive to be a clean people with good hearts.

Ezekiel 36:26 **A new heart also will I give you**, and a **new spirit** will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my **Spirit within you**, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

We are to be a Godly people. These verses apply to those of us who have been called by God the Father to be His children.

As we grow in spiritual maturity we learn to view ourselves more and more as God sees us. We no longer justify ourselves — but ask to be justified by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Let's be sure to spend time in prayer – asking God to show us and lead us in a **thorough** pre-Passover self evaluation.

End: Eye of the Beholder