

Dear Friends,

Matthew 6: 22-23

How are your eyes today? Do you have healthy eyes? Are they good eyes? Jesus says this, "If your eye is healthy your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy your whole body will be full of darkness".

The idea is that if you fix your gaze with a singleness of purpose in a good direction then everything in you will light up and your whole life will become a beacon bringing blessing to you and blessing to thousands around you. I suppose the question is, what is it that we should fix our gaze upon? In what direction should we focus our attention?

In the time of Jesus, Jewish people knew that it was important for them to turn their eyes in the right direction. In their scriptures, they had read this example of an unhealthy gaze which they found in the book of Sirach. "The miser is an evil person; he turns away and disregards people. The eye of the greedy person is not satisfied with his share; greedy injustice withers his soul. A miser begrudges bread and it is lacking at his table".

They had also read this contrasting passage from Tobit which calls on people to have a healthy gaze. "Give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity".

Those two quotes are taken from books which were written in the time between our Old and New Testaments. There is however also a reference to the good of eye in the book of Proverbs. It says "The good of eye are blessed for they give of their bread to the poor".

The idea is clear. The good of eye are those who are generous. They see those in need, turn towards them and do what they can to bring justice.

Jesus told a story which illustrated this. He told of a man who was beaten, robbed and left half dead along the road. Two respectable, religious people see him, but immediately turn their faces away. They refuse to see the need and do justice. They pass by on the other side. Their eyes are unhealthy. They are full of darkness. A third person, a Samaritan, sees the person in need, turns towards him and takes care of him. He makes a difference. He does justice. He has good eyes. He is full of light and those around him are blessed.

In our circuit service on Sunday we celebrated the harvest. We thanked God for the gifts of the creation. Harvest is also a time to remind ourselves of the importance of having a good eye, of turning towards those who are in need, of properly seeing

them, and doing what we can to be good neighbours. We do this by such things as generous giving, supporting the food bank and taking part in campaigns for justice.

Of course, sometimes we may think that the Good Samaritan had it easy. He only had one person in need. Our road is filled with those who cry out for our care. In the light of so much need, we may feel that our contribution is only a drop in the ocean. Yet, as many have said before me, "What is any ocean but a multitude of drops?"

God bless you,

Tony