

John 13:12-15

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?'¹³You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am.¹⁴So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.¹⁵For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

Habakkuk 2:1-4

I will stand at my watch-post, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.²Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.³For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.

What does it mean to see the world through Jesus' eyes? How do we embrace this vision once grasped and how do we lead others to embrace it as well?

Vision . . . leader . . . the two words go together. Many people would be skeptical that the words *servant* and *leader* go together, but *vision* and *leader* . . . you betcha. In their book, *Lead Like Jesus*¹, Ken Blanchard and Phil Hodges present Ken and Jesse Stoner's three part framework of what makes up a compelling vision:

1. *Your purpose.* What business are you in? Where are you going and why? Or in terms of your family, what is your family all about? Where is your family going and why?
2. *Your picture of the future.* What will your future look like if you are accomplishing your purpose?
3. *Your values.* What do you stand for? On what principles will you make ongoing decisions?"

This is all good stuff and you can certainly see all three at work in Jesus' leadership. Jesus understood his purpose and stayed committed to it even though it led to a horrifying death. Jesus certainly had a clear picture of the future. No rose-colored glasses for him; Jesus knew the confrontation to which he was leading his disciples. And, of course, Jesus also grasped the bigger picture, the promise that the day of salvation was arriving in him and his God-given vocation. Thirdly, Jesus taught about the kingdom of God, kingdom values we might call them, in much of what he said and did.

Yet . . . and it is always a big puzzling "yet" for me . . . Jesus' disciples, those who spent the most time with him, remained largely blind to all this. There are many examples we could look at, for the disciples' blindness is a large theme in the synoptic² gospels. Here are a few examples:³

1. Though Peter eventually names Jesus as "the Messiah, the son of the living God," soon thereafter Peter cannot yet comprehend that Jesus' vocation will take him to his death. Peter even tempts Jesus with avoiding it, as if Jesus needed any more temptation to turn away from such a horrible path (see Matthew 16:21-23).
2. As we saw two weeks ago, right before Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, some disciples jockeyed for privileged positions (Matthew 20:25-28).
3. And, of course, Peter's three-time denial and the disciples' abandonment of Jesus when he is arrested by the authorities.

¹This series is based upon the Blanchard & Hodges book, *Lead Like Jesus*.

²The synoptic gospels are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. All three share the same basic story line and even some material. These similarities gave rise to their being called "synoptic," which means "seen side by side."

³The examples could fill a book. I've always thought that one of the best evidences of the gospels' authenticity is the obtuse blindness of the disciples. Since it is their story to tell after Jesus' death and resurrection, why would they come off so badly at times unless the gospel portraits are accurate.

The disciples just never seem to get it, and the question that has always troubled me is “Why?” The disciples are with Jesus day in and day out, but they just don’t “get it.” How could I, living here in Texas 2,000 years later, ever hope to “get it.” Admittedly, I take some comfort in the disciples’ obtuseness, as it makes me feel better about my own weaknesses. Yet, I’m still left wondering why the disciples couldn’t see and asking myself what it means for my faith, my discipleship, and my own leadership.

Why wasn’t Jesus able to bring his closest disciples to the place they would be after his death, resurrection, and ascension: preaching with great power and courage⁴? Might Jesus simply have been a poor leader, unable to communicate in word or deed the vision that he wanted to share with his disciples. That thought seems at least mildly blasphemous, but still the question remains.

Swapping glasses

Perhaps we are confused by the disciples’ blindness because we underestimate the enormity of the change laid before them. And, in the same way, we underestimate the transformation entailed when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

The image of the disciples being blind is a good one, for it draws us to the question of vision. I’m not speaking merely of where we are going or even where we are now . . . it is a question of seeing things as they really are . . . seeing the true nature of reality, looking through right-seeing glasses.

The disciples had what is often called a “worldview.” Jesus had a worldview. You and I have worldviews. A worldview consists of our answers to the most basic questions of life. A worldview is our understanding of how the world works. If you are ever in an argument with someone and things reach the point where the person exclaims in exasperation, “Well, that’s just how things are!,” you’ve run right into their worldview.

The disciples lived within the world of second-temple Judaism. They lived under the thumb of the Romans while awaiting the day when God would finally step in and put things right, when God would keep all the glorious promises found in the writings of the prophets. And, as typical second-temple Jews, the disciples just *knew* that this great day would be ushered in by the arrival of God’s right-hand man, the Messiah, who would swoop in with power and might and wonder and glory. Everyone would see it, even the hated Romans.

Consequently, Jesus didn’t just want his disciples to see more clearly, he needed them to swap one pair of glasses for another; one way of seeing and being for another. He wanted them to adopt a wholly new worldview, to see that God’s saving power would be manifested in sacrifice and faithfulness, not power and might and wonder. We fail to grasp the gospels if we fail to grasp the radical swapping of worldviews required to see the truth about Jesus.

This is in large part what Paul means when he writes, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

This mind-renewing, glasses-swapping transformation can be as difficult for us as it was for the disciples. We think we know how the world works when we really don’t. We think we are seeing the truth when we are not. Indeed, again like the disciples, were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit, we would never be able to see the world as it really is. And even with the Spirit’s help, it still takes training and time to grow into our new glasses.

A leader’s vision

Written during the final decades of Jerusalem before its demise at the hands of the Babylonians, the book of Habakkuk⁵ focuses on a problem we all share. How can we believe that things will really be put right in a world filled with so much wrong? Or to put it another way, how do we really trust in God’s justice when the world is so obviously unjust?

The vision given Habakkuk in today’s passage is a guarantee that God will put things right, that God’s saving justice will remake all of creation. And we are to trust that God will do what God has promised to do (“the righteous will live by faith” v.4).

⁴Somewhere in here there is perhaps a clue to what Jesus meant when, on the eve of his crucifixion, that it was to the disciples’ advantage that he leave, for otherwise, the Spirit could not come to them (See John 16:7).

⁵Tucked away in the back of your Old Testament are the books of the twelve so-called “minor” or “lesser” prophets. The tag “minor” refers only to their length, not to their importance. The book of Habakkuk is one of the twelve.

But still, that doesn't answer all our questions. We do live in an unjust world, filled with wrongs and tragedies. What is to be our response? How do we really live by faith? In his commentary on this Habakkuk passage in the *New Interpreter's Bible*, Theodore Hiebert writes:

“The righteous, the sincerely religious, those who long and work for justice and righteousness receive the strength to go on, not because the world itself is just or because it rewards those who work for justice, but because these persons possess a larger vision of the way things should be. They possess the vision, as did Habakkuk, of God's just reign.”

This is the question we need to ask ourselves: “Do I possess the vision of God's just reign?” Jesus tried to help his disciples to see the truth of God's just reign, i.e., the kingdom of God. He wanted them to see that, contrary to the way they thought the world worked, the words *servant* and *leader* actually do go together. Yes, the Messiah would wash their feet.

I've come to believe that our transformation into the people God desires us to be entails a massive change in the way we see things. The key is to see that God's just reign is not just about the future, it is also about the present. 2,000 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth ushered in God's just reign, this kingdom of God and it is not just in our hearts, it is reality. Philip Yancey writes about the rumors of another world in a book by that title and he is right, there is another world every bit as real as the keyboard on which I'm typing at this minute. Just because I can't see it, doesn't make it less real.

Learning to see God and God's reign in all things won't happen overnight. But if we are going to lead like Jesus, we have to commit ourselves fully to the transformation of our vision. You might begin simply. When you watch a movie, ask yourself what the movie had to say about ourselves, this world . . . about God. This goes for any movie, not just the obviously God-oriented ones. What worldview is the movie presenting? How closely does it align with a Christian worldview?⁶ The world wants to shape us into its mold; God wants to shape us into Jesus' mold. Whose glasses will we wear?

READING WITH HEART & MIND, AUGUST 26 – SEPT 1

Sunday, Deuteronomy 16:18 – 17:13 We live in an unjust world created by a just God who has and will put things right. What does this passage teach us about God's justice as it is administered by sinful humans? Throughout these sections, remember the sort of world in which Deuteronomy was written, a world in which an “eye for an eye” represented moral progress over unlimited vengeance.

Monday, Deuteronomy 17:14-20 Why do you think that God chooses to warn the Israelites about kings? What warnings does God give? What requirements and restraints are placed on the king? Who is to choose the king?

Tuesday, Deuteronomy 18:1-8 We don't have much experience with priests, at least the levitical sort (the tribe of Levi was to be the priestly tribe). Why do you think the material needs of the priests are to be provided by the people?

Wednesday, Deuteronomy 18:9-22 We don't have much experience with prophets either. How does this passage shape what God means by a prophet? Specifically, what does God not mean by a prophet? What is to be the prophet's vocation?

Thursday, Deuteronomy 19 What might be the modern-day application of these instructions about cities of refuge? Why would respect for property rights be important (19:14)? How could one possibly call “an eye for an eye” moral progress?

Friday, Deuteronomy 20 Hmm . . . instruction on the conduct of warfare. What here surprises you? What does it say to us about our own warfare?

Saturday, Deuteronomy 21 Most of this chapter (v. 10-21) imposes restraints on the heads of households. Why would this be necessary? What does it say about the patriarchy depicted within the OT?

⁶The question here might be “What is a Christian worldview?,” but more on that will have to await another background study!

Sermon Notes

www.thebibleacademy.com

Registration for the Fall 2007 Bible Academy session is now open. We are offering daytime and evening classes as well as two one-day Saturday workshops. There is something for everyone this fall and we hope that you'll make plans now to be a part of it. Classes will begin the week of September 24. Brochures for the fall session are available around the church and will arrive in homes soon.

Scott Engle's Sunday morning class, *Something More*, moves to Festival Hall at 11am on September 9.

The new teaching service at 9:30 in the main sanctuary will begin on Sept. 9. Because Scott will be preaching in that service each week, his Sunday class is moving to 11am in Festival Hall. If you are not a part of a Sunday morning class, we hope that you'll visit our class. It is open to adults of all ages and focuses on a deeper understanding of Scripture. Whether you are new to St. Andrew or just visiting, the class is a great way to begin getting connected. If you have questions, you are welcome to call Scott at 214-291-8009 or e-mail him at sengle@thebibleacademy.com.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

If we are going to lead like Jesus, lead with a servant's head, we have to learn to see like Jesus. In my personal experience, this is harder than we think. Most of my life was spent being pumped full of the world's "real world" vision. The way the world works was defined for me by economists or scientists or business people. I've come to understand that it was all very far removed from God's understanding of the way the world works (and after all it *is* God's world)— not just how it ought to work, but how it does. I've learned that a life built on love and faithfulness and sacrifice is actually the path to the life I always wanted. I've learned to think theologically, to watch movies and hear the God-questions, to feel God's tugging on the old priorities to which I still too often cling.

So the question is an obvious one to me: How can I see like Jesus? And another: How would I even know if I am? These questions touch every facet of our lives. It's why I suggest something as seemingly mundane as learning to see movies differently. You might try it with headlines. What God-questions (that's really all theology is) are generated by the headline . . . or the novel . . . or the conversation with your friends? What are some other ways you might begin to see like Jesus?

Part of this is learning to read Scripture better, to eat it as Eugene Peterson puts. We need to step within the stories and pages of Scripture. There is probably no more proven means of transforming our vision . . . I know that it has transformed mine.