

A Peanuts comic strip begins with Lucy sitting comfortable on the couch. Charlie Brown enters the room and Lucy says, "Charlie Brown go in the Kitchen and get me a nice cold glass of milk." Charlie exclaims, "Why would I do that, you never do anything for me?" Lucy answers, "Charlie Brown if you get me that nice cold glass of milk, on your 75th birthday, I will make you the best chocolate birthday cake you have ever seen." The next frame shows Charlie in the Kitchen getting that cold glass of milk for Lucy and he says to himself, "I just love to have something to look forward too." Most of us are like Charlie Brown; we love to have something to look forward too, it gives us hope.

The Pharisees went off and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech. They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion, for you do not regard a person's status. Tell us, then, what is your opinion: Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?" Knowing their malice, Jesus said, "Why are you testing me, you hypocrites? Show me the coin that pays the census tax." Then they handed Jesus the Roman coin. Jesus said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?" They replied, "Caesar's" At that Jesus said to them, "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." The Gospel of the Lord.

For the last three weeks, we have heard Jesus using parables to criticize the religious leaders. The Lord tells them that they initially said yes to God but later rejected God's messengers, and when they were invited to the wedding feast of God's Kingdom but they refused to come.

In this week's Gospel, the religious leaders attempt to turn things around by questioning Jesus and plotting against Him. What was causing all this conflict between the religious leaders and Jesus? I suggest that the tension was coming from the fact that they saw the world through very different eyes.

During my last week of basic training in the Army, we were given our final rifle range test. Up until this point, I had scored fairly high on the previous five tests when the targets were clearly in front of us. However, during this final test the targets would pop up in the woods and the goal was to shoot and hit it. When it was my turn, I waited and waited for a target to pop up but never saw one and the Sargent angrily shouted, "Fisher you better start shooting at those targets." I replied, "Drill Sargent, I don't see any targets." He shouted again, "How come everyone else are able to see them." What the Sargent didn't realize was that I'm colored blind and for me the targets were invisible because they blended in with the woods.

I realized that I did not see things the way the other soldiers and that we all see life through different lens. It has been said, "We see life not as it is, but as we are."

The religious leaders looked at the Samaritan woman they saw a loser. Jesus looked at her and saw a woman made in God's image, someone who would help bring an entire town to follow the Lord. The crowds looked at Zacchaeus, and saw an unjust, evil Tax Collector; in Jesus' eyes , He saw a child of God, who would generously give half of what he had to the poor. My friends, Jesus always saw people through the lens of love and mercy.

There is a video produced by National Geographic called “Celebrate What’s Right with the World.” When an employee begins working for the Geographic, they are given this vision statement; a way of looking at the world, simply, “Celebrate what’s right with the world.” Dewitt Jones, the narrator was a photographer for national geographic for twenty years. He said that this vision statement, not only changed his work but more importantly changed the ways he looked at life and gave him passion and purpose; he knew if he looked long enough in nature or in human beings, he would find something to celebrate.

Dewitt Jones concluded the video by asking the viewer, “Do you have such a vision for your life. Six words which you say to yourself each morning that creates passion and purpose.

If I were to write six words to describe Jesus’ vision, it might be: “Everyone is made in God’s image.” Where did Jesus get His vision statement? In the book of Genesis, it reads, on the sixth day God created man and woman in His own image and He found it was very good. God looked at the human being and found us very good. It’s no wonder that Jesus looked at His disciples, and said, “You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world,” because that how He saw them.” Jesus knew what kind of stuff we are made from; for He is seeing us through the eyes of our Creator.

Behavioral Scientists have discovered that we see what we are prepared to see. This is all centered on a network of nerve cells called the Reticular Activating System. Everyone has this system. It is a small part of our brains. The Reticular Activating System works like this: Once something has been brought to our attention and we are prepared and want to see it, we see it almost everywhere we go. For example, you decide you want to buy a certain car, with a certain style, in a certain color. You will begin to see that car everywhere you turn, on the road, on TV, in the newspaper, magazines.

Now what has happened? Those things have always been there but now you are prepared to see them. It happens in other areas of our lives; we see what we are prepared to see. If you are prepared to see gloom and doom today, you will see it. If you are prepared to see the faults in others, you will find them.

In the book, "Radical Optimism, the author Beatrice Beetroot writes that people lose hope because they focus on the regrets of the past and the fears of the future. When we are seeing life through the lens of regrets and fears, people lose hope. You know that people are losing hope when they fall into the three C's. Criticism, Complaint and Control.

On the other hand, if you have prepared yourself to see the sunshine even on a cloudy day, you will see it. If you have prepared yourself to see opportunities, they will be there.

Saint Mother Theresa lived life through the lens of love and mercy. When a journalist asked her how she could spend all her time with the poor and dying, she simply said, "Because it is how I see. I see Christ in each person I meet."

Behavioral Scientists have also discovered that one of the ways to activate your Reticular Activating System is to commit yourself to a goal and then write it down, like a vision statement.

What's your vision? How do you see the world? When we see the world through the lens of love and mercy, it gives us passion, purpose and it gives us hope because all need something to look forward to.

Take some time this week to reflect on your life. What in your life gives you hope? Whatever that is, write it down and prepare yourself to see it.

Let us pray: please pray after me: Lord Jesus, prepare me to fix my eyes on you, the author and finisher of my faith. Give me eyes that I may see you wherever I go, especially those who are most vulnerable. Amen and amen.

May God bless you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May God bless you and keep you, may God's face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May Mary our Mother, hold you in her loving arms. Have a blessed, safe and healthy week.