**BELIEVING IS SEEING**

On Wednesday night I have been teaching the Gospel of Matthew. When you are the teacher you naturally shift your mind into a higher gear than when you are the student. Your job is to master the text as much as possible, anticipating every conceivable question that might be asked. While I know I will never be a scholar or expert on Matthew, I have tried to pour over the text until it becomes “alive” to me.

I want to *see* the events as they take place, *hear* the sermons as if sitting there, *feel* the emotions of amazement at a miracle, *touch* the nail scars in His hands, side and feet, *smell* the fragrant perfume as Mary opens the alabaster box to anoint Christ’s head.

What I’m asking for as I examine the life of Jesus under this Biblical microscope is all the empirical evidence (i.e. the five senses) I can possibly experience so that I can say in my heart, and to my God, “I have walked and talked with Jesus.”

I want the Bible to live in my mind and heart that I might experience it fully. In short, I want to embrace Jesus in the same way Cleopas and his friend experienced Him as they walked home to Emmaus on the day of His resurrection. I want heart burn like they had, and I don’t mean the kind that required Tums or Prilosec. After walking 7 miles listening to Jesus explain all the Messianic prophecies and how they were fulfilled, said “*Did not our hearts burn within us as He while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us*?” (Luke 24:32). I want to experience Jesus totally and fully just like that.

How I envy John the apostle who could write these words in I John 1:1-2,

​*1 That which was from the beginning, which we have* ***heard****, which we have* ***seen*** *with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have* ***handled****, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—*

Peter and John, and all the apostles, could experience fully the life of Christ using all the empirical evidence of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and even “*taste that the Lord is good*” (I Peter 2:3). If only I could have been there and enjoyed the Lord in all His glory. If only I could have seen Him, heard Him, touched Him and “tasted” Him. If only I could have …

Stop! Just stop!

Did not the resurrected Lord chasten “doubting Thomas” for saying these words:

*“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”* (John 20:25)

Did not the resurrected Lord then tell “doubting Thomas” these words:

*“Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”* (John 20:27)

Did not the resurrected Lord then say to “seeing-is-believing Thomas” these words:

*“Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed.* ***Blessed are those who have******not seen*** *and yet have believed.”* (John 20:29)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, friends and neighbors, do you realize what Jesus just said to us? Do you feel the impact of that incredible statement? Jesus is declaring that those of us who have lived AFTER the ascension into heaven are “*more blessed*” for a faith that says, “Believing Is Seeing!”

Thomas, and all the other apostles and disciples who walked and talked with Jesus came to a decision about Christ only after a “seeing-is-believing” by empirical evidence. But that’s how God planned it. God intended there to first be eyewitnesses to gather the necessary evidence and then tell the world what they had seen, heard, touched and tasted. Read again I John 1:1-2 above.

But then finish that quote which I did not give you in I John 1:3-4,

*“… 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”*

There it is for all the world to see. By examining the evidence of those who actually saw, heard, touched, smelled and tasted the life of Christ on earth (“seeing is believing”), we can now experience the same fellowship with Jesus that they did so that our joy may be full (“believing is seeing”).

Oh how I want my brethren at Northwest, my neighbors in Maple Grove, the cashier at Wal-Mart, the stranger in the car next to me at the red light, and my wife and family who know me best, to say of me what the Sanhedrin said of Peter and John:

“*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And* ***they realized that they had been with Jesus***.” (Acts 4:13).

When others *see* our believing-is-seeing faith, may they also *hear* us sing:

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me. All His wonderful passion and purity.  
May His spirit divine, all my being refine. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.

When your burden is heavy and hard to bear. When your neighbors refuse all your load to share.  
When your feeling so blue, don’t know just what to do. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

When somebody has been so unkind to you. Some words spoken that pierces you through and through.  
Think how He was beguiled, spat upon and reviled. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

From the dawn of the morning till close of day, in examples, in deeds, and in all you say.  
Lay your gifts at His feet. Ever strive to keep sweet. Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in you.

Until tomorrow… live like Jesus. I love you. Rick