

# OPTICAL ILLUSIONS

## (Sermon Summary)

### **Reading: Matthew 6: 19-34.**

The verses we are looking at here are from what we call the Sermon on the Mount. It is an invitation to us to think carefully. The sad fact is that often we do not think carefully at all. Yet we find the Lord helping us to think by using simple illustrations which are designed to make us ask things of ourselves. They are easy-to-follow in one sense but they are like hammer blows to us in what they are showing us about human nature. Christianity is not a comfortable journey, neither does it have a sense of settling down. It is a life of upheaval and a cycle of realizing different things, repenting and embarking on a fresh process of change.

#### **1. What is your eye taking in?**

The Lord is not teaching us here about literal eyesight or our powers of observation. He is inviting us to think about the world that we are seeing, or think we are seeing. What is the set of values that are instructing what our eye is taking in? In this regard it is much the same as thinking about what values and attitudes are working our tongues.

We can be guilty of 'confirmation bias' where we simply see things in a way that backs up the opinions we already have. Only particular ideas are able to reach us as we look out on the world. We miss out lots of things that do not fit in to our scheme of things. We have a roving eye looking to co-opt the world to agree with our concepts and basic philosophy of life. It can get quite ugly because there are people who meet our gaze who do not fit in with our ideas and whom we look at as problems and obstacles. They might be roadblocks to us achieving something and so we are angry and unhappy with them.

We have to ask ourselves 'Who is in charge of our eyes? Which ideas are governing what we notice and what we do not notice? And how much are those ideas our own construction of points of view that other people hold and have imposed on us?' When we look out at the world, is it seen by us as a place to conquer, or something to fear, or somewhere to belong? We will act upon what we see, or think we see, and the results may leave the world a better place or leave behind great damage.

## **2. Importing darkness.**

If we do not know who we are, then we may think we are seeing the world right when in fact we are not, and we are not bringing light, wisdom, knowledge and understanding into our lives but darkness. We are suffering from an optical illusion of our own making. We have an inner darkness in that we have no clear idea of our place in the world and so we are not learning much as we survey the world, and what we think we do know is only more of the same darkness which is within us. So we end up adding more darkness to the darkness we already have.

So the Lord gives us here an invitation to stop and consider. What are we doing to ourselves? What are we doing to our souls? We need to get fresh eyes so as to be able to see fresh things. Our minds need to be enlightened so that we are looking at a different world in a different way and reaching different conclusions. The unspiritual eye, the eye of unbelief, looks out a world without Christ and sees no demands there requiring obedience to God. It reckons that this world is all that there is. It sees no divine hand, no divine intervention. It sees no Creator, nor anything supernatural that has shaped what we see. It can even insist that there is nothing supernatural in the universe and thus, from a position of darkness, argue that it alone has light. People can look out at the world and reckon to have figured it all out, that it is all about class war, or a war among the sexes or races. The darkness within then becomes baked in, compounded and beyond the reach of challenge.

## **3. The eye of faith.**

The spiritual eye sees much more than this. It sees there is much, much more than the unspiritual eye will ever be able to conclude. Yet in our hearts we all long for an eternal security, a peace within to be able to face death. When it is light within, we are seeing Christ everywhere and in everything. We look out at the world seeking ways to bring glory to His name. His life and death, all that they mean, are imprinted on all that we take in and try to understand.

We see a world that needs saving from its own darkness, or darkness masquerading as light. We see a world that has no answers, that is wearing out and that is dying. We see people as part of the problem, consumed with their greed, fear, and self-centredness.

The light within that we need is the knowledge of the dying Saviour whose death for sin answers our need for forgiveness and can answer the need of any human being who calls upon His name. Such a soul has a source of light in the Bible and the Holy Spirit. There is clarity about what our calling in the world is. Optical illusions are gone as we are not now fooled into thinking we have light when really we have darkness. We are able to ditch any reliance upon works or foolish expressions of the Christian faith.