

Seeing Things The Right Way

Psalm 73

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 73:25

“Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

A sheet of construction paper for each child (various colors), scissors and tape.

A picture (from a magazine or another source), poster board, a pencil and scissors.

ATTENTION GETTER!

Things Are Not Always as They Appear!

For this activity you will need a sheet of construction paper for each child (various colors), scissors and tape. Give each child one sheet of construction paper. Have them cut the sheet in half (width). Set the other half aside (They will use it later in the craft so make sure they hang on to it). Next have the children roll it to make a tube about 1 to 1 1/2” in diameter and tape it.

Next have each child hold the tube up to their left eye to look through, kind of like a telescope. Tell them to keep both of their eyes open. Next, with their right hand they should cover their right eye (palm of hand facing eye). Then tell the children to move their hand away from their eyes to the center of the tube. Both eyes should be kept open during this process. A large hole should appear in the palm of their hands.

Next gather your children in a circle and explain that things aren't always as they appear. Even though it looks like there is a big hole in your hand you know that there really isn't one. Sometimes in life we can look at people or things and not see the big picture. We

might think that something is a certain way when really it isn't. That is what we are going to learn in our lesson today. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

*IMPORTANT – Make sure the children hang onto the tube and the other half-sheet of construction paper for the craft later in the lesson.

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever wanted what someone else has: Or have you ever hoped something would not work out for someone else so “you” could take his place in doing something you would really like to do? Have you ever wondered why people who are not Christians do not ever seem to have any problems, while you do? It seems as though a man by the name of Asaph had similar questions.

Asaph was one of the main musicians at the temple. He was responsible to lead worship at the temple. He led worship with lots of musicians and singers. Asaph began to have some questions that really bothered him. He began to look at evil people and notice that it seemed like they never had any problems. It looked like they had everything they wanted and nothing bad ever happened to them. Asaph even began to wonder why he should continue serving the Lord; but the Lord in His love and mercy taught Asaph some valuable lessons. We can learn from his experiences.

Today's lesson out of Psalm 73 is going to help us do some soul searching. We need to understand why we serve the Lord. Do we just serve Him because someone else has told us to? Or do we sometimes look at the world and think that maybe there is a better, more fun way out there? We have to be very careful because we can deceive ourselves. We have an enemy, the devil, who wants to destroy us. He speaks all kinds of lies to us.

Let's look at the answers to some of these questions and see how God looks at all of this. We may learn some surprising things like Asaph did. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

PSALM 73:1-16

Truly God is good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart.

But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; my steps had nearly slipped.

For I was envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

For there are no pangs in their death, but their strength is firm.

They are not in trouble as other men, nor are they plagued like other men.

Therefore pride serves as their necklace; violence covers them like a garment.

Their eyes bulge with abundance; they have more than heart could wish.

They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; they speak loftily.

They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.

Therefore his people return here, and waters of a full cup are drained by them.

And they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?”

Behold, these are the ungodly, who are always at ease; they increase in riches.

Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.

For all day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning.

If I had said, “I will speak thus,” behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children.

When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—

In this half of the Psalm, we see that the writer, Asaph, is a follower of God. And we see the writer being very honest with God. God always wants us to be honest with Him. He doesn't mind when our minds or hearts are struggling with hard questions. He is always up to the challenge of our “hard questions.” The main thing we need to remember is that He wants us to be honest with Him. We must always be respectful, but we can go to Him with our questions and He will help us. He knows we are made of dust, and that we need His help and guidance.

We find here that Asaph is struggling. In fact, he even says that his feet almost slipped. It is another way of saying that he almost fell away from the Lord. Actually, Asaph was struggling with envy. He began to look at all of the wicked people in the world and began to make conclusions about life. The problem was that he didn't look at the big picture or ask God for His opinion on this. He was trying to answer these things at first in his own heart and mind.

As Asaph looked at those people who were in the world, he became jealous of them. He began to look at and point out all of the good things about their lives. He saw them as prosperous, they never suffered any pain, they were strong, they never had problems in life, they had everything they could possibly wish for.

It is interesting to see that Asaph says that they have all of these “wonderful” things happening to them, but at the same time they are boastful, wicked, proud, violent, scoffers, and hurt other people. Asaph could not figure out how bad people could be doing so well.

In our world today there are so many people who set themselves up as popular or heroes. Most of them are not Christians. They may even be wicked, proud and boastful. They may also be beautiful, strong or very popular. It is tempting to want to be like some movie star or sports star. But, we have to be very careful because we do not see the big picture like God does. The biggest problem Asaph had was that he took his eyes off of God and placed them on other people. We have to remember to keep our eyes on Jesus and not on the ungodly of this world. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

The writer gets sad because of the way these people act and it seems to him that they are not punished for their bad attitudes. It is kind of like when we see something that doesn't seem right and we tell our parents, “It's just not fair!” That is what Asaph was saying to God. It seemed to him like God was not paying attention, and he wants to know why God is letting them get away with this, while he is going through hard times.

It sounds like Asaph wants to change his mind about following after God's ways in verses 13-15, doesn't it? He is wondering if it is worth all the pain to walk the narrow way. He is wondering what he is going to get after all these years of looking to God, and learning to walk in love and purity and the fear of the Lord. He

knows that envy is keeping him from seeing things the right way. He is asking God to help him see things the right way. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

Helping Us To See

For this craft you will need the 1/2 sheet of construction paper and the tube from the Attention Grabber above, scissors, tape and markers. The children will be making paper telescopes with today's theme. Have them take the 1/2 sheet of construction paper and cut that in half to make two 1/2 pieces. Take one piece at a time and roll it into a tube slightly smaller than the tube that has already been made. Do the same thing with the second piece. Insert the first tube into the tube the children made earlier. Then place the third tube into the second.

You can either have the children tape (or use a gluestick) to have the three tubes in place. Next you can allow the children to decorate the telescope and have them write today's theme on the larger tube along with Psalm 73 and their name.

PSALM 73:17-28

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end.

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction.

Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

As a dream when one awakes, so, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind.

I was so foolish and ignorant; I was like a beast before You.

Nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.

You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You.

My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry.

But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all Your works.

When we come to verse 17 there is a great big “UNTIL” that we see. That means that at some point Asaph stopped thinking the way that he was thinking and began to look at things another way, God’s way. He got a view of life on this earth through the Lord’s eyes. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

Basically, Asaph is saying that when he went to God’s sanctuary, when he began to get his eyes back on God and began to worship Him, then everything began to make sense. It is like Asaph asked himself, “What in the world was I thinking?” We can do that sometimes when we take our eyes off of God and place them on this world. Every day we need to spend time in God’s Word and worshipping Him so that we can keep the right attitude.

What really was happening was that Asaph was receiving an “eternal” perspective. That just means that he was beginning to see things like God sees them. He remembers what happens at the end of the path for wicked people. Their path leads to destruction and judgment, not blessing. It may appear that everything is OK now, but there is coming a day when they will be judged and if they do not have a relationship with God, then they will be destroyed. **God wants us to see things the way He does.**

Let us look at some of the things that Asaph describes that will happen to wicked people. He says that they are in slippery places. That means that they could fall at any moment. We need to be on a solid place, firmly planted. The only solid place in this world is when we stand on the rock of Jesus and His Word. We also see that one day they will be destroyed, and it can happen in a moment. Life is very short and it can end very quickly. Eternity lasts forever; we need to be prepared for eternity.

Asaph says that they are consumed with terrors, like in a dream. We don't see everything that goes on in the minds and hearts of evil people. We only see the outside. Everything may look good on the outside, but people who do not know Jesus can not experience peace like we do. The wicked things they do cause all kinds of problems in their lives. Their families can be destroyed; their relationships and their very lives can be a disaster because of their choices. People who sin on television or in the movies don't show you that part of sin. There is always a result to our choices. When we sin there are bad results.

Asaph begins to "see things the right way"; that is the way that God sees things. Now we see compassion come to his heart and mind for all these people that he was jealous of. How many people in our world do we see everyday making a decision not to follow after

God and His ways? Are our hearts grieved for these people? Can we trade our jealousy and envy for compassion? We are told that Asaph was grieved. That means that he was sad at the condition of the world.

Now that Asaph is seeing things the right way again, he begins to praise the Lord. He is able to see the blessings of his life, which come from a Heavenly Father who loves him very much. He sees that even though he might not have a lot of money or all kinds of material things, the Lord is always there for him, no matter what his circumstances. He has everything he needs. He remembers the Lord is guiding and strengthening him through this life; and after life in this body is over, the Lord Himself is going to bring him into glory! Wow! What a thought! There is so much to look forward to when we walk with the Lord.

There is a verse in the NT that says, “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (1 Peter 1:6,7) It is true that life is not always fun, or easy, or painless. It is true that it will seem like we are going through more hard times than someone, but the last verse of this Psalm reminds us how to see things the right way. Asaph goes back to what God has called him to do and that is to praise Him.

What a blessing it is for us to be able to learn from Psalm 73 so that we can see things the right way. Are you taking your eyes off of Jesus and placing them on others? Let’s remember that we need to always keep our eyes on Jesus. Then we will understand what is true and right. Eternity is going to be awesome. Keep your focus on God and His kingdom! God wants us to see things the way He does!

Looking for the Big Picture

You will need a picture (from a magazine or another source), poster board, a pencil and scissors. Find a picture of someone doing something nice for someone else or that would communicate seeing things the way that God sees them. With a glue stick, paste the picture onto poster board. Turn the picture over and make squares. Make enough so that each child in your class can get one square. Next number the squares so it makes it easier for you to put them together later. Cut out the squares.

Next without saying anything about what the picture is, mix up the squares and pass out one square to each student. Go around the room and ask each child to tell you what the picture is that their square comes from. If no one guesses allow the children to get together and try to put the picture together. If they are still having trouble put the picture together using the numbers.

Use this activity to reinforce that if we have just one small piece of the puzzle, we can't always understand everything that is happening. Sometimes we might be tempted to look at our lives or problems we are going through and like Asaph begin to question God. Remember, we cannot see the whole picture. We need to put our eyes on God and not on ourselves.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to keep looking to Him all of the time. When tempted to look at the people and things of this world have them pray and ask the Lord for help to remain focused on Him always. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so.