

New Hope Global Sermon: Open Our Eyes, Lord

Introduction:

This week I am reviewing the book *White Fragility* by Robin Diangelo, a distinguished white female college professor. In it she challenges the dominance of white control in all areas of US life – in politics, in the money markets, in those who control the movie and music industries, in denomination and church structures, in mission organizations and non-profits etc. Her findings are not new or hidden from common knowledge, but her premise that racism is endemic to white people is unknown to most Caucasians because of the white control of the foundational structures and assumptions of US society. Because most whites are beneficiaries of white supremacy and white power in the US, they are blind to their own racism that upholds these structures. The result is what she calls “white fragility” – the defensiveness, anger and backlash among white people when their own racism is exposed. Diangelo seeks to open white people’s eyes to admit their complicity in racism and to correct their misunderstandings about what being racist actually means. She hopes her goals of awareness can motivate white people to change the very structures that reinforce racism on a daily basis.

Open our eyes, Lord.

I wonder how many other issues people are blind to, among Christians as well as secularists and those of other religions. I believe the reality might be shocking.

Spiritual blindness, of blindness of one’s heart was certainly an issue Jesus cited repeated with the Pharisees. “You blind guides...you hypocrites...You say one thing and do another...You don’t ‘see’ the weightiness of the law as you focus on obeying man-made regulations in the minutia.” Hear Jesus’ word of rebuke in The Passion translation of Matthew 23: 16-26:

¹⁶“You blind guides!^[a] Great sorrow awaits you, for you teach that there’s nothing binding when you swear by God’s temple, but if you swear by the gold of the temple, you are bound by your oath. ¹⁷You are deceived in your blindness!^[b] Which is greater, the gold or the temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸And you say that whoever takes an oath by swearing, ‘By the altar,’ it is nothing. But if you swear, ‘By the gift upon the altar,’ then you are obligated to keep your oath. ¹⁹What deception! For what is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰Whoever swears by the altar swears by the altar and everything offered on it. ²¹And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and the one who dwells in it. ²²And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by God, who sits upon it.

²³“Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and pretenders! For you are obsessed with peripheral issues, like insisting on paying meticulous tithes on the smallest herbs that grow in your gardens.^[c] These matters are fine, yet you ignore the most important duty of all: to walk in the love of God, to display mercy to others, and to live with integrity.^[d] Readjust your values and place first things first. ²⁴What blind guides! Nitpickers! You will spoon out a gnat from your drink, yet at the same time you’ve gulped down a camel without realizing it!^[e]

²⁵“Great sorrow awaits you religious scholars and Pharisees—frauds and imposters! You are like one who will only wipe clean the outside of a cup or bowl, leaving the inside filthy. You are foolish to ignore the greed and self-indulgence that live like germs within you. ²⁶You are blind and deaf^[f] to your evil. Shouldn’t the one who cleans the outside also be concerned with cleaning the inside? You need to have more than clean dishes; you need clean hearts!

“You are deceived by your blindness. You are blind and deaf to your evil.”

The shocking thing is that Jesus delivered this harsh rebuke to the religious scholars and Pharisees – those who were educated and the religious leaders among the people. Yet, due to their blindness, they had forfeited their leadership from God’s perspective and were sentenced to hell as “blind guides – full of hypocrisy and deceit.”

These are serious prophetic words from Jesus, from Robin Diangelo and from countless prophets and other leaders in the Christian world in past centuries.

How is this blindness possible among those who call themselves Christians?

The Unexamined Life

Socrates once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Blindness to the truths God sets forth in His word leads people to that unexamined life. An unexamined life that is often overtaken by sin. All because “the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.” (Jer.17:9). It is all too easy to rationalize and justify our sinful behavior in one area or our whole lifestyle because we are blind to the parasitic nature of sin that progressively overtakes our minds and bodies. We act and react out of our blindness and disregard the Spirit’s promptings of confession, repentance and reconciliation.

Can you think of one area in your life where you have done that? I can. But I can also remember when the Spirit finally got my attention in that area, I acknowledged my sin, confessed it, repented of it and turned my back on that sin forever. There was such an amazing freedom that occurred when I finally had eyes opened to see as God saw and do what God said to do.

Open our eyes, Lord.

We desperately need God to do this in our lives today, beloved, because Christians and non-Christians alike are riddled with self-delusion, rampant prejudice, unchecked racism, lustful indulgences, blatant self-sufficiency, narrow-minded dogmatism and insistence on leaders who fulfill people’s desired agendas while turning a blind eye to these leaders’ immoral character, thirst for power, dishonesty, greed and anti-biblical actions and attitudes. That is the same unbridled hypocrisy Jesus accused the Pharisees of.

We need God to open our eyes to what is true and honest and good and exemplifies God’s character in our lives because we often can’t see it ourselves. In fact, this is why confession is so important. First John 1:9 says “If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We confess what we know and God forgives that and then God also forgives us from what we are blind to – “all our unrighteousness.”

Several hymn writers have turned this need into prayers for God’s intervention:

1. “Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me, place in my hand the wonderful key that will unlock and set me free. Silently now I wait for Thee; ready my God, thy will to see; open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine.

Open my ears that I may hear voices of truth you send so clear. And while the message sounds in my ear, everything false will disappear. Silently now I wait for Thee; ready my God, thy will to see; open my ears illumine me, Spirit divine.” (words and music: Clara Scott)

“Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, open the eyes of my heart, I want to see You. I want to see You. To see You high and lifted up, shining in the light of Your glory.

Pour out Your power and love as we sing, "Holy, holy, holy; holy, holy, holy, I want to see You.
I want to see You. (words and music: Paul Baloche)

[On a similar theme]: Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus, to reach out and touch Him
And say that we love Him.

Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen; open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus.
(words and music: Bob Cull)

Open your hearts all you who hear this, open your hearts to know God's love;
Open your hearts to hear God's message: Jesus makes us one.
(Israeli folk song, tr. Caroline Fritsch).

These prayer songs are right on because only the Lord can open our eyes, open our ears, open our
hearts to see Jesus in His glory and to understand the glimpses of truth that will uncover our blindness
to sin, to self, to others, and to God's purposes in the world for and through His people.

Do it, Lord. Open our eyes. For Your sake and in Your name we prayer. Amen.

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