

Are We Seeing Through the Eyes of Jesus?

~Other Speakers S-Z: K.P. Yohannan:

Things aren't always as they appear to us at first glance. It's true, isn't it? Let me explain what I mean: You make a phone call to an old friend just to say hello, but he responds with harsh words and shows no interest in talking with you. By the time you hang up, you are convinced he is upset with you. A week later, you find out that his wife was diagnosed with cancer just hours before you made your phone call. The situation was not at all as it appeared, and you had to revise your earlier judgment.

How easily we judge others every day, without actually knowing the full story! In the book of Samuel, we read the story of Hannah, a lonely, heartbroken woman who came to the temple to pour her soul out before the Lord. In her pain and heaviness of heart, she wept bitterly and could barely utter a few words in prayer. The priest Eli, who watched from a distance, only saw her lips tremble as she sobbed her request to God . . . and he promptly accused her of being drunk. When she explained her story, Eli no longer condemned her, but with a heart of compassion he blessed her in the name of Jehovah.

Eli made the mistake of basing his quick judgment of Hannah on her outward appearance. God corrected him by making him look at her heart and take time to listen to her whole story.

What Eli did is exactly what we do to others: We pass judgment without knowing the real condition or situation, and we end up condemning others. Furthermore, we often use harsh, sarcastic words and expressions in our "overdict" and end up hurting others deeply. Although they may respond to our sarcasm with a smile, deep down in their heart they are weeping. We must never forget that when we carelessly hurt the least of our brothers and sisters, we are hurting the Lord Himself.

Why is our perception of others and their problems often so inaccurate and insensitive, even if we consider all the facts? Because we lack God's perspective on their situation. As human beings, we are so limited in our ability to understand one another. We don't see the world through the eyes of our fellow man, but only through our own. Subsequently, our own experience, traditions and values are the measuring scale for our judgment and the reality we perceive in the world around us. If we use ourselves and our circumstantial views of reality as final authorities for assessing others, we will inevitably make hopeless and inaccurate judgments.

Because each person on earth lives and judges by his own perception of reality, how can we ever respond to a situation in the right way? We can't until we recognize that God alone is the measuring scale for all things and that without the guidance of the Holy Spirit we are incapable of discerning the hearts of men, their true needs and God's answer for their situations. In other words, we must learn to see others through the eyes of Jesus.

The story of Peter in the 10th chapter of Acts is a classic example of how Peter's view of reality, which was created by his upbringing, traditions and convictions, became a major hindrance to his ability to do God's will. Being a Jew, he could have no dealings whatsoever with Gentiles. But here we see Peter throwing out his lifelong judgment on Gentiles and traveling to the house of Cornelius to lead him and his entire family to Christ. What happened to Peter? He allowed the Holy Spirit to replace his own faulty conception of reality with God's perfect one; and as a result, he was able to respond as Jesus would.

I believe the most disturbing reason we are so quick to judge others is our deep-seated pride. We don't want to admit it, but we often secretly delight in their flaws and problems. Their failures give us something to talk about and at the same time make us look holy. In reality, our hearts are so wicked that we actually feel elevated when someone else falls! If we could see them with the eyes of Jesus, we would intercede with tears for their restoration.

Do we judge the motives of others? This is one of the worst things we can do. Without even asking one question, we make up our mind and say things like, "I know why he is saying this or why she is doing that." When we do this, we seat ourselves on the throne of God, because He alone can judge the motives of men's hearts.

The Word of God clearly warns us, "So be careful not to jump to conclusions before the Lord returns as to whether someone is a good servant or not. When the Lord comes, he will turn on the light so that everyone can see exactly what each one of us is really like, deep down in our hearts. Then everyone will know why we have been doing the Lord's work. At that time God will give to each one whatever praise is coming to him" (1 Corinthians 4:5, TLB).

Remember, by the judgment you give, you will be judged also.