

Matthew 6:22-23

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/matt/matt-6/matthew-622-23/>

Jesus gives a short parable about what the eye can see to emphasize the importance of spiritual awareness. To have a true perspective. If our eye is good, we see the reality and glory of His Kingdom and we will act according to our sight, and prosper. If our eye is bad, we fail to see His Kingdom's reality and glory, then we will act according to our blindness, to our shame.

The parallel account of this teaching is found in Luke 11:34-36.

Jesus tells a short parable, whose principle is analogous to His oft repeated warning, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15; 13:9; 13:43; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; 14:45). The symbols and terms of this metaphor are *the eye, the lamp, the body, light, and darkness*. Their meaning will become clear as we go through this parable.

Jesus begins, *The eye is the lamp of the body. The eye* is the organ of sight. *The eye* functions as a *lamp* for *the body* it serves. As a *lamp* sheds light so that we can see our surroundings, the *eye* allows us to perceive physical reality. *The eye* is how *the body* perceives its surrounding environment. *The eye* is the primary instrument *the body* has for seeing what actions and reactions it should undertake to accomplish the goal for the body.

So then, if your eye can see clearly, *your whole body* will benefit from its true sight and *be full of light* (truth). If *the eye* functions properly and *is clear*, it sees both the chasm and the bridge that safely lead across. It guides the whole body to safety according to *the light* it sees. *The body* is illuminated by its *light*, acts according to its *light*, and is filled and even *full of its light*.

But on the contrary, if your eye is bad and can't see well, *your whole body* will be *full of darkness*. It won't properly perceive the environment surrounding it. *The body* will have spotty details, or no information, or even false information that guides its steps. Consequently, it will be unlikely to pursue the best course of action. *If your eye is bad, your whole body* will be in the dark, or as Jesus says, *full of darkness*.

Jesus concludes His short parable with this statement: *if then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!* In other words, *if the light* that you are acting by is actually wrong and misleading, *how great* will your confusion become as you continue to follow its deceptions.

If you cannot see, you are liable to act foolishly. And as folly leads to greater folly, *darkness* leads to greater *darkness*.

With this parable, Jesus is not primarily concerned about physical sight any more than He was concerned about how well someone's physical hearing is when He says, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew 11:15; 13:9; 13:43; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8; 14:45). In both this parable and through those recurring admonitions, Jesus's primary concern is spiritual awareness.

Jesus desires real spiritual awareness, not mere mystical sensation. This passage is sandwiched between two passages speaking of our attitude toward money and possessions. Preceding this passage, Jesus says to not lay up our treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Immediately following Jesus declares that we cannot serve both money and God (Matthew 6:24). Why did Jesus place this passage on blindness between these two admonitions to avoid greed? Perhaps it is because we as humans have a tendency to only think of greed as a problem for anyone wealthier than we are.

Jesus makes clear that the ability to see spiritual realities leads directly to living a constructive life in the physical world. If we succumb to greed, we will be the loser. It is of immense personal benefit to us to view our finances from the standpoint of stewardship, and focus on laying up treasure in heaven, while avoiding becoming a servant to money.

Without the truth revealed by God, we will be like someone trying to find their way while stumbling in the pitch dark. When we have eyes to see truth through the eyes of faith, it leads to recognition of a very present and a very powerful reality. The reality of His kingdom. This reality shapes a perspective that leads to constructive living in the physical world. We cannot see our true self-interest without an *eye* that can see what is true and real. That only comes through the clarity of spiritual eyes to see what is true.

The warning of Jesus' parable is this: If we spend our lives oblivious to His kingdom and only recognize the kingdoms and powers of this world, our *eye is bad*. Subsequently, our *whole body will be full of darkness*, because we will invest our treasures and exhaust ourselves in the vain pursuit of sad rewards—earthly glory and praise from men (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16). Our hearts and all we treasured will be eaten by moths, destroyed by rust, or stolen by thieves (Matthew 6:19). Money will become our master (Matthew 6:24).

But, *if our eye is clear* and perceives the reality of God's kingdom then our whole body will live according to its glorious truth. It will act to win the reward from the Father who is unseen (by the dim eyes of the world) who is in *secret* (Matthew 6:1, 4, 6, 18). It will lead our heart heavenward by storing up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:20-21). And it will seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33). Subsequently, our *whole body will be full of light*. That will lead to living a life that has the most possible reward and fulfillment, both in this life as well as the next. As we will see in the next verse, having the proper perspective toward money and possessions, with *light* rather than *darkness*, leads to living in peace—rather than living anxiously, worrying about possessions.

Biblical Text

6:22-23 The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!