Faith that Sees Through Culture

Lesson 3: Seeing Reality

# Getting going

1. Agree or Disagree - Kids should be taught that there is a Santa Clause, Easter bunny, and Sasquatch/Big Foot.
2. Just this past week, I was talking about challenge of staying together as a Christian congregation during the pandemic. Someone mentioned that we don’t know what will happen next, it seems like another new variant has popped up. Another person commented, “Well, yup, there had to be, there is an election coming up in a few months.” Someone else commented, “oh, you just had to go there, didn’t you.” We all laughed. It was a light-hearted conversation, but definitely a reminder that many people have lived in very different worlds or perceptions of reality for the last two – three years. Without getting into the specific debates, do you ever feel like you are living in a different world or reality than the people you are talking with? What is your general response in that moment?
3. What kind of conversations have you been having with pre-Christians?

# Getting the Word into our lives

In lesson 1, we gained a faith that sees through what is outside of us. The world is very good as God made it, yet it is also fallen. Jesus has defeated sin and evil. In the light of Jesus, we ought to be able to see through the world and separate good from evil.

In lesson 2, we gained a faith that sees through what is inside of us. The message of the world is “your emotions are good and determine everything. Do what you feel.” God’s message is to put to death what is of sin, but also that the Spirit brings new life within.

In lesson 3, we want to gain a faith that sees reality.

1. The Bible repeatedly points out that there is more to life than meets the eye, and in fact, God often prefers to work through hidden things. According to the following passages, what are some of the hidden things God has done or is doing and the hidden places where God is at work?

“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” (Colossians 1:16)

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.” (Luke 10:21)

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (Ephesians 6:12)

“For we live by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

1. According to those passages and others, what do we learn about God in general from the fact that he works in such hidden ways?
2. What does our world and culture consider real? What is the general cultural opinion about what is real? Consider some of the following statements.

“The Cosmos is all that is or was or ever will be.” Carl Sagan

“I’ll believe what I can see.”

1. Are there non-biblical parts of life that tell us there is more to this life than what we touch, see and feel? If so, what are there? (that is, are we only depending on the Bible to tell us reality is more than what we observe.)
2. Jesus gave us the lens to see reality when he said things like,

“Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” (Mark 8:34)

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?””

According to these words, what is the correct lens to see reality?

# Going forward in faith

1. Insight about how to see reality was one of the insights that set off the Reformation and still helps distinguish faithful believers from false ones. Martin Luther put it this way in his Heidelberg Disputation.

That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1:20].

He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

Don’t worry about getting it all right way. (Most of us don’t get it after we’ve considered and debated it a lot.) The general point is that, as Jesus said, the work of God is only really seen through the cross. That insight was part of what drove the Reformation.

When I ask you regularly, “What has God been doing in your life?” I’m trying to put this insight into play. Where is the cross at work and where is God raising up new life out of death?

As we wrap up today, try to answer the question, “what has God been doing in your life” with this lens of reality in mind.

1. What’s a passage from this Scripture that impacted you?
2. How are you going to respond to this message?
3. Who is one person you’d like to share this with?

Visible and invisible

Physical and spiritual

The revelation of God and the hiddenness of God