

Sermon for September 21, 2014
Matthew 20:1-16

“Or are you envious because I am generous?” is a translation of the Greek phrase meaning “Is your eye evil because I am good?” In Jesus’ time it was believed that we could see because light came out of our eyes; not because the light goes into our eyes. It was what was inside a person’s heart that enables us to see. We are sending out what is inside of us and so blindness was believed to be caused from having a bad heart. Jesus talks about this earlier in Matthew in chapter six where he says, “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness.”

This is also from where we get the phrase, “evil eye.” The evil eye is literally inner evil that is projected outwards through the eyes. It was especially believed that envy—the covetous glance—was an outward projecting of evil desiring. And evil desiring always resulted in evil acquiring—taking what belonged to others. A great deal of alertness: charms, chants, and gestures were required to avoid being “hit” by an evil eye.¹

I personally like the way that envy is joined with sight because when we are envious of others and what they have it blinds us to the abundance with which God has blessed us. We are so busy looking at what the other has that we literally don’t see what’s right in front of our faces! It happens not only with individuals but also with congregations. Too often when I hear members talking about Calvary it’s to complain about how we’re not like we used to be, but when

¹ David Ewart, www.holytextures.com

we focus on what used to be we miss what's happening here and now. Yes we have fewer members and youth, but those who are here are very active and committed members. No, we can't compete with the larger churches on the number of members or programs we can offer, but I would put to you that it's not a competition!

We have an Education Committee and Sunday school teachers that are very committed to teaching our youth about God's love for us shown through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They have an excellent curriculum and have a great relationship with the kids. Because of our smaller class sizes we are able to give each child greater attention and make sure that everyone understands the lesson.

We have a Luther League that not only does fun things, but helps out at the Fishes and Loaves food pantry, supports a missionary, sells candy bars to raise money to add to our Globe offerings and actually looks forward to participating in the 30 Hour Famine and our mission trip to the cities; in fact when asked if they wanted to do a mission trip again this year one youth said, "Of course, I'm finally old enough to go!" They help with our worship services, with VBS and our cleaning of the ditch.

We have a women's group that not only does Bible studies, but also is involved in learning about current issues such as human trafficking. They raised money to support our 140th celebration and donated to The New Colossus which is a group helping to end human exploitation. Our women made prayer shawls, made quilts for and gave our graduates and families a breakfast, and did most of

the set up, serving and clean-up for our 140th celebration and put on our Concert and Cream event.

We have an active men's group that not only takes care of the cemetery and the church property, but also cooks us breakfast on Easter and the first Sunday in June! They have a Bible study and repainted a member's home and they're looking to do more!

Our Fellowship committee not only took the lead in preparing for our 140th anniversary celebration, but they also plan events to foster fellowship not only among the members of Calvary but also the surrounding community. We have a game day, Lenten meals, a valentine's dinner, potlucks, and girl's night out.

But we couldn't do any of this without the support of you the congregation. You have given generously of your money, time and talents. Because of you; we as a congregation have given to the Synod's Malaria campaign, to the ECHO food shelf, to the Fishes and Loaves food pantry, to Kids Against Hunger, and to the Crossroads food pantry at MSU. Because of you we have a Sunday school and Vacation Bible school, our Luther League is able to support a missionary and to go on a mission trip. Because of you we are able to support Breast cancer research, fight against human trafficking and help to end hunger in our community.

The Spirit of God is very active here at Calvary Lutheran—we just need to open our eyes to see!