

Dollar Store Cheaters

by Associate Pastor: Jerry Krueger
Copyright © 2011, Jerry Krueger. All rights reserved worldwide.
This material may be printed or copied for personal use only.

Isaiah 60: 1-6 *“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

“Lift up your eyes and look about you: All assemble and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters are carried on the hip. Then you will look and be radiant, your heart will throb and swell with joy; the wealth on the seas will be brought to you, to you the riches of the nations will come. Herds of camels will cover your land, young camels of Midian and Ephah. And all from Sheba will come, bearing gold and incense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

"Where are my reading glasses?" I used to laugh at my Dad when I was a teenager when he would shout for us to look for his missing reading glasses. Well, to be real honest, it is more comfortable for me to read with reading glasses now than without them.

My sister Jean from Chicago came for a visit to my home a few years ago, and got tired of my constant searching for reading glasses. So, we took a trip to the Dollar Store, and she bought me an assortment of 5 pairs of Dollar Store Cheaters as she called them. (Here is a rendition of me shopping for dollar store cheaters.)

Suddenly, I could read clearly. Suddenly the light on the flowers or dust on furniture was actually seen in a different light when I would read.

You see, we all need some kind of "eye correction" sometime in our life. Perhaps you call it, a change of vision. A change of perspective, a change of my heart.

I love the imagery that the writer of Isaiah uses in the first few verses of our text. "Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you." Words like arise, and rise complement each other just as words like shine, light and glory work to project an idea of brightness, illumination on the physical level, as well as the spirit filled level.

The second verse uses this image of darkness covering the earth, and THICK darkness is over the people. Can't you just feel the thick darkness? Cloying, penetrating, clinging darkness that sucks the light and life out of humanity.

Yet the next verse tells us that the Lord rises over you, and his glory appears over you.

What can shut out the light of the Lord? Nothing. There is nothing that can push back the light of God. Nothing. You see, for us to see the light of God in our lives, we have to use new vision, new eyes. And sometimes we have to use a bit of help in seeing the old, or making the mundane more visible. Do you believe we can use assistance from the Lord God to let us see with new eyes, new lenses, and new perspectives?

Do you remember going to a movie theater in the summer perhaps, maybe a mid afternoon show. You walk out into the light of the July sun, and it is overwhelming. Bright, eye squinting, pupil

closing, hand to your face sunlight. We step from darkness into the light, and it is overwhelming.

The writer of Isaiah is talking about a people who have lived in darkness for so long that they have stepped into the light and are unable to fully acknowledge the brightness. Isaiah's writer may not have just been speaking of people from years ago. His words ring true with biting clarity to God's people today. And that is you and me, folks. Being unable to acknowledge the brightness of God's word, God's truth, God's son, that can be a human and a physiological response to God's intense light.

Dollar Store cheaters may help you read the Bible better, the paper better, or to even write a letter with fewer mistakes, but inexpensive ocular accoutrements like reading glasses, do not help you gain a better understanding of God in your life.

That only occurs when our perspective is changed from darkness, into the light.

Exodus 24: 17 is referenced when we read the phrase, "glory of the Lord." "Glory of the Lord is like a devouring fire." Ever seen a wildfire explode on the scene where you live? When I was at FUMC in Albany, Texas, we lived in a community surrounded by huge ranches. 25-45,000 acres. Raising cattle, supporting deer, quail, and hog hunters, along with oil and gas production is big business. In that community of 2,100 persons when the fire siren went off, people checked their phones, and computers to see if they needed to report to a particular ranch to fight fire. One hot 100+ dry summer day, a grass fire was sparked on the road to Moran and the fire got out of hand rapidly. Ever seen a preacher on the back of a brush truck battling fire? The whole town pitched in, because the fire was a consuming, eagerly devouring fire.

Much as the glory of the Lord will overwhelm us like the angelic appearance to the shepherds on Christmas Eve, when we begin to see the world in a new light, our vision will gradually improve.

The **glory of the Lord** shone around the shepherds in Luke 2:9, and at the transfiguration of Jesus, God's glory shone around Jesus, and in the resurrection.

The glory of the Lord is overwhelming, intense, maybe frightening, but most of all, illuminating. It helps us see the full power and personality of the Lord God Almighty. What becomes clear in the glory of God is that **grace and truth reign**. Our God is a God of truth and grace. Not lies and meanness. John 1:14 says "we saw the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth."

Grace and truth is what becomes so clear in the light of the glory of God. So...why do we miss it so often?

This is the start of a new year, 2011.What are we looking for this year? A new job, a new relationship, more money, more kindness, more forgiveness? What are we visioning and thinking about as we move into this year? Are we looking for truth AND grace?

There are two ways we can avoid seeing the world. They distort and give us a corrupted view of the world.

1. The first distorted world view is seen through eyes that are **cynical**. Our eye of **cynicism** is not working for us. We have a difficult time believing that people can live real and authentic lives of compassion and selflessness in Christ. And that lack of belief in us, colors our view of the world. It affects the way we see God. Do we see God as caring and loving, or do we see God as absent, removed, ineffective, and powerless?

(Expand on how people see God in a cynical manner) Always criticizing, expecting friends to

break promises, believing kids or spouses will not follow through. Always believing the worst, being surprised when someone does NOT disappoint or fail them?

Dollar store cheaters that have been prescribed for us by God are what we need to see the world, the Kingdom of God as it is made to be seen.

So maybe you're not cynical, but are you -

2. **Overly rational?** Eyes that see only with rationalism are not much better than the eyes that see cynically. Rationalism means we think that there is nothing real except what we can see in front of us. If I can't see it, touch it, hear it or taste it, it does not exist. If you have never been to Poland, how do you know it exists? Hmmm. For rationalists it is hard for them to believe that there is a God who is unseen, yet at work **always** in the world. What we so often would like is a God who shows up once in a while, who is understandable, manageable, and yes, visible.

Yet many will complain what we have instead is a God who gives us promises in a book made by a make believe deity for the popular consumption of the naive and gullible. We can be the doubting Thomases, or the "Show me" Missourians.

But not everyone sees it that way. Not me, maybe, hopefully, not you. We need eyes to see. Maybe we don't need an eye transplant; maybe we just **need adjusted lenses** that are corrective. There are 5 lens types that allow us to see, and hear God more fully. A corrective God provided lens prescription that allows us to read with the 1. lens of **Scripture**. Remember the Wolf Brand Chili ad where the man says, "Partner, how long has it been since you had a big, thick, steaming bowl of Wolf Brand Chili? Well that's too long!" How long has it been since you have dived into Scripture reading? I am waiting for your answer. HOW Long. A day, a week, a year or more of days? It's the New Year, time to get back in the Word of God to see better. In mid January our Wednesday nights will have a variety of studies on the Bible, as well as many of our Sunday school classes.

2. It could be that you need a **church** lens adjustment. One that will encourage you and lift you in a faith community of hope. Maybe we need to be in church more often.

3. It could be the lens of **worship** that will allow us to worship with others so that our souls will be fed and healthy. It's a New Year, time to get back to worship.

4. It could be the lens of **service** and outreach that is calling to us. Getting out of ourselves to minister to others in some way. Taking the focus off of us develops our faith life and makes it stronger.

5. Or maybe it is the lens of **love**. Love is the ointment that heals the eyes of faith, restores broken relationships.

Eyes of new seeing through the lens of Scripture, worship, love, service and church, pick up divine light in times of deep darkness. The world can be a dark and lonely, scary place. When seen in the light of God's Dollar Store glasses and Kingdom glasses, the darkness is pushed back.

Our challenge over the years is to always focus on the Kingdom work of God.

In the last week we have had the recounting of all the events of 2010. Many were news worthy events from crime, war, oppression, inhumanity, and shortcomings of human beings. Yet in the midst of that, there is always, always a light of hope. There is always hope that glows on the horizon of your life, even if you are immersed in the darkness. (REPEAT)

I read stories of selfless acts of heroism by our troops in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Life seen through the eyes of hope.

I read and hear about the single mom, or single dad who works two, maybe three jobs to give his kids a bike, an iPod, a guitar, clothes at Christmas. His or her sacrifice for others is seen through the eyes of hope.

I hear about the people in our church and community who provide funding for school kids in need. I see the outpouring of generosity by businesses in town, by church members who adopt families for the holidays and provide toys and gifts and food for the disadvantaged. I hear about my friend who employs a man to help in his business, knowing all the time that the employee may relapse into his or her addiction. Life seen through eyes of compassion.

I hear and see the people in each of our lives who model Jesus Christ to me and to you by their faithful lives of teaching, volunteering, organizing, giving of time and money, and I see through the lens of mercy and gratitude and grace, God's Kingdom at work in the world, in your lives, in my own life.

If we look with eyes that have been illuminated by the glory of the Lord, we will find the Christ. If we train our eyes to see glimmers of light in our shadow times, we will emerge from the thick darkness that can threaten to overwhelm us.

Today is the start of a New Year. This is the challenge for us today and for the year. Will you see God's light in the darkness when it appears?

What will you do this year, to see the glory of the Lord? Will you agree to read scripture, attend worship, give of yourself this year?

God through Jesus Christ has given us opportunity after opportunity to see the world through the eyes of Christ. All we have to do is claim the eyes of faith, which God bestows on each of us.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.