

# At a Glance

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The Bible Passage: **Mark 4:11** *“You have been given insight into God’s Kingdom. You know how it works but to those who can’t see it yet . . . . . these are people “whose eyes are open but don’t see a thing; whose ears are open but don’t understand a word.”*

Last Sunday Rev McCoy finished her message with a quote from the song I Hope You Dance where Lee Ann Womack sings the line *“Promise me that you’ll give faith a fighting chance,”* and *“Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance.”* And that’s kinda where I want to start today. What I’d like to do today is share with you my thoughts and prayer that we don’t go through life missing the point that God wants to be close to us and that the birth of the child that we just celebrated on Christmas proves it. But it’s incredibly tough in our busy world now a days because it seems the only way you can possibly get through all the information being thrown at us is by taking no more than a moment to glance at it. An example of this happened when I got on the computer and typed in the word “Jesus” in the Yahoo search engine and came up with over 182 million references. Then I went to our basement and pulled out my trusty old World Book Encyclopedia, the 1963 version that I used as a kid, you know the book that whenever you had a question and asked your parents they told you to look it up, anyway, when I looked up the word “Jesus”, there 6 pages of information, including pictures and maps. So it’s understandable now that we either feel that we’re overloaded or that some things are just not significant, so we look at things with just at a glance. Unfortunately, if we develop this habit and use it in other areas of our lives, we will miss something and maybe something monumental. But by turning to God through prayer we may be able to make distinctions in seeing some of the hidden directions that Jesus would have us follow.

Talking about hidden stuff I remember when I was a little kid sitting in the doctor’s office reading The Children’s Highlight magazine. There was always a section called **The Hidden Picture**. It was always a full page picture and if you glanced at it, you would see an interesting and busy picture. The intent of this activity is to have you look closely, and find all kinds of different “hidden” objects in the picture. OK let’s try it. On the screen, what do you see? At first glance, we see a girl on the farm walking towards a garden. But, if you look closely, you should be able to find all the objects listed, like the clothespin, the doughnut, the crown and the fish. And isn’t this a perfect analogy with life where

there is so much more there that God wants us to see if we look beyond a glance.

This problem of glossing over life isn’t anything new. People viewed life at a glance even at the time of Jesus. And this is shown in the Bible scripture for today from the book of Mark in the New Testament when Jesus was talking to his disciples. In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, the 11<sup>th</sup> verse of The Message version Jesus tells them, *“You have been given insight into God’s Kingdom. You know how it works but to those who can’t see it yet . . . . . these are people “whose eyes are open but don’t see a thing; whose ears are open but don’t understand a word.”*

I’m sorry to say that this is all to true in my life. I feel there are a lot of things that I missed by taking just a passing glance. But at times when I put Jesus in the center of my life , which I don’t always do, I feel that I can focus and understand the direction that I should follow.

There was one time in particular in my life that I am truly grateful that I took a look beyond just a glance at something I think God wanted me to see. It happened during Freshman orientation at **Purdue**. Our dorm had the opportunity to get up at 6:00 a.m. to serenade one of the women’s dorms and have breakfast with them. As exciting as this may have seemed on the face of it, getting up at that hour was not my idea of the exciting college experience. Hey, but that’s where the doughnuts were. I certainly could have gone over there with the other guys from our dorm, sung our song, grabbed a donut, glanced around at the group of girls who were even less thrilled about being woken up by a bunch of guys and headed back to my dorm room. But for some reason, there was something telling me to look beyond a glance at this group of woman (besides the obvious). There was one girl I saw that truly stood out and I knew there was something meaningful there for me. I found out her name was Sandi. She told me her name was Sandi Wdowka and when I asked her how to spell that, so I could find her again, she said just remember it’s Wd and it’s the only Wd here at Purdue, except for my brother. And I knew I would be able to tell the difference, it wasn’t that early. We made a date for later that day. I felt that there was greater meaning

there and was excited about making this discovery, until I realized that I was the only one who was going to show up. So apparently the deep meaningfulness of this encounter was not quite as widespread as I had thought. But as time went on, I truly do believe that God was a part of that early morning breakfast and my comprehensive glance paid off, as my love for Sandi continues to grow after 28 years of marriage and as we continue to watch our children grow in their relationships with others and God.

There's a story I'd like to share with you that I think shows that God has much more available for us, if we look beyond a glance. It's from [Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul](#) and it's titled "The tablecloth". And it starts with a young minister and his wife who were assigned to an old church back in 1948. At one time it was one of the most magnificent churches in the city. However, the area had declined over time and the building was in need of restoration. One of their goals was to restore the building to part of its original splendor and glory before the upcoming Christmas Eve service. Well, they worked like crazy – plastering, painting, fixing woodwork and doing all kinds of work to get this church ready for Christmas Eve. The night before Christmas Eve, there was a terrible storm and the roof leaked, right behind the altar and ruined the plaster. When the minister came in, he couldn't have been more despondent – to see all their hard work literally ruined just before the service. Knowing that repair was impossible he went ahead and went to a fundraising auction for the youth group. One of the items that came up at the auction was a 15' long table cloth. It wasn't an ordinary tablecloth. It was old and beautiful. It was ivory and gold. The minister was struck with an inspiration, and bid on that tablecloth and as it turns out; he was the high bidder at \$6.75. It was his intention to hang the tablecloth on the wall behind the altar to hide the damage done from the recent rain.

As the minister returned to the sanctuary, he noticed there was an older woman waiting for the bus outside the church. He knew the bus wouldn't be coming for another half hour. He invited her into the church to warm herself and get out of the weather. She explained that she wasn't from the neighborhood and that as she thanked him for his kindness, she went on to explain that she was interviewing with one of the families in that area for the job as governess, but didn't get the job. As she sat in the back of the church, the minister began to hang the tablecloth behind the altar to cover the damaged wall. To his delight, it covered the damage perfectly. As he was standing there admiring his handiwork, the woman began to wander towards the front of the church when she exclaimed "that's my banquet cloth!" She went on to explain it's history – how she used it for special occasions at home in

Vienna. She even showed the minister her initials in the corner of the cloth. She went on to explain how this cloth was only used at special times with her family. Then during the war, she and her husband opposed the Nazi's and needed to flee their home. They traveled separately to avoid detection but her husband never connected with her in Switzerland. She later heard he had been killed. After hearing the story, of course, the minister said he wanted her to have the cloth back. She responded that she really didn't have a need for it anymore and it did look beautiful behind the altar. "You keep it", she said and left.

Later during the Christmas Eve services, the church looked absolutely breathtaking especially with the candlelight reflecting on the banquet cloth hanging behind the altar. After the service, many of the people attending thanked the minister and his wife for the incredible job they had done with the renovations and remarked on how beautiful the church looked and how meaningful the service was. There was an elderly gentleman who lingered and made his way to the altar and looked intently at the cloth. Then as he was leaving the church, he remarked to the minister that he and his wife once had a banquet cloth similar to the one hanging in the front of their church. He went on to explain it's special significance and that he was from Vienna, but during the war he and his wife became separated and were never able to reconnect. As the minister was standing at the door the goose bumps on his arms weren't for the freezing December air. He was absolutely beside himself, but as calmly as he could, he told the elderly gentlemen about the woman who had been at the church that very afternoon. The old man's eyes lit up and he said, "Can it be!" Well the minister remembered the family the woman had interviewed with. He called them to find out if they had her address or phone number for her. Together that very evening, they all went to the woman's home. When they got there, she opened the door and that young minister and his wife witnessed the most incredible reunion they had ever seen. God clearly intended for that minister and his wife, that woman coming out of the cold and that man attending the service to see more in that church than just a glance could provide.

I believe that if we look deeply into the everyday things that go on in our lives, through the eyes of Jesus, that we too [will be given insight into God's Kingdom](#). And that in the hidden picture of life we will be able to find God's love for each of us and to see God's desire for us to be closer to both Jesus and to other people in our lives.