



Watch out for Your Eyes

Something stood out in the Gospel readings this past Sunday: “The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes.” (Genesis 3:6-7) and “[the devil] showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence” (Matthew 4:8).

Sin is like fishing (no offense to those who like to fish). There is always a hook, a lure before the catch. Sin baits us to the hook. If one takes the bait, sin becomes inevitable.

The first two temptations of Jesus started with bait...“If you are the Son of God”. The temptations were not just bread and immortality. First, bait was thrown into the water to entice Jesus. If Jesus had any doubts about His divinity or wanted to prove His divinity to the devil, He might be lured into sin. The last temptation used different bait...the eyes.

The tree was pleasing to the eyes of Eve. She could not take her eyes off of it and began to fantasize about having the fruit. She could not look away. The more she looked, the more she desired. If she could have only looked away and dwelled on God’s Word, like Jesus in the desert, maybe she could have avoided sin.

Nearly 3,000 years later King David was lured into sin. “[David] saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful.” (2 Samuel 11:2). Once again, it was the eyes. David could not take his eyes off of her and began to fantasize about her. One sin led to another, as happens so often. If only David could have looked away, maybe he could have avoided sin and its consequences.

When the eyes look at something that is pleasing, desire enters. The more one watches, the more one desires. This is how favorite videos and TV shows are formed. The first episode is pleasing to watch so more episodes are desired. There is nothing wrong with having a favorite show or watching videos. But the desire to watch can lead to the consuming of one’s life by the show or by searching for new videos to watch. The inability to look away sets the hook to sin. It is the beginning of addiction to pornography and leads to some marital affairs.

It is not just lust that begins with the eyes, “*Thou shall not covet.*” Coveting begins when the eyes see something pleasing that someone else has, but we lack. The hook is set, desire begins and envy leads to sin. Anger can result from seeing another person do evil and getting away with it. Pride can arise when one sees another becoming envious to one’s own success. There are a multitude of sins that begin with the eyes.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 5:29 are well-known to many, “*If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.*” Jesus obviously did not mean this literally; but controlling the eyes is very important in the spiritual battle to resist temptation.

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good. It strengthens the resolve to resist temptations and to overcome obstacles in the moral life. Pray for fortitude and seek fortitude in the never-ending spiritual battle to overcome sin and temptation, like our Lord Jesus. And “Watch Out for your Eyes!”

Meditation:

- What sinful habits are my eyes leading me into?
- Is there something in my life that is not sinful but I have little self-control when I see it?
- In what ways can I, figuratively, remove my eyes if they are leading to sin and offending God?
- In what ways can I develop the virtue of fortitude to help me turn my eyes away from temptation?
- What other “hooks” of the devil are leading me into sin? How can I better recognize these hooks to avoid sin?