

2 Kings 6:8-17

“Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in such and such a place.” The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.” So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, “Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?” “None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.” “Go, find out where he is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh, my lord, what shall we do?” the servant asked. “Don't be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”

How's your eyesight? Do you have 20/20 vision? Maybe you need glasses to read, drive, or maybe just to see at all. When you see do you see everything, do you really see the whole picture? Do you see things in their proper perspective? Are you really able, are we really able to see the important things the way we should?

A piano teacher from DeMoines Iowa, Mildred Hondorf, had taught piano for over 30 years. Through the years she has had students from all levels with varying musical ability. She has also had her share of those, how do you say, were "Musically challenged." Robby, age 11, was one such student. Robby was being raised by his mother and she always dreamed of hearing her son Robby play like the greats. From the beginning Mildred thought this was a hopeless endeavor. As much as Robby tried, he still lacked a few needed qualities to be a great piano player, a sense of tone, and basic rhythm. Robby practiced tirelessly and Mildred listened, and cringed, but she encouraged Robby. Every now and then he would ask when he could play, because he wanted more than anything for his mother to hear how good he was. Mildred knew this was hopeless.

Mildred never met Robby's mother, just saw her from the driveway as she would sit in the passenger seat every time He was dropped off and picked up. Then one day Robby just stopped coming. She thought about contacting Robby, but she decided because of his lack of ability he probably decided to pursue another field. Deep down she was glad he had stopped coming, because he was actually bad advertisement for her teaching.

Several months had gone by and Mildred had sent out a flyer about the upcoming recital. Much to her surprise, Robby called and asked what time he would be playing. See, he had received one of the flyers by mistake. Mildred explained this recital was for current students and since he had dropped out he did not qualify. Robby explained his mother had been sick and she was unable to drive him to his lessons, but he had been practicing in spite of that. Robby begged Mrs. Hondorf ... please let me play, just this once. Mildred felt sorry for the boy and finally agreed.

The night of the recital came; the auditorium was packed with parents, friends and relatives. Mildred had put Robby last in the program right before her closing remarks. This was for damage control, and she could always salvage his performance at the end as opposed to the beginning.

Everything went off without a hitch, the students played brilliantly. Then Robby took his place. His clothes were wrinkled and his hair looked as if he combed it with an eggbeater. The other students whispered to each other, he could have at least dressed nicer, and combed his hair.

Robby took his place and announced he would be playing Mozart's Concerto #21 in C Major. Mildred was not prepared for what she heard next. Robby's fingers flew across the keys; never had she heard Mozart played so well by anyone his age. After six and a half minutes he ended in a grand crescendo and everyone flew to their feet in a wild applause.

Overcome with emotion and in tears Mildred ran on stage and embraced Robby in utter joy. She said, "I never heard you play like that, how'd you do it?" The microphone Mildred had in her hand picked up Robby's answer; Robby explained that his mother had been sick with cancer and had died the day he received the flyer, and since she had been born deaf tonight would be the first time she would hear me play. I just wanted it to be special for her.

Why must we always have to see something first in order to believe it?

Faith serves as the eyes of the believer. Let me repeat that, faith serves as the eyes of the believer. Faith allows us to see what our eyes cannot. This morning's Scripture tells us, that Elisha's servant went out early that morning, probably still wiping the sleep from his eyes. You know how you are when you first wake up. How well do you function first thing in the morning ... well Elisha's servant is just like you and me. What did Elisha's servant see when he looked out from the tent? He saw the army of the king, the horse soldiers and chariots completely surrounding the city. Elisha's servant was now in total fear.

It was probably like the fear I felt the first time I got to start in a college football game. There I was, starting center on my college football team, ready to snap the ball to the quarterback then blow open a hole big enough to drive a truck through. Then my opponent stepped to the line and I proceeded to stare him directly in the mid-section. That's right, the mid-section. Believe me, that was fear. I could see nothing but total failure ahead. It was not if I would fail, but when. That is the same thing Elisha's servant faced when he looked at the army surrounding them. He was staring his opponent

directly in the mid-section. Have you ever faced such a situation where you saw nothing but failure? Has this church ever faced what you perceived was total failure? No matter how you viewed the situation you saw or see nothing positive that could come of it. It must be human nature to blow everything out of proportion. What started as a minor problem, with the aid of fear, is now life threatening.

It is when things appear to be the darkest that we need to see with our faith and not our eyes. The book of Hebrews tells us, "*faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*" We need to put our trust in God, not in ourselves. I'm not saying that every time you see with your faith you will come out on top in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of God you will shine.

Remember when Elisha's servant ran back into the tent, he said, "*Oh, Lord what shall we do?*" Did Elisha panic? ... No, he calmly said, "*Don't be afraid.*" That was easy for Elisha to say he had not looked outside lately. Things were not looking good for the home team. Elisha saw things differently than his servant. He felt safe and secure and as such he prayed, "*O Lord, open his eyes that he may see.*" It was then that the servant's eyes

were opened. Now when the servant looked outside he still saw the king's army, but behind them he saw God's chariots of fire ready to consume the king's army. The servant now could see the whole picture. He now saw God was in charge and the battle would be won.

The same can be true for us today. By asking God to open our eyes together we can see the whole picture. This in turn can be the silencing our fears. Have you ever had your eyes wide-open and seen things that weren't there? Have you ever looked over an open field or vacant lot and saw a beautiful home that wasn't there? Maybe you have looked at a vine covered, broken down car, but instead you saw that 57 Chevy hot rod you use to drive. Have you ever held a newborn baby and envisioned him/her walking, talking, going to school, and accomplishing great things? And yet the child has not left your arms. Does a farmer plant a field and see failure? Does he see a poor harvest? No! He sees a field full and the greatest harvest yet, and all from an empty field. Have you ever looked a dirty person, with long hair, beard and sandals? Who did you see? Did you see only a homeless person or did you see Jesus? What do you see ahead for Landrum UMC? Where do you see this church headed?

Do you see this church moving forward, staying the same, or moving backwards? You should know one thing, you can never stay the same, you are either moving forward or moving backwards, but you can never stay the same.

What do you see for your own lives? Where do you see yourselves down the road? Are you looking through your eyes or are you seeing things through God's eyes?

We need to pray to God asking Him to open our eyes and allow us to see what He sees. The more we call on the power of heaven to open our eyes the less we will fear the problems of the world. The more we call on the power of heaven to open our eyes the less we will fear the problems in our church, and the less we will fear the problems in our own lives. This can only be done through faith. Faith that God is in control, faith that God can handle anything and everything. If we feed our faith we can starve our fears. Again, "If we feed our faith we can starve our fears." Let's start today and ask God to open our eyes and show us His way, and then allow Him to fight the battle. Let's not fear tomorrow for God is already there.

We need to pray for the ability to see beyond our present situation, and see what is waiting just over the next ridge. God will guide and direct us, but we must trust in God's direction and not on what we think should be happening.

Where do you see Landrum UMC heading? Do you envision Landrum growing and moving forward or are you afraid of the future? If we want to see what God sees we need to pray that God will open our eyes just as He did Elisha's servant. Where do you see your own life headed? I pray you're ready to ask God for His direction for this church and for your life. Ask God to give you His vision for this church. Remember, a church without a vision is dead. Ask God to give you a vision for your own life. A life without vision is dead. We cannot do it on our own we need God's help, and I'm asking you this morning as we begin a new chapter together to open yourselves up to God's leading. God is right here if you need to talk He's waiting on you. Are we ready to have our eyes opened? Are you ready? If so, if anyone is ready, come, together let's ask God to open our eyes, ask God to show His vision for Landrum UMC, come, God's waiting.