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I'm going to let you in on a secret. It's nothing groundbreaking; it's pretty simple actually. Some of you may even know this secret already, but in this moment, right now, none of you are thinking about it. You don't even realize it. But it's so simple, I can't believe you can't see it! It's right there in front of you! Right under... well, here, let me just tell it to you.

Right now, and every day, you are always looking at your nose. It is always in your field of vision. You can always see it... but you just kinda let your mind block it out. I'll prove it to you. Close one eye, and look down over at your nose with the other eye. You can see it, right? It's kinda blurry, and obviously most of your noses are a bit smaller than mine, but you can see that thing with your one eye open, right? Now try it with the other eye. See, most of us can see it with both our eyes. And now that you're really focused on it, I want you to open both eyes and slowly look forward and straight ahead. Now move your head left and right a couple times. Without looking right down at your nose, you can still kinda see it right? Kind of in the corner of your vision, just sort of looming down there. Now that you're *thinking* about it, you *can see* that sort of faint, double-exposure outline of something *nose-shaped* down here, even when you're looking straight ahead.

You *can always* see that. I didn't do any kind of magic trick to make you see something that wasn't there before. Right now you're just *aware* of something that was, in a manner of speaking, right under your nose the whole time.

In a few minutes, or a few hours, maybe even a few seconds after I'm done talking about it, you will completely lose sight of your nose again. It won't have gone anywhere, yes, you *can* still see it... but your brain chooses *not* to. Once you start *thinking* about it again, there it *is*. "How did I not notice that?"

It's called "unconscious selective attention." Our brains *block out* the image of our nose because it's right in front of us all the time, so it can focus on all the other stuff out there that we have to look at. But unless someone points it *out* to us, we can't recognize what's right there in front of us.

Jesus had that experience a lot. He would encounter people all the time who couldn't see what was plain as the nose on their face. People who couldn't see what was right under their noses. People like us, normal people. *Wise* people, even. Again and again He had to reveal things to the *disciples* that they should have been able to see

all along. And He taught them to do that for others too, but *still*, even with twelve or thirteen or seventy-two divinely called disciples, he still had to step in and show them what they were failing to see.

You see the problem Jesus had was that God had been revealing things to people for a long time. Pretty much from the “in the beginning.” And yet for however many thousands of years of human civilization, we still weren’t able to see what was right under our noses. That’s one of the big reasons that Jesus came to us at all. To reveal things to us in a new way, to show us the messages God has for us and to shine a spotlight on them, revealing all the nooks and crannies.

People had been trying for a long time to make sense out of what God had revealed to us. Whether it was through the words of Holy Scripture, which the Hebrew people of Jesus’ time referred to as “The Law,” or through revelation in prayer, dreams, and visions, or through the countless ways God speaks to us in creation and experience. And to be honest, there were a lot of people who felt they had it all figured out.

Jesus encountered one of those folks in our Scripture reading for today. A Pharisee, one of the teachers of the law, the religious and legal authorities who maintained Scriptural tradition and interpreted the wisdom of God... they *knew* what God had to say. God said it a long time ago, and a lot of big thinkers had done a lot of big thinking about it, and it was all well in hand. And Jesus encountered these Pharisees a lot in His ministry. He was revealing things about God and God’s messages that didn’t jive with the Pharisees’ party line. And so they were constantly harrying Him, trying to trip Him up and get him to prove that he didn’t really know what He was talking about. Because he *wasn’t* one of the *wise*, one of the knowledgeable, one of the in-on-it.

*First* he was a snot-nosed kid who got separated from his parents at a festival, snuck into the temple, and started telling the *temple leaders* how to interpret Scripture. Some of them probably *remembered* that little kid, and didn’t like the idea of this country bumpkin who thought He was revealing God’s truth to the people *they* were supposed to be teaching.

But He *was* revealing God’s truth. If he’d carried a card that said *anything*, it would have probably said “Jesus Christ: God’s Truth,” and been printed off on Heaven’s own mimeograph machine. It was the First Century, Heaven hadn’t upgraded to Xerox yet.

But as radical as Christ's messages were, he wasn't creating them out of whole cloth. He wasn't teaching something that *wasn't already there*. Right under our noses.

So "an expert in the law" stands up to test Jesus. "'Teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" He's trying to catch Jesus up, because Jesus can't possibly know the Scripture as well as a Pharisee.

But Jesus turns it back on him to prove his *own* point. "'What is written in the Law? How do you read it?'" Now the Pharisee is *ready*. He knows the answer, written in the ancient scrolls of Leviticus and Deuteronomy by God's own inspiration... "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

And Jesus says, "You got it! Chapter and verse. Problem solved." I'm paraphrasing, and maybe projecting a little, but I like to think Jesus had little bit of wise-guy hidden under the wise-man coating. Maybe a twinkle in His eye when He spoke, because He knew what was coming next.

See the Pharisee wasn't *ready* for the conversation to end there. It didn't make any *sense* to him to end it there. There hadn't been any *interpreting*. All he did was speak chapter-and-verse and get a pat on the back. He wanted to hear what this wannabe philosopher had to *say* about the Scripture the Pharisees had spent generations packaging. So he asks Jesus a question that is *so* telling. "And who is my neighbor?"

See Jesus had been happy to end the conversation there. Not because he didn't *want* to talk to the Pharisee, but because what had needed to be said was said: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" To Jesus, it was as simple as that. Why parse words when it's so clear? Right under your nose, plain as the nose on your face.

But the Pharisee was so caught up in his preconceptions that he couldn't see what Jesus was trying to say. The Pharisee wanted to define who his neighbor was and who his neighbor was *not*, and exactly what it *is* you have to *do* to love your neighbor, and what it is you don't have to *bother* with.

And so Jesus responded to the Pharisee with an illustration that we today know as the parable of the Good Samaritan. It's the part of the story that comes next in our Scripture if you want to pick up where today's reading left off. It's a story about a person from another land who risked *everything* and gave *all* he had to *care* for a person

in need that he had *never* met... a person who under better circumstances would probably *spit* on him as soon as *look* at him.

It's a story Jesus told to say that there is no *limit* to who your neighbor is, and there is no *limit* to the love God calls us to *show* to our neighbors.

Once you think about it, you realize just how simple a message it is. A message that was right under our noses the whole time. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Full stop.

What we think we know gets in the way of what God's trying to show us. I'm going to say that again.

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God is revealing things to us every day, and our brains just block it out. Just like the nose on our face that I bet most of you stopped noticing somewhere during all the Jesus talk. God's messages are right in front of us, but we look past them. Not on purpose, not because we're *trying* to *ignore* them, but because we get so preoccupied with all the *extra* that we don't realize how simple God's truth can *be* sometimes.

"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."

We can be like those Pharisees all the time. Those wise and learned souls. We bog down everything with the minutiae of life, and we completely overlook the simple messages God is dropping right in front of us.

I mean think of all the things God drops in front of us that we look right past without realizing it. Jesus *Himself* said in the Gospel of Matthew that *He* can be found in the "least of these." The panhandler in the intersection, the woman in the alley, the veteran curled up under a newspaper, the pensioner who can't afford surgery.

Think of the messages God writes on the world for us to *read*. The lessons we aren't even noticing as we move from point A to point B. The lessons about forgiveness, gratitude, generosity, compassion, community, justice, mercy.

And think of all the *miracles* we don't even recognize. The little moments of beauty that God hides around every corner *just for us!* Just *waiting* for us to find, so they can light up our *life*. The things we take for granted, and... the things we straight up ignore.

God is active in this world, right under our noses, and until we can recognize that simple truth, we will go on living our lives with a big blind-spot in the center of our vision.

God has been trying to show *you* something all day. God has been trying to show you something all *week*. Just as there's something God's been trying to show you all *year*. *And* something God's been trying to show you your entire life.

Just like the Pharisee, who thought that what he could see was *it*, and that there was nothing new to be revealed about God's truth... we too are blind to the things God is trying to reveal to us. Whether it's in the Bible that's been on your bookshelf and maybe you've been even reading from your entire life... whether it's in the conflict you've been having with a neighbor for weeks or for months... whether it's in the depths of your loss or confusion or despair... whether it's in a day that's just like every other day before... God has something to reveal to *you*.

Jesus tried to prove it to us. He bounced the Pharisee's own words back at *him* to show him what *he* was missing... and I *pray* that *we* can open *our* eyes to what Jesus has been trying to show *us*. What Jesus has been trying to show you.

It's as plain as the nose on your face. And if you look... I think you'll be surprised to find that it's been there all along.

Thanks be to God. Amen.