

- 1) When you see something you really want to share with others; HOW do you SHOW them?
Quick answer: *SAY something!* But what DO you say to HELP them see?
The task isn't hard if it's just of passing interest: *Look at what that little dog is doing!*
But the task can be daunting when the stakes are high, and the issue complex:
Look at what he's doing to you!
Simply inviting others to observe may not be enough.
Their eyes may need training; what they see may need explaining.
And they do have to be willing to pay attention.
The biggest challenge is finding how to say: *OH, LOOK!* without saying: *SEE HERE!*
- 2) We live in a time when those on opposite sides of political divides
pretty much DO see ONE thing in common—
that the other side looks at the world with eyes wide shut.
Instead of asking: *Can we look at this together?*
partisans spend their energy preaching to the choir.
Efforts to reach those who see things otherwise often come down to saying: *SEE HERE!*
- 3) In today's Words of the Lord for this Family of Faith,
I'm struck with how, in three high stakes/complex issue settings where insight is critical,
Isaiah, Paul, and John (the Evangelist and the Baptist) all try their best to say *OH LOOK!*
Through poetry, doxology, and drama, respectively, each draws attention
to how THEY see God offering people NEW WAYS of seeing.
Isaiah and Paul address communities both of which have trouble seeing,
but for opposite reasons.
Isaiah speaks to those whose eyes are blinded by too many tears.
Paul speaks to those whose eyes are bedazzled by too many stars.
- 4) Isaiah talks to those who weep bitter tears from years in exile.
Tears of grief at death and loss; tears of guilt over corporate sin.
Tears of anger over cruel treatment; tears of frustration about a hopeless future.
Israel weeps the tears of the totally broken.
With so many tears clouding their vision, how can they see anything else?
Any word from the Lord would surely be harsh:
See, what did I tell you? You got what you deserve.
Yet Isaiah doesn't remind them that they've brought this on themselves.
He doesn't exhort them to get their act together.
Rather, he raises their eyes to the prospect of a seemingly impossible challenge.
Not only to mend the covenant they've broken.
But also to share God's gracious healing vision with the whole wide world.

This is extraordinary—Israel is told to meet weapons of war with weapons of words—
to offer life-giving words to the very oppressors who have made THEIR lives unbearable.
As Isaiah speaks, their eyes go wide—*we don't see any way we can do that!*

But Isaiah responds: *Look further still. It is GOD who will do this; but do it through you.*
Emerging from his own despair, Isaiah shares his God—inspired vision:

Listen to me, O coastlands; pay attention, peoples from far away.

Israel is given as a light to the nations, so God's salvation can reach to the ends of the earth.
Israel expects to be told: *SEE HERE!* Isaiah says to them: *OH, LOOK!*

5) Paul addresses folks who are quite sure that they HAVE no limitations.

What clouds the vision of the Corinthian community is how impressed each faction is
with its own spiritual gift: *If only everyone ELSE could see how stellar WE are.*
Power plays are tearing the church apart.

And the deeper tragedy is that, at the community's edges
needy, hurting members are being discounted or ignored.

Paul has every reason to call the Corinthians out—to tell them: *NOW, SEE HERE!*

Before his letter is done, he'll come close.

But while Isaiah speaks from his previous experience of anguish;

Paul speaks from his previous experience of arrogance.

Paul knows how destructive his own partisan views were.

He also knows that his perspective totally changed
when God gave him fresh insight and forgiving grace.

So, to ensure that the corrective vision he will offer isn't met with eyes wide shut;

Paul commences his conversation with these Corinthians by saying: *OH LOOK!*

*See how richly God has already gifted you, each and all, with everything you need
to recognize each other's gifts and to share them with others.*

Paul says this up front, so he can later tell them

that trying to outshine each other is mutually blinding but totally unnecessary.

In a high stakes encounter, Paul tries to lift their eyes

to their diverse, abundant, God-given gifts—gifts they, in turn, can generously give.

Through distinctive strategies, Isaiah and Paul are trying to help their listeners

look at their own worlds through the lens of God's grace.

6) As John the Evangelist tells the story,

the challenge facing John the Baptist is still a different version of limited vision.

John's two disciples are searching for a Messiah long-promised
who is now in their midst, but whom they haven't met.

John was granted a preview when he baptized Jesus.

What he DOESN'T do, however, as Jesus passes by, is grab his disciples by the arm,
and drag them before Jesus, blurting out: *You just gotta meet this man!*

Instead, as Jesus walks by, John simply says: *BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD! OH, LOOK!*

John gestures toward Jesus, giving space for his followers to see Jesus for themselves.

It works. The two follow John's gesture and make their own approach.

What does Jesus ask when they approach him? *What are YOU looking for?*

They can only manage to mumble: *Uh—where are you staying?*

But Jesus makes a response that gives them more space still: *Come and see.*

They do. And they pass along the spacious gesturing they have received.

Andrew tells his brother Peter: *Let me show you whom I've found.*

Jesus eyes Peter closely, saying: *I see YOU for whom you can become.*

The story continues: Jesus finds Philip; Philip tells Nathanael.

But Nathanael is not impressed: *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*

Philip responds (guess what?): *Come and see.*

Jesus then names Nathanael for who HE is.

Nathanael is amazed, and Jesus says: *You're taken with what you've seen already?*

Keep on looking, there's lots more coming.

7) A contemporary communication strategy specialist offers this observation:

No one convinces anyone else of anything.

All we do is offer resources to each other through which we can come to see for ourselves.

Do you often "see the light" when someone gets in your face, saying: *SEE HERE!*

Not likely, is it? We best pay attention when someone says *OH LOOK!*

in a way that has our name on it.

How can we, at Redeemer, pay such careful attention to the grace of God,

that we can say to others not *SEE HERE*; but, rather: *OH LOOK*

in ways that foster epiphanies for those who deep down long to see.