

Jesus Saw the People, the Pain; So Should We

“As he passed by, He saw a man blind from birth” (John 9:1).

A recent trip to downtown Denver on the local train provided transportation and a bit more.

Masks on. Space provided. Miles covered.

Once downtown, a walk to a beautifully renovated office building—and the assignment at hand. I was focused. My mind locked on the subject in front of me. My destination was a studio where I would livestream a video to our Youth for Christ staff around the United States. This was the virtual replacement for seven geographically targeted conferences that had been on the agenda at the start of the year.

I felt strongly about the specific message I wanted to deliver in a tight 25-minute window.

My notes were printed, highlighted and appropriately scribbled on. I was ready.

Once delivered, I retraced the route. But this time, my personal attention was less focused on my own righteous agenda and, consequently, more responsive to the world around me.

The homeless man on the corner panhandling. The young guy sitting on the bench by the bus stop. He looked weathered. Worn. Out of it.

Then there was the Greyhound bus station in the lower level of Union Station. Benches cluttered with people heading to wherever. For whatever. Toting luggage and burdens that seemed to ooze from their expressions. I heard a baby crying. I saw a man on the floor sleeping on his bags.

Then the train back to my car. Again, staccato interaction with a few other passengers. All with a story. All with a destination in mind. In relatively close proximity, but miles away.

Were these people here when I traveled downtown? Had the brokenness and loneliness of the community just surfaced?

I wish. But, no.

I was so “on mission” to get to my opportunity to preach the gospel, the Good News, that I missed being the good news.

Jesus—on a three-year timeline. A ministry pace to change the human race. Cosmic urgency.

Focus. Purpose.

“He set His face to go to Jerusalem” (Luke 9:51b, ESV).

Yet Jesus, in the midst of His mega-narrative, never lost sight of His minor opportunities. His attention was on the cross, but His eyes never left the faces of those around Him.

The faces of the broken. The outcast. The unclean. The distained. The ugly.

Jesus made eye contact with the blind. He approached the leper. He touched the dead.

He was always on mission, yet always aware—always on task, but always available.

COVID-19 has given me permission to live my selfishness, to ignore for a reason, to avoid on purpose, a medical rationale for a sinful preoccupation.

And Jesus grieves.

Call it an “eye exam,” call it a new “lens,” but make no mistake; it’s the visional attention of Jesus. Before He

healed, before He taught, before He cleansed, before He exorcised, before He bled—He saw.

And so should I. No mission, godly or mundane, should ever obscure my vision of the human condition around me.

Eyes like Jesus. And a heart that will follow. {eoa}

Dan Wolgemuth is president/CEO of Youth For Christ. Youth For Christ has been a pillar of missional ministry since 1944, when the Rev. Billy Graham served as its first full-time staff member. Since then, Youth For Christ has continued to be both a rural and urban ministry with the message of Jesus.