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"ON SEEING MUD OR STARS"

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Two men looked out through prison bars, one saw mud, the other stars. Well here we are, average people. We live in the same world, breathe the same air. Read the same books and newspapers, eat the same food. And yet through our eyes we see a different world, while one of us sees the mud, another's gaze hangs on to the stars. Someone wrote a poem that expressed it beautifully. A tree, a road, a hillside and a white cloud drifting by

Ten men passed a long that road  
And all but one passed by  
He saw the road, the tree the clouds  
With an artist's mind and eye  
And put it down on canvas  
For the other nine to buy

Many of us live life vicariously. Wondering why there is not the same excitement in our lives ~~as in some~~ that is to be found in some people we know. While we're conscious of the mud that dirties our feet others seem to be filled with a radiant attitude about life. The same world, the same air, the same bird, tree, cloud and hillside. To one it's mud, to another... a star. The difference comes at the point of whether we live simply by sight or whether we have insight. Our eyes can take hold of the same objects the same colors, the same form and structure of the world. Few of us are denied entry into places where other people are able to go. One shop owner here in Gatlinburg, said some time ago, "Hardly a day passes that someone doesn't come in to my shop and ask, 'Well, what is there to see and do in Gatlinburg'". When there's no other spot in America that holds so much. To be explored to be found, to be made personal, but to be graced with the ability to look from within one's self into the core of that upon which he looks is God's greatest gift to us. All of us have sight not all of us have insight. Jesus possessed it, he built the entire ethical structure of his life upon it. The legacy he left for the millions who would bear his name, was built ~~upon~~ <sup>not upon</sup> what you can see and feel and touch, <sup>but</sup> that which you can sense from within. I feel sorry for people who really can't see the totality of what he comes in contact with. For centuries men sat before their open hearths and slept to the sound of a singing tea kettle, but James Watt dozed off and heard the sound of a steam engine and countless people have stood under an apple tree and watched the apples drop to the ground only to pick one up and eat it and walk away. But Issac Newton saw the law of gravity. During the Italian Renaissance there was an artist who came to Florence. He was relatively unknown, he had no patron really to underwrite his stay there, but there was something within him that he brought. And when he came into the middle of the city, he came upon a stone that had lain there for years and years, decades. And when he inquired about it he was told that this massive piece of marble had been brought in to Florence for a particular artist and while he was working upon this piece of marble there was a misslip of his hammer and there was a deep cut driven into the marble which spoiled the thing that the artist was trying to do. And so he threw it aside and took another piece of marble and went on with his work. Since that time many aspiring artists have come to Florence. Had gained permission to work upon the marble but nobody could seem to bring anything out of it. This young man was poor, he didn't have marble ~~to~~ with which to work so he fell upon this one cast away piece of stone and he went to the city fathers and he asked them if he might have this piece of marble and they readily granted him the permission to use it no one else wanted it. He built a rough wooden structure around it where there wouldn't be bystanders peering at him while he worked but as they went by they could hear the sound of mallet upon a chisel and a chisel upon stone. The days and the weeks and the months passed and then one day it was finished and the young artist tore away the wall that he had built there. Now those who passed by could look upon it.

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And suddenly they beheld one of the greatest master pieces that any artisan has ever done. It was the beautiful statue of David by ~~Michael Angelo~~ Michelangelo. He took a castaway piece of stone that had been ruined by others but he saw something there that others were not able to see. Beyond sight, he had insight. There are two realms upon which our lives are lived That of the material and that of the spiritual. We're well aware of the fact that we're impoverished if we live apart of one from the other. God created us as physical entities and gave us all of the world in which to use our energies and our gifts to do something with it. I have no use for an ascetic who sits back and withdraws from the world, says it's an evil thing and I don't want any part of it. But I have less patience with one who ~~sits~~ simply sets his feet firmly in the materialistic world and never enters into the spiritual ~~world~~ realm. Jesus made an earth shattering statement, he said, "Life is more than meat and the body is more than \_\_\_\_\_". Happy is the man who has found the middle ground. Not fluctuating from one to the other but rather interrelating the two, so that he is constantly living in both worlds ~~so that~~ and not one at the expense of the other. An unknown Syrian poet, centuries ago, expressed that thought when he said, "If of thy mortal goods thou art bereft from thy slender store two loaves alone to thee are left. Sell one and with the dole buy white hyacinths to feed thy soul." How do we move into that relationship with life? That ~~has~~ is built upon insight and sight alone. Well first it was the gift that Jesus came foremost to bring. We're all aware of the miracles that Jesus <sup>wrought</sup> ~~performed~~, healing miracles ~~and the like~~ and the like I think that there's nothing that can be expressed quite so dramatically as one who is blind and is now able to see. Last week a noted surgeon made a statement to the world that he had transplanted completely one eye from one person to another and suddenly the hopes of millions of blind people rose. Here is my opportunity to see again, only to have it dashed by a confession that it was not a complete transplant, but it was only a partial transplant to a partially health eye. Physically we have not been able to bring complete sight to the blind, but Jesus did. Coming upon a man who was blind, he gave him sight. When we think of the miracles of Christ, there is none that towers above that. ~~This~~ But this was not what Christ came to do, he didn't open medical practice in Palestine, in order to have healthier inhabitants. He said, "I came to give you a new set of eyes, so that you might have not only sight, but that you might have insight." And from there he began to open up new vistas, New interpretations, new concepts that would not only revolutionize the individual person but ultimately revolutionize the entire world. He ~~is~~ came into a world that was filled with darkness and he became that light. If we are to know the exhilaration of insight here is our point of beginning. But we can't leave it to God alone simply to relinquish all responsibilities of our own and say, "God you take over." Rather it is permitting God to motivate us, enter in to the point of our deepest sensitivities and set fire to the tender that is there. Thus, elevate us to greater heights and clear the misty air that we might see farther horizons. The key word is imagination. Now we think of imagination in one sense simply that we fabricate something that doesn't exist and ~~this~~ is imaginative. Too many of us have already relied upon that. The kind of imagination that I'm talking about is springing loose your mind. Opening wide your eyes, so that something can take place. Much is being ~~is~~ written today and much is being said today about the establishment, the colleges and the universities, the government, and particularly the churches. And we might well open both ears and hear what needs to be ~~said~~ heard. And that is we must bring imaginative efforts ~~and~~ into all that we seek to do in all of these levels. We have adapted ourselves to to the common place. To what we experienced when we were born and we've not tried to ~~to~~ grow higher than that and the world is yet to be conquered, we just won't emerge. I don't think anything has reached the level of perfection that we can be satisfied with it. I think constantly we must be bracing ourselves to new adventures to imaginative ways. There are a lot of people who today would like to ~~to~~ see the Church stay just like it's been for decades. Well there were a lot of people who were like that when Christ came and I can't imagine anything quite so boring

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AS TO attend one of those worship services. All they could do would be to repeat the words of the ancient prophets and then reiterate the laws that had grown in such magnitude that they had become meaningless. And go through the same formalities and the forms that were required of them by the tradition of their fathers. But let me tell you what Christ did. He walked out on the side of a hill and planted himself on the fresh green grass and there preached the greatest sermon that's ever been preached. No alters, no candles, no acolytes, no flag bearers, no burning incense. And what was it he talked about, he talked about; the lilies of the fields and the sparrows that fly through the air, he talked about the fish that swam in the sea. And he didn't say brother are ya saved? He said, "Come follow me and I will make you to become fishers of men." He saw the intolerance of the people of his day and he said, "You have got a log in your eye. Don't be so concerned about the mote in your brother's eye until you get the log out of your own." What a great man he was. He trampled upon the way things had always been done, because it had become an impediment which stood between man and God. He was an imaginative person and he springs imagination in each of those who are willing to be led by him. First there's an imaginative motivation. Why do you do the things you do? And is it worth doing? We are a ritualistic people. Not simply within the Church, but in all of the facets of our lives. We go through the ritual of eating meals at the same time every day dressing properly for the proper occasions. Conforming to the greater scope of things without being individualistic and when one becomes an individual we're ready to strike him down because he was out of line with the status quo. There ought to be a reason for everything that we do that requires any time or energy. And if we don't know what that reason is then we have no right to do it. And if it is not a valid reason then we ought not to do it at all. Ask a demonstrator that carries a placard down main St., "Why do you hold this placard high?" There are many reasons why he's there. If he's one trying to stir up excitement then he has no right to hold up that placard, it's an indecent thing for him to do as well as being the deepest form of hypocrisy. But if he is so caught up in the injustices of the world feels it so strongly that he's got to do his thing to change it then pat him on the back and say to him, "Go to it man, I'm standing right behind you." Dare we let ourselves condemn all because of a rotten few? Or shall we abide the rotten few because of our respect for the others. Motivation is the springboard from which we ought to begin any journey. And if the motivation does not measure up to what it ought to be then start looking in other directions. And then there's imaginative aspiration. From what did that gold materialize? From selfish interests? Or because you certainly have found a place where your ability and your talents come into an intersection with the needs and the problems of the world and mankind. A young man came to London, he was quite the fellow among the people of that city who were socially oriented. He attended all the parties, took dancing lessons so that he could be the desired partner of all the fairest ladies there. He was quite cultured. Well, extremely educated. He had sufficient material goods so that he could provide himself with whatever was necessary to be accepted among the better people. And for a while this was his life and then something happened within him. He went back to his native India, not the Dandy to whom he ran from one party to another in London. And suddenly he was caught up with a hope for his people. He ripped off the expensive clothing and put on a loin cloth. He shied away from the table filled with rich foods and he drank goat's milk. And singlehandedly he brought the greatest nation on the face of the earth to his feet. And brought freedom to millions of people. Perhaps it might have been done without \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ was the man who did it. A worthy aspiration, ~~enough~~ to spend your energies in your time to achieve. How many of us live shallow and superficial lives. Like the witchdoctor who puts on a mask and suddenly becomes a power that that mask represents or the Indian who covered his body with a Leopard skin and felt the strength of the leopard seep into his body so that he felt strong as the leopard who roams in the fields. We're pretending. We're living in a world of make believe/ When it is simply our putting on external appearances without anything happening on the inside.

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The real power of the universer. Those who have made the world beautiful. The great movers and shakers of society are those who have sprung from within themselves and not simply arrayed themselves in the mantle of that which can be seen. And then finally there is the imaginative pursuit. If it's worth going after then how do you get there? Not by walking over the well blaze d trails, certainly not. Not by repeating cliches that have lost ~~there~~ their meaning, certainly not. But blazing new trails, entering new wildernesses. I quote Frank Boreham quite often from this pulpit. He's one of the most delightful essayists that I've ever read In one of his essays. He told about passing a field of strawberries and in the middle of that field of strawberries there was a scarecrow. He went in great detail in describing that scarecrow, that it had been placed there to keep away the birds from the berries. He was amused to see that there were two blackbirds one on each expended arm of the scarecrow and every once and a while one would pluck a berry and eat it and fly back up to his perch until he was hungry again. While overhead, blackbirds were circling wanting the berries, but fearful of the scarecrow, wouldn't come down and eat. And he observing this said, "You know if I were a blackbird what I would do?" "I would perch on the highest point that I could find the steeple of a Church or the topmost tree and I would look as far as I could see and find all the scarecrows and I wouldn't go anywhere except where there's scarecrows, because where there's a scarecrow there is something worth getting." Imaginative pursuit, our generation is too prone to avoid the scarecrow and goes out into the comfortable meadow and fields where there really isn't anything worthwhile.

And now this: We live in a universe of mud and stars upon whichever you build your life, depends on you alone.