

## **“Nearsighted”**

**2 Peter 1:1-21 (Transfiguration of the Lord, Communion)**

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According to Dr. Eric Papas, approximately 1.6 billion people have myopia. The numbers are expected to rise to 2.5 billion by 2020. Myopia is also called near- or short-sightedness. “Those with myopia see nearby objects clearly but distant objects are blurred. With myopia, the eyeball is too long, or the cornea is too steep, so images are focused in the vitreous inside the eye rather than on the retina at the back of the eye” (*Wikipedia*)

Simply put, those of us who are near-sighted have a hard time seeing anything beyond our own hand in front of our face.

Another type of myopia affects all of us at some time or another. When we are myopic in our *thinking*, we tend to “lack foresight, we have only a short view of a problem, we lack discernment or long-range perspective in thinking or planning.” Simply put, we have a hard time seeing anything beyond our own hand in front of our face.

For those of us with visual myopia—nearsightedness—there is hope. We can get corrective lenses—glasses or contacts. We can have surgery on our eyes. With these corrective measures we can clearly see distant objects.

For those of us who suffer from myopic thinking, it’s tougher.

Take Peter, for example. He, along with James and John are invited by Jesus to go up on a mountain to pray. Right before their eyes, Jesus is “transfigured.” The appearance of his face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. Then Moses and Elijah show up and start talking to Jesus about his impending death in Jerusalem.

Peter’s response to this amazing event is admirable in many ways. He’s blown away by this experience and wants to show honor not only to Jesus but also to Moses and Elijah by building dwelling places for them right there on the mountain.

But Peter’s response is also myopic. It is short-sighted. Peter may also have had another malady that affects all of us at one time or another—that of HEARING only what he wanted to hear. He missed the part about Jesus’ “departure.”

Peter has a hard time seeing beyond the mountain top. What’s right in front of his face is far easier to grasp in many ways than the long-range plan for Jesus

about which Moses and Elijah speak. Peter has a hard time hearing that Jesus will depart. He will die. Something big and far-reaching was going to happen in Jerusalem. That part was blurry for Peter, especially with Jesus shining in glory right in front of him. He was near-sighted.

The writer of Second Peter uses the term “near-sighted” when referring to Christians who can only see the present reality—what’s right in front of their faces. These believers “lack discernment or long-range perspective in thinking or planning.” He also seems to suggest that near-sightedness also negatively affects these believers’ ability to see the past—namely “the cleansing of their past sins.”

These Christians had been taught that Jesus would come again. So far he hadn’t. Some leaders within the church began to teach that the second coming was a myth. Peter reaffirms that the second coming of Christ is a promise. It requires a long-range perspective with long-range thinking and planning. He says that when believers cling to this promise, we can escape “the corruption in this world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature.”

Long-haul commitments are tough. No immediate results; very little if any immediate gratification; lots of waiting.

Today some of us will watch the Super Bowl. For some of us it will be the first game we’ve watched all season. For us, it would appear that these players simply arrived at the Super Bowl. We lack knowledge of how hard-won this opportunity is for the Giants and the Patriots. We have no comprehension of the long-haul commitment made by those players and their families, many from the time they were children, to arrive at this game today. If those players had suffered from myopia, if they had been short-sighted, they would never have endured years of training, injuries, losing as well as winning seasons, unfaithful as well as faithful fans, working for nothing as well as making the big bucks. You don’t walk away with a Super Bowl Ring by showing up for one game. You don’t walk away with a Super Bowl Ring by being short-sighted. You make a long-haul commitment long before the ring is placed on your finger and you make the commitment over and over again.

The Christian faith is not one which promises instant gratification. It’s not for “myopes”—near-sighted folks who can only see what’s right in front of their faces. Yet, we pray for patience and we want it now! We pray “come, Lord Jesus” and we don’t mean tomorrow, we mean now or maybe even yesterday. We want health and wealth now, with as little cooperation on our part as possible. Suffering—no way. Discipline—no way. Sacrifice—no way. Self-control—no way. Study the Bible—how boring. Wait . . . for an indefinite period—you’ve got to be kidding.

The writer of Second Peter says he is convinced of Christ's coming again to judge and heal this broken world. He is convinced in part because he was an eyewitness to the transfiguration. Christ was glorified right before his eyes. With the long-haul perspective he now possessed, Peter was absolutely confident in the prophecy of Christ's second coming. Just because it hadn't happened didn't make it a myth to Peter. He says: "For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty."

Peter says that we need some corrective lenses if we are going to stay the course of the Christian faith, even in the face of what appear to be unfulfilled promises. He says this: "you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance and endurance with godliness and godliness with mutual affection and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you."

This evening—as we sit in our Lazy Boys, eat chips and dip and provide arm-chair coaching (translated yelling at my house) as the Patriots and Giants play, ponder what it took for them to get to the Super Bowl. Then, take a moment to consider the long-haul commitment of the Christian faith—a faith that promises delayed rather than immediate gratification. Don't forget to put on your "corrective lenses," lest you forget the past forgiveness of your sins and the future promise of Christ's coming again—even as you go forth to tackle your giants today.