

“To him that watches, everything is revealed. Italian proverb.”

I read these words, close my eyes, and take a deep breath. Instantly, reality melts away, and I can picture myself, lazily reclining in a brightly painted gondola, gently floating down the *Canal Grande* in Venice. The Mediterranean sun is warm and soothing. I hear the screeching of seagulls, and the *pwash, pwash* of the placid waves rolling against my glorified barge.

The above maxim was just spoken in deep, rich Italian by the gondolier propelling me along the waterway. I open one eye, squinting against the sunlight.

He repeats it. “*A lui che le vigilanze, tutto è rivelata.*”

“Are you hinting that I should open my eyes?” I ask, amused.

My gondolier grins. “Only if you want to see,” he replies.

I consider that. Then I settle back against the puffy cushion under my shoulders. However, this time I leave both eyes open.

Curiosity arouses me. “So, what’s this line of yours all about?”

“Line?” He frowns.

“Yeah, line. Like, whatever you just said. You know, the ‘watching equals seeing’ bit?”

That registers with my guide, and he smiles. “Ah, you mean the proverb! *Sì*, it is an old saying here in Italy. It means that nothing is hidden from the man who knows how to truly *see* what he is seeing—to observe. There is a great difference between the two. Observation is the keyword that unlocks the meaning of this proverb.”

It is my turn to frown. “Okay, so you’re saying that even if a person is looking around them, they may not, like, really be . . . getting anything out of it?” I ask.

He nods vigorously. “*Esattamente!* Many wise men agree that without cultivating the ability to observe, nothing great can be accomplished.”

“But suppose a person is blind?” I demand. “Does that mean that because they can’t see, or ‘observe,’ they can’t do anything great?”

The gondolier smiles. “No, *amico*. Hear the proverb again: ‘To him that watches, everything is revealed.’ Languages change over decades and centuries. The original meaning of the word *watch* had more to do with being awake, alert, and attentive. Thus, ‘to him that is *attentive*, everything is revealed.’ True observation begins in the heart and the mind. It is a combination of the information gleaned by our five senses added to our minds’ abilities to make judgments. One must perceive what is around him, take those facts, and then learn from them.”

“Hmm.” I allow that to sink in. “But, seriously . . . you think if you’re totally alert, all day, every day, you will actually know EVERYTHING?! That’s just nuts!”

My guide laughs. “Try to understand the meaning of a proverb, *signora*. A proverb is simply a saying which expresses a general truth. It is not to be taken completely literally. No human being can ever know EVERYTHING.

“But the point is this: the person that IS alert and observant will certainly understand and discover much more than someone who does NOT give attention to the world around him. And that is what ‘*A lui che le vigilanze, tutto è rivelata*’ really means.”

We are silent. I think about what he has said, and recognize the truth in it. So many times I just float through life, like a tourist dozing in a gondola. I give no attention to what is around me. I am locked tight inside my own little bubble. Life is “all about me,” and I see nothing else. I cannot see or appreciate the beautiful works of my Creator. I cannot see the needs of my family or friends. And I cannot even observe my own heart, and what needs to be changed.

But, if I CAN wake up, observe, and “watch” . . . revelation will abound! I can discover, understand, and accomplish great things. I can have success in whatever I do, whether it is practicing a new recipe or campaigning for a political candidate, because I will be learning. It all begins with the lesson of observation.

I smile as I understand.

Then, I blink. My beautiful vision vanishes, and I am back where I started, staring at my blank computer screen.

But it's okay . . . I know what to write!