

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. ² He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. ³ Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. ⁵ Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. ⁶ But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. (Hebrews 3:1-6)

Fix Your Thoughts on Jesus!

What do you think about during church? I hate to admit it, but I've often said that one of the reasons that I became a pastor is so that I would hear a sermon all the way through. It's just so easy to let your mind wander. When you do let your mind wander, where does it go? What do you think about when you're driving? What do you think about when you're at home at night? Or do you watch TV so that you don't have to think about anything? It would be interesting if we could chart how much of what we think about comes from TV or the radio. Do you think you can decide what you're going to think about? Some of us would probably say no. But I think you can, at least in part. You can choose to turn off your internal monologue and focus your attention on other things. This morning, God tells us to fix our thoughts on Jesus. He doesn't just mean in church. He's talking about our whole life of faith. God is talking about the fundamental attitude of being a Christian: **fix your thoughts on Jesus!**

I.

There are always things that compete with Jesus in our minds and hearts. This morning, God's Word focuses us on the biggest competitor for a Jewish believer's attention and then tries to reorient us. **Fix your thoughts on Jesus the fulfillment of all God planned.**

What was that competition that kept Jewish people from focusing on Christ? It was Moses. Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. The story of him leading the children of Israel out of Egypt is one of the most dramatic events in human history. Yet for the Jewish people, Moses became a stumbling block to faith. Now, Moses himself wasn't the problem. Rather, the problem was the way they perceived Moses. So this morning, God makes a comparison between Jesus and Moses. He says, **"He [Jesus] was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house."**

When we look at the life of Moses, we see a kind of living prophecy about Jesus, specifically, in his faithfulness. God called Moses. He was out in the desert taking care of sheep and God came to him in a burning bush and sent him to Egypt to confront Pharaoh. Moses did that again and again. He led the people in the celebration of the Passover and then he led them out of Egypt. God gave Moses his covenant at Mt. Sinai and Moses passed that covenant on to Israel. During forty years of wandering and grumbling and rebellion against God, Moses stood up for what the Lord said, when it would've been much easier for him to just go along with the people. Just as Moses was the model of faithfulness throughout the Old Testament period, Jesus, too was faithful. Faithful to whom? "To the one who appointed him." God the Father sent his Son into this world to be our Savior and Jesus was perfectly faithful to him. Jesus always stood up to his enemies and told them what they needed to hear. Jesus even stood up to his friends. Again and again, his own disciples tried to get him to do or say things that were different from what God had sent him to do and say, and always Jesus stood with his Father.

In fact, the faithfulness of Moses doesn't really do the faithfulness of Jesus justice because Moses was a sinner. He had a tremendous faith, but his sin did show through at times. Jesus was different. The book of Hebrews says, **"Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything."** Do you see the key difference between Jesus and Moses? Jesus is the Son of God. God the Son, the Creator of the universe, entered the womb of the Virgin Mary and took on a real human nature. That means that none of the Old Testament living prophecies will ever completely measure up to the fulfillment. Jesus has greater honor than Moses because Jesus is the builder of God's house. Moses was just a servant in that house.

What “house” is God talking about? The Church. In the Old Testament, Israel was the Church. Moses was faithful in all God’s house because he gave God’s Word to his Old Testament people. But Moses was still part of that house. Jesus is the Son of God who rules over the house. In fact, he created the house. There never would’ve been an Old Testament people of Israel if God hadn’t promised to lead them out of Egypt and to give them a Savior. Those promises made Israel God’s people because those promises gave them faith. And there would be no New Testament people of God either, if Christ hadn’t kept those promises and if he hadn’t told us about them. But he did both and he built his Church. So he is the builder of the house.

God says, **“Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future.”** In Moses, God’s people had a preview of Jesus. We already mentioned the fact that Moses was a living prophecy of Christ. When he led the people of Israel out of slavery to the border of the Promised Land, that was a picture of Christ leading us out of slavery to the death and hell and leading us to the brink of heaven. Sometimes, Moses told his people what Jesus was going to do. Moses taught that the Seed of the Woman would crush the devil’s head and that through Abraham all nations on earth would be blessed. Those were prophecies about Jesus. And in the Mt. Sinai covenant, in all the sacrifices and in all the rules about being clean and unclean, and who could come into the temple, God was teaching his people about Jesus. Jesus is the Lamb of God who gave his life to save the world. Jesus washed away our sins and now we can come into God’s presence. God sent Moses to make all that clear.

There is a very important lesson in all that for us today. What do we think about when we come to church? What do we think the purpose of this congregation is? It’s supposed to be about Jesus. But it’s easy for us to get distracted. It’s easy for us to think that the number one concern should be the youth. I’m very concerned about retaining the young people in our church. I’m very concerned about how disconnected they feel and about how hard it is for us to get even a corner of their lives. But we don’t exist to be a social club for young people. We don’t exist to keep them off drugs or to help them find spouses, although I hope and pray that our message impacts all those areas of their lives. We exist to teach what Christ has said and done and what he will say and do when he returns. And we could make the same application to every charity or social ministry we might think is a good idea. It’s not wrong for us to have support groups for people struggling with alcohol or grief or physical impairment. But always, inside these walls, the reason for those groups is to make Jesus clearer to his people so they can tap in to the strength and comfort only he can provide.

But just as Moses could become a stumbling block for Israel, so our efforts to minister to the poor, to the hurting, to those who struggle with grief or addiction, to the young could lead us to focus so much on the methods and the organization and on meeting the physical or emotional need that we forget that our primary purpose is the spiritual need. The Christian church in America is overwhelmed by churches that have fallen into that trap. Now, we cannot allow that danger to keep us from exercising Christian love and helping people with real problems. Sometimes, that’s the stumbling block in the WELS and that’s sin, because God does call us to bear each other’s burdens and to care for the souls of young and old alike. So using the danger as an excuse to do nothing is making excuses for sin. But if we think that we know the truth so we won’t ever fall into those errors that other churches are guilty of, or if we imagine that those doctrinal concerns aren’t all that important, we’re also sinning. It’s just plain sinful pride. Either way, we are not living up to Christ’s call.

But Christ is still our Savior. He still paid for all our failures and sin. He has forgiven us for all the times we covered our laziness with a convenient concern about doctrinal purity. And he has forgiven us for the pride that thinks that we could never fall into that sin or that thinks that all those doctrinal concerns are no big deal. Jesus washed all that sin away. Now God calls us to fix our thoughts on Jesus, the fulfillment of his plan. He calls us to actively and creatively engage the church with that good news and to use it to comfort and to strengthen and to share our faith, thinking always of laying our burdens down in heaven.

II

It’s all about Jesus. But just saying the name “Jesus” doesn’t mean we’re focused on him. Many churches talk today about the Jesus, but they’re still not getting to where God calls us to be. We need to be different. **Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest God sent.**

The heart of the Jewish problem with Moses is their focus on the law. In most people’s minds, Moses’ teaching comes down to those pages and pages of laws that God had him write at Mt. Sinai. But that was never the heart of Moses’ work. God gave every one of those laws to teach the people about Jesus, either by convicting them of their sin so that they threw themselves on Jesus’ mercy or by preparing them to see him as

their Savior through those living prophecies. And sadly, most churches today see Jesus like Jews see Moses. They see him as a new lawgiver. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls the gospel a new law and calls Jesus the lawgiver of that new law. Many other churches today use different words but treat Jesus in this same way. Think about that popular expression “What would Jesus do?” It’s law. It makes Jesus an example – a lawgiver. Many people seem to think that if we throw in the word “love” then we’re talking about the gospel. But Jesus says that the law commands us to love God and love each other. Just saying “Jesus” and “love” doesn’t mean that we’ve preached the gospel.

Instead of all that, God calls us to focus our thoughts on Jesus the apostle and the high priest whom we confess. What was the high priest? Was he just the head priest? No. He was the go between. His job was to go into God’s presence and confess the people’s sins and offer sacrifices to take those sins away. Then he came out and announced that forgiveness, often by sprinkling the blood of the sacrifice on the congregation. That’s gospel. That sacrifice was another one of those living prophecies. It pointed to Jesus who was both the priest who offered the sacrifice and the sacrifice itself. Every time we hear that Jesus stepped into our place and took our sins away, that’s gospel.

Jesus is also the apostle whom we confess. It’s a little unusual in the Bible to call Jesus an apostle. But the word simply means someone who is sent on a mission. Christ came on a mission: to win forgiveness and to announce that forgiveness. Jesus gave us the gospel that we proclaim, which the Bible calls the power of God to give faith. All that we do to bring people to Christ, all that we do to strengthen faith comes from Christ, because it is all about Christ. So when we say that it’s all about Jesus, we don’t just mean talking about Jesus. We mean teaching that he took our sins away. We mean proclaiming what he promises us and how he loves us. We mean talking about all the ways he watches over us and works through us and takes care of us. To make it all about Jesus you have to make it about more than what he commands. You have to make it about what he has done and what he is still doing through the word and the sacraments and what he will do when he returns and remakes the world.

That’s what God wants us to think about, not just here, but throughout our lives. He wants us to think about Jesus our Savior. Not our example, not our lawgiver, but our Savior. He commands us to fix our thoughts on him because only he has won eternal life for us. Only in that gift do we find joy and strength and comfort and new life. We need the law, because without it, we wouldn’t know how a Christian lives. But above all else, we need the gospel. We need Christ dying and rising and ascending and promising and working for us. We have all that, because Christ has given it to us. My friends, fix your thoughts on Jesus. Amen.