

**October 25, 2009**

**Pentecost 21**

*“Stay Focused on Jesus”*

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## **HEBREWS 3:1-6**

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**T**herefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. <sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. <sup>3</sup> Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. <sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. <sup>6</sup> 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.

It is dangerous to talk to people on a cell phone while you are driving your car. It is even more dangerous to text a message while you are driving. That is why the federal government has ordered all federal employees to cease texting messages while driving. In September of last year a Los Angeles Metrolink engineer failed to stop for another train in Chatsworth causing a collision with another train that killed twenty people and injured over 130. Records show that he was text messaging several times before the fatal crash.

I introduce this sermon today with the danger of texting while driving to illustrate an even greater danger that confronts us every day in our lives, the danger of taking our eyes off of Jesus. This letter to the Hebrew Christians encourages them to stay focused on Jesus, especially when false teachers were trying to get them to turn back to keeping the Old Testament as part of their salvation.

What is threatening to take your eyes off of Jesus this morning? Are you weighed down with problems in your personal life such as your health, your financial problems, your feelings of guilt and shame or your concerns about the future? Satan loves to send us text messages that tell us to focus more on what's going on in our lives, and less on Jesus. Let's listen to this timely message this morning that encourages us to stay focused on Jesus.

### **Challenges will come**

Think of the challenges we face every day of our lives on this earth to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and priest whom we confess." In the previous verses the writer to the Hebrews told us how special Jesus is with these words, "Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." We will be tempted just as Jesus was tempted to take his eyes off his heavenly Father's love and his mission of saving the world from sin.

We are called holy brothers who sharing in a heavenly calling. Look at the people sitting next to you this morning. They are holy brothers and sisters, baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are washed by the blood of Jesus, holy and pure in God's eyes through Jesus. We share in a heavenly calling. We know where we are going when

we die, not because of any goodness or purity in us but because of Christ alone and his holy and pure life that saves us from the ugliness of our sin.

What a privilege to talk to my father this past week and encourage him with the words, "Dad, it may not be long before Jesus sends his angels to take you home. Your lungs and heart are getting weaker, but Jesus has done everything to get you ready for that day when it comes. With the Apostle Paul we can say, "Now, there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing." We trust we will receive this award on judgment day, not because of anything we have earned but because of the holiness and purity and perfection Jesus has earned for us. As we shall sing in our final hymn this morning:

*Blessed are the saints of God; They are bought with Christ's own blood.*

*They are ransomed from the grave; Life eternal they shall have.*

*With them numbered may we be Here and in eternity.*

Because we are holy brothers and sisters who share in a heavenly calling, we don't want anything to take our eyes off of Jesus. That is why we are encouraged to "Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. This is the only place in the Bible Jesus is called "the apostle." The word "apostle" means someone sent by God. He is also called a high priest because as the Lamb of God he offered a perfect sacrifice for sin, his own pure and holy and sinless body on the cross. I am born into this world thinking I can find a source of salvation and peace with God in myself, similar to the man who came to Jesus and asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life." The Holy Spirit opens my eyes to see how impossible it is to find anything acceptable to God within myself. He opens my eyes to see Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, including everything I have done wrong, once again this past week. It is also the Holy Spirit who keeps our eyes fixed on Jesus.

What a strong word this word "fix" is! It means to give our full attention to something and not get distracted. Jesus used this word in the gospel of Luke when he told us to fix our eyes on the ravens and watch as our heavenly Father feeds them. These Hebrew Christians were in danger of listening to super religious people who said it was not enough to have Jesus for salvation. They piously said you had to add rules and regulations and rites and rituals of Old Testament law to what Jesus did to be truly holy and pure in his sight. For some of the Jewish Christians it was hard to give up the worship from the past such as the temple, the sacrifices, the celebrations and the Sabbath laws.

Satan is always reinventing new ways to draw attention of Christians away from Jesus. He wants us to find our glory, not in Jesus, but in our feelings about Jesus, especially when we are going through hard times. He mocks and taunts by saying, "You don't have enough faith in your life. You are not sincere. You are not real. You need more feelings and emotions and then you will be a real believer." When we listen to him we start looking inward instead of outward to Jesus. Fix your thoughts on Jesus.

**Jesus is faithful**

Just look at Jesus and see how faithful he is and let that help you stay focused on him. "He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all of God's house." Jesus was more faithful in God's house or God's church than Moses. Why would you want to go back to keeping Old Testament laws given by Moses, when you have Jesus who fulfilled all the Old Testament laws that pointed to him? Moses was faithful, when he brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai and gave them to the people. He faithfully copied the words God gave him about rules and regulations of the people, without putting his own spin on God's Word. Moses also had his moments when he was not faithful because of his anger towards the people and lack of trust in the Lord. In contrast to Moses, Jesus is always faithful.

The United States Marines encourage each other on the field of battle with the stirring words, "Semper Fi" which stands for "Always Faithful." No one will ever be more faithful to you than Jesus. He said in John 10, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." In 1 Thessalonians 5 we have these comforting words, "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

Jesus is so much better than Moses with his rules and regulations just as the builder of a house is greater than the house itself. "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than house itself." Moses was part of the house or church of the Old Testament people. Jesus was the builder of the church. I am holding in my hand a stone taken from the Sisquoc River. Each stone is unique and different. In 1 Peter 2 we are told that we are living stones built on Jesus the Living Stone. In the psalm we sung this morning it says of Jesus, "The builder the stones the rejected has become the capstone and it is marvelous in our eyes." Moses was one of the living stones in the church, but Jesus is the Living Stone, upon whom we build our salvation. How sad it is when people put their faith and trust in religious people more than they do in Jesus.

Listen now to how verse 4 describes for us how God builds everything. "For every house that is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything." Have you ever looked at a house, or landscaping, or even a kitchen, or some furniture and marvel at how someone was able to design with such beauty? Nothing compares with the beauty the Lord our God puts into his design of creation, or design of animals, or design of our bodies. Jesus was part of that creation process. He was there when the world was made. "All things were made by him," we are told in John 1. Our Jesus who designs the world is the same Lord and Savior who builds the church. You are part of his church and so am I. Remember that Jesus never, ever creates anything that is junk. He is faithful. He is the builder. He is the potter and we are the clay, we are the objects of his glory.

Finally, Jesus is faithful in God's house as not just a builder, but also a Son in that house. "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. 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." Moses was God's servant, but Jesus was God's Son. Moses did a good job of taking care of God's house, God's people, while he served as their leader, but he was not perfect. In fact he was not allowed to enter

the promised land because of his sin of getting so disgusted with the people he made the Lord God look bad in their eyes. Now look at Jesus. Look at how he is taking care of his church. He sits at the right hand of God and prays for you and me each day. He controls our lives and works out everything for our God. He will keep us in our faith until the end. When Satan calls you this week and tempts you to give into temptation or even despair, then keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. He is always faithful. As we just sang in our hymn before the sermon:

*"In Christ alone my hope is found. He is my light, my strength, my song;*

*This cornerstone, this solid ground, Firm through the fiercest drought and storm. What heights of love, what depths of peace,*

*When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!*

*My Comforter, my all in all, Here in the love of Christ I stand."*