

Hebrews 3:1-6; Let us fix our thoughts on Jesus! October 14-15, 2018

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God's grace and peace are yours through Jesus Christ, our faithful Apostle and High Priest before God. Amen.

The Book of Hebrews was written to Christian Jews to encourage them to be faithful to Christ in Hebrews 3:1-6

¹ 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.

These are your words heavenly Father. As we consider your blessings in the past, we ask you to continue to guide us in your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear Christian friends,

Today we are celebrating with about 130 other congregations in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod across the country the 100th anniversary of when the synod was reorganized. Before 1918, the Norwegian Synod in America had over 900,000 members. Then, groups split apart due to differences in belief of the Scriptures. But in 1918, the groups merged back together to form one large Norwegian Lutheran Church. They formed not on the basis of truth, but on a compromise of the Bible's truth. Ever since that group has been drifting further away from God's Word. Yet, in 1918 a small group of 13 pastors and about 200 lay people did not join in the merger, but remained steadfast in following God's Word. That group formed what is the ELS of today. As we celebrate this anniversary and thank God for those who stood firm, our focus remains not on the people on the one who gave them strength.

Let us fix our thoughts on Jesus!

First, Jesus is most faithful. The letter to the Hebrews states, *"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus"* (v.1). It's hard for us to include ourselves with people who are called holy. We do not feel holy since we daily sin often. Picture holiness as a boat with no leaks traveling across a very deep lake to get to paradise on the other side. Our sinful lives are like a boat that is holey. There are so many holes as fast as we bale the water it keeps coming in! We are doomed to sink to eternal judgment due to the sins that weigh us down. But Jesus' forgiveness has patched all the holes that our sins have made. And since the time of our baptism through faith in Jesus we have been covered in His holy life. That is why God includes us in this greeting as His holy children. Through Christ as our Savior, we are the children of God. We are Jesus' own dear brothers and sisters. The more we fix our thoughts on Jesus the more privileged we will see ourselves to be included by God with all other believers!

Also, he writes, *"Jesus (is) the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house"* (v.1-2). The word Apostle simply means one who is sent. In the Old Testament, God sent Moses to Egypt to lead His people to freedom. Moses was faithful as he faced hostility from mighty Pharaoh. Moses was chosen by God to bring the 10 plagues. He led Israel out of Egypt through the middle of the divided Red Sea. The people were no doubt thankful that Moses was faithful so the walls of water on either side did not come crashing down on them! Moses was also faithful in bringing God's 10 Commandments to the people, making the Tabernacle where they could worship, leading them in the wilderness, and bringing them to the Promised Land. He often interceded for the very people who rebelled against him. He prayed that they would not all die and God spared many lives due to Moses' plea.

As faithful as Moses was, Jesus was greater. God sent His Son from heaven to face worse enemies than Pharaoh. Jesus fought the devil and his tempting angels. He stood against death and its claim on all people and our sins that so strongly condemn us. He overcame them as our great High Priest through His faithful life of obedience and His innocent death to pay for all sins. If Jesus had not been faithful, our eternal life would have been lost! But, Jesus rose from death, a sign that His faithful work was complete. He was given all authority in heaven and on the earth so that He would faithfully lead us through the challenges of this world to our heavenly home. Due to His faithfulness, we can boldly claim that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone! This is the truth that the ELS founding fathers confessed 100 years ago and which we continue to hold to today.

Second, Jesus is worthy of all honor. He is God's Son and is our Savior. It states, "*Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself*" (v.3-4). The Jews of Jesus' time certainly honored Moses as their greatest spiritual "father" of the past. All Jews lived and worshiped by the 5 books of Moses. All Jews described him as their spiritual guide. But, he was only a man. Hebrews pictures a huge spread-out house, not made of wood but of people. Although God worked through Moses to do great things, Moses was still just a part of the house.

Jesus is the builder of the house. The Son of God was with the Father at creation to make everything that exists. That fact alone gives us a reason to praise Him. But, more than that, through His life, death, and resurrection, He became the foundation for all believers, Jews and non-Jews. All are members of the Holy Christian Church through faith in Him. Without Him, we would be separated from God and die in our sins. But, with Him as our Savior, God will keep us as His own forever. He is worthy of our praise!

About 100 years ago many people celebrated as the Norwegians from 3 synods joined together, agreeing to disagree about how to be saved. That Norwegian group is now part of the ELCA which still has many leaders who do not confess the truth about Jesus. Some of their leaders have ignored the clear Scripture about a six-day creation, a world-wide flood, miracles recorded in the Old and New Testaments, and even statements made by Jesus! We cannot follow these false paths away from God's Word; for only God's Word can tell us the truth.

Third, Jesus is the fulfillment of the truths that Moses wrote. It states, *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.* (v.5-6) Moses wrote God's first promise of the Savior: how Eve's descendent would crush the serpent's head and the serpent bruise His heel. Later Moses wrote that God would send a prophet like him who would reveal the saving God and bring great His blessings to them. This was known by people for centuries before Jesus was born. During His ministry Jesus said, "*If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me*" (John 5:46). So, Moses faithfully wrote prophecies to prepare for Jesus' coming. Yet, many Jews down through the centuries still did not believe in Christ.

Yet Jesus faithfully came and accomplished exactly what God needed Him to do. He was born holy of the Virgin Mary. He totally pleased His heavenly Father. He laid down His life that people might be saved. Now, our risen Lord rules over all things for our good. We can call on Him at any time. We can trust in Him to answer our prayers in the best way for our good. We will not give up so precious a Savior for the sake of people, pleasure, or anything. Hebrews states of us: "*We are [God's] house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.*"

So, here is where we stand with the true believers of all times; people like Moses, Jesus' disciples, the faithful Norwegian "fathers" of 100 years ago, and all true believers today. Christ our Savior is the reason to hold to His true Word because Jesus fulfilled every part of that Word for our good. We can be certain of that!

What a beautiful picture the author to the Hebrews paints of Jesus, our faithful Savior! The last thing we would want to do is to drift away from Jesus. Rather, we want God to accomplish great things through us just like He did through Moses or Jesus' disciples or the early Norwegian Church "fathers." But in the end, it's not about us. Our boast remains in Christ. Let us fix our thoughts on Jesus. Amen.