

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Sexagesima Sunday, February 23, 2025
(60 days before Easter)

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 466, 248:2, 132:1-4, 657, 132:5.

Lessons: Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Hebrews 2:9-18, Matthew 1:18-25.

Sermon Text: Hebrews 3:1-6

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I think you probably realize that in order to accomplish something, you need to concentrate, or in other words, to fix your thoughts on that matter. We have to give it our full attention. We even hear the term “fixated on” to refer to a person whose attention is really focused on something or someone. When you fix your thoughts on something or someone it can occupy all your attention. Today we are told to fix our thoughts on Jesus so that we can

GIVE HONOR AND GLORY TO JESUS THE CHRIST

- 1. Because you are sons of God and brothers of Jesus,**
- 2. Fix your thoughts on Jesus.**
- 3. He deserves such honor.**

The letter called “Hebrews” was written especially for Jewish believers who had come to faith in the Savior to encourage them and to assure them that they had not made a mistake in following Jesus who is the Christ, the Messiah

This third chapter starts with the word “*Therefore*”. This chapter is a sort of conclusion to points the writer of this letter has been making so far.

In the previous chapter believers were called “*sons*” of God and “*brothers*” of Jesus

Because you share in the heavenly calling you are sons. Sons are part of the family. We, sons, were “brought to glory”. Jesus, of course, is the author of our salvation who suffered the punishment for our sins to bring us to glory. We have been made holy and Jesus has made us brothers.

“*Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling,*” begins this earnest encouragement and warning. Believers are “*brothers*”, holy, cleansed from sin and consecrated for service by Jesus the high priest. There was a “*heavenly calling*” both coming from God in heaven and ultimately leading to God in heaven. Such a calling they surely would not want to jeopardize.

Sons. Made holy. Family. Brothers. Children. These words are piled up to speak about you who believe! The Apostle Paul tells us “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*” (Galatians 3:26–27, NIV84) You who believe are part of the family of God! You who believe share the heavenly calling!

This is very much like the apostle Paul’s use of the word “*saints*” repeatedly in his 10 letters in the New Testament to speak of those who believe that the Son of God is their only Savior from sin.

Every word of Scripture is important, including the names of the Savior. We rather casually speak of Jesus, or Christ, or Jesus Christ and don’t always think of what the names mean. But each of those names has special meaning. Jesus is the personal name given to him. The angel said to Joseph. “*Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She*

will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:19–21, NIV84)

Luke first uses the name "Christ" when the angel appeared to the shepherds telling them that *"unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."* (Luke 2:11, KJV) The shepherds were told that this was the Christ, the Messiah for whom the Jews, including those shepherds, had been waiting.

Christ is the Messiah, the one anointed to be the Savior, the one appointed by God to redeem mankind.

God says *"fix your thoughts on Jesus."* This involves serious attention, careful study of Jesus.

Christians especially are to *"Fix [their] thoughts on Jesus."* Concentrate on him. Give him careful, constant study. The use of the personal name *"Jesus"* immediately focuses attention on his work on earth, the mission God became man in order to fulfill. And why focus your thoughts on Jesus? He is *"the apostle and high priest whom we confess."*

This is the only place in the New Testament where Jesus is called *"Apostle"*. This word involves the thought of a mission, referring to one who is commissioned for something. God had sent his Son as the officially authorized messenger to speak for him and carry out his will. *"High priest"* refers to the sacrificial nature of his mission. This picture of *"high priest"* is important in the whole letter of Hebrews. This describes the Jesus whom the letter's first readers had confessed as the one who offered the complete sacrifice for all their sins. An apostle is one who is sent, who is commissioned for something. This Jesus, is the apostle who was anointed, appointed, sent by God. The letter to the Hebrews elaborates in later chapters on the fact that he is the great high priest, greater than any human high priest. Jesus is the one whom we and all believers confess as our Savior. We believe in him. He is our apostle from God and he is our high priest.

Why are we to fix our thoughts on Jesus? *"He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses."* God the Father is the one who appointed, who anointed Jesus, and in all his life, in all his deeds, Jesus was faithful to his Father. He never disobeyed him, never contradicted him, and always did his will. He and the Father are agreed in all things, united in their mission and purpose – to save mankind from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

Probably the most important point of this letter to the Hebrews is the idea that Jesus is superior to anyone and anything.

Because he is faithful, he is worthy of greater honor than Moses.

Here we have a special message to these Jewish Christians, who could look back at Moses as a great leader and servant of God. The writer compares Jesus to an Old Testament servant of God who is extremely significant in Jewish history. Could a Jew think of anyone greater than Moses? Even the New Testament refers to Moses' greatness, mentioning him some 80 times, more often than any other Old Testament figure. But as great as Moses was, Jesus was far greater.

They would have recognized that Moses was faithful to God in all that he did. He was faithful as a great servant of God in the entire house of God, not just in some things.

Jesus is compared to Moses. But as great as Moses was, Jesus is the one who *"has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses."* To say someone was worthy of greater honor than Moses was not in any way putting Moses down or speaking ill of him. It is just that Jesus is greater than Moses. He deserves greater honor than that great leader of the Jewish nation.

As a result, to forsake and abandon and not follow Jesus would bring results far more terrible than to forsake Moses. This is a strong warning for those Jewish readers being tempted by persecution to turn away from Jesus. He is greater than Moses!

"Just as Moses was faithful in all God's house" so Jesus *"was faithful to the one who appointed him."* Jesus was anointed, appointed, called, designated by his heavenly Father. And the name "Christ" specifically refers to that anointing, that appointing.

Scripture goes on and uses another picture. We may look at a great building and marvel. We often don't know or we forget the names of the builders. If we examine a great building, we may marvel at its craftsmanship, and in that way give honor to the builder. When we look at some stately or beautiful building, we don't often think about the builder until we examine some of the details and wonder 'how did they do that?' How much work went into that beautiful, impressive building?

No one would give to any house, any building, no matter how grandiosely built and furnished, more honor than that given to the builder. To rank both builder and building on the same level is foolish. Now look at Moses and Jesus. Though important as their leader, Moses was only part of the house of Israel. Jesus as God was the builder of that house, just as he is the **“builder of everything.”** As a human created by God Moses occupied a high position in Israel and was worthy of honor. As the Creator of everything, including Moses and Israel, Jesus is worthy of the highest honor

The writer piles up the comparisons. Just as the creator is superior to what has been created, so the son is superior to the servant. Moses was a “servant”, a faithful servant, in the house of Israel. He did and taught what God commanded and in this way he was a faithful servant. Jesus said **“If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.”** (John 5:46, NIV84)

Just as the creator is superior to what has been created, so is the Son superior to the servant. Moses was a good servant. But Christ is greater. The term **“Christ”** marks his high office and the honor due him, for he was not a servant in the house, but **“Son over God’s house.”** He owns the house; he built it and he is ruling over it.

And this “house” is not something that will be built in the distant future, but the writer speaks of it as a present reality. To which house does the writer refer with the words, **“We are his house”?** The Apostle Paul described it as the **“household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”** (Ephesians 2:19–21, NIV84) All believers of the Old and New Testaments are part of this glorious house, built up and ruled by the Son. This is the “Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints” which we confess in the Apostolic Creed.

“And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.” How have we been built up and are constantly being built up? By the Word of God.

Yes, **“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.”** We have been brought into God’s house – many of us through Baptism as infants. We’ve been kept safe in that house – the Holy Christian Church – up until now.

Yes, we stray because of our sinfulness. But that you are here today confessing your faith and practicing your confession shows the work of God in keeping you safe in his house, the invisible Holy Christian Church. You have been moved by God today to also show your presence in this visible church, a church which strives to proclaim God’s Word in its truth and purity, with fellow confessors of Christ.

“And we are his house.” You are this house, members of this household, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. But did you notice there is a condition? **“If we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.”** Letting go and not holding on to Christ, the true Messiah was a real temptation facing the Hebrew Christians to whom this letter was first written. But isn’t it also a temptation facing us to let go of what God has given us in Christ and to replace it with human ideas?

But in our temptations we must turn to God. He assures us through the Apostle Paul that **“God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”** (1 Corinthians 10:13, NIV84)

So how are you going to give honor and glory to Jesus the Christ? Jesus Christ is surely deserving of honor and glory. Fix your thoughts on him. Look to him for guidance in all you do. Praise him with all you do and say. Let him be the most important person each day in your life. Amen.