

Hebrews 3:1-6 (The Transfiguration of Our Lord—Series C)
“The Focus is Christ”
Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT
February 27, 2022

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is the Epistle lesson for today from Hebrews 3:

¹Therefore, holy brothers, sharing in a heaving calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, ²the One who is being faithful to Him who appointed Him just like Moses was faithful in all His house. ³For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as much more glory as the builder of the house has more honor than the house itself. ⁴For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. ⁵Now Moses, on the one hand, was faithful in all His house as a steward for testimony to the things that would be spoken, ⁶but Christ as Son is faithful over His house, whose house we are if only we hold to the confidence and the boast of what is hoped for.

As he has been doing for hundreds of years, the writer of the Book of Hebrews speaks God’s Word to you. As you heard the Epistle read today, the Spirit-inspired author was talking to you. He addressed his words to you—holy brothers—holy brethren—holy brothers and sisters. It is you, he says, that share in a heavenly calling as Christians who are the holy priestly house of God. You are the Church, the body of Christ, a community who lives together with one another and with Jesus, the Spirit, and the Father, ever one true God. And to you who share in this heavenly calling, the divine writer tells you to consider Jesus.

Consider Jesus. Focus on Jesus. Contemplate with the eyes of saving faith His faithful service to you as Apostle and High Priest. Most familiar to us as Christians is Jesus’ three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. As Prophet, Jesus proclaimed His Word—the Word of God—to the people during His earthly ministry. Through the Holy Scriptures, and the reading and preaching of those Scriptures, Jesus today proclaims the Word of God to you and me. As our King, Jesus rules over all creation as King of kings and Lord of lords, but He especially

rules for the good of His Church. Jesus, our High Priest, offered Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of the world when He suffered, shed His blood, and died on the cross. He rose from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven where even now He intercedes with the Father on your behalf and mine.

But the writer to the Hebrews also calls Jesus "Apostle." This is the only place in the New Testament where the word apostle is applied to Jesus. An apostle is literally "one who is sent as an envoy or representative." Jesus is God the Father's commissioned agent. He is the One whom God authorized to speak for Him and to act on the Father's behalf. In His High Priestly prayer in the Upper Room on the night of His betrayal, Jesus prayed, "For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. . . . As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. . . . that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:8, 18, 21 ESV). Jesus is the One sent by God the Father to be our High Priest, our Prophet, and our King.

And it is this Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession of faith, whom we are to consider, to meditate, and to focus upon as Christians. We focus upon His faithfulness as Apostle and High Priest, the One who was sent by God, who perfectly represented His Father in heaven in word and deed, who went to the cross and offered the final, perfect sacrifice to pay for our sins and to earn our complete forgiveness and eternal life with His holy, precious blood. It is this Jesus who is risen and ascended, who is being faithful to us who focus our

eyes of faith on the presence of Jesus with us in this Divine Service and His ministry to us as our High Priest.

It is the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Jesus who is the heart and center of the Scriptures and therefore, of our most holy faith. Luther wrote, "Thus all of Scripture, as already said, is pure Christ, God's and Mary's Son. Everything is focused on this Son, so that we might know Him distinctively and in that way see the Father and the Holy Spirit eternally as one God. . . . God is particularly concerned about our knowledge of the revelation of His Son, as seen throughout the Old and the New Testament. All points to the Son."¹

But what if we should lose focus on this Son? What if the members of Christ's Church focus on the things of this world, on the teachings that are popular in society, and choose to diminish Christ in their preaching, teaching, and living the Christian life? Failure to have Christ at the center of faith and life means that we would fail also to see, not just Christ, but our status and vocation that come from Christ. Without Jesus at the center, without the focus of our faith on Jesus crucified and risen again for the forgiveness of sins, a person may forfeit his or her share in the sonship of Christ. If a believer loses focus and does not consider Christ at the heart and center of their faith, teaching, and living, they may give up their heavenly calling.

What good is the Christian faith without the Christ who is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession? What good is Christian faith without the Christ who died to pay for sins

¹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 15: Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Last Words of David, 2 Samuel 23:1-7*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 15 (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1999), 339, 338.

with His holy blood? What good is Christ if one should claim that he does not sin and does not need the merits of Jesus Christ? To lose focus on Jesus is to neglect the very Apostle and High Priest of our faithful confession as the Church. To not consider Jesus with the eyes of saving faith is to disregard who we have been called to be in Christ, namely, the house that Jesus is building for Himself and His Father. Christians are the holy priestly house of God. He is both our Father and our King. But the writer to the Hebrews says clearly by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are God's house "if only we hold to the confidence and the boast of what is hoped for."

Christians hold on to Jesus and what they have received from Him—forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and a heavenly calling as children of God who share in the priestly holiness of Jesus by sharing in His royal sonship. Christians share in Jesus and His work as God's anointed Son, the Christ. But to lose Christ Jesus, to diminish Him in preaching and teaching, not to consider Jesus with eyes of faith is to let go of the confidence to speak openly and frankly with God which the High Priestly service of Christ in His death and resurrection and His present intercession gives to us. Only in Christ Jesus do we have access to God our Father. To lose focus on Christ, to not always consider the Apostle and High Priest of our faith, forfeits this confidence and the boast of the inheritance we have in Jesus Christ. Only as long as believers remain God's spiritual house by grace through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit with Christ Jesus at the center and as the focus will they have confidence and hope as royal sons and daughters with full access to Him and His mercy.

Our survival as God's house, His people by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, depends on our faith remaining sure and certain in Him who is our High Priest and on God's

continued blessing through Jesus. We are dependent on Jesus Christ. We obtain our identity from Jesus and our confession of faith in Him. Remove Jesus from the center of the Scriptures, from the focus of the Church, and from the heart of your life is to remove your identity in Christ as God's spiritual house. "Christ as Son is faithful over His house, whose house we are if only we hold to the confidence and the boast of what is hoped for."

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you are God's house. And since you are God's household, God has made you His temple, the place where He resides with you, just as you live with Him. All this depends on the access you have to God through Jesus, the High Priest over all God's house in heaven and on earth. By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word and Sacraments, hold tenaciously on to Christ by faith. Hold on to the Word that reveals Christ. Hold on to the Word that gives you Christ. Hold on to the Word and that gives you faith, forgiveness, and eternal life in Christ. Consider Christ Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of your confession. Focus on Jesus. Keep Him at the center of your faith and life. And with confident faith declare with the hymnwriter:

Now I will cling forever
 To Christ, my Savior true;
 My Lord will leave me never,
 Whate'er He passes through.
 He rends death's iron chain;
 He breaks through sin and pain;
 He shatters hell's grim thrall;
 I follow Him through all. (*LSB* 467)

Amen.