

Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost – October 21, 2012
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Hebrews 3:1-6 (NIV)

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. 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," bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. 6) But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

Holy Brothers and Sisters who share in the heavenly calling,

The opening words of our text practically jump out at us, don't they? Holy brothers and sisters – the phrase jumps out at us because it is so unique. This is the only place in the entire New Testament where we run across that phrase.

Holy brothers and sisters – can these words really be addressed to us? Indeed they can! We often describe the members of the Lord's church as the communion or gathering of saints. For example in the Apostles Creed we confess that we believe in the holy Christian Church and the communion of saints. Those words are a beautiful expression of the fellowship we enjoy with Christ and each other as people who have been cleansed of their sin through faith in Christ Jesus. We rejoice that the Holy Spirit has called us to faith in Jesus and that we have been included in the communion of saints. We rejoice to be called holy by our God!

The opening words of our text are just another way of expressing that same thought and reminding us that we have been called into the family of God. God has given us the royal robes of Christ's righteousness to wear. We have been set apart for God. In fact the Bible even describes us being the dwelling place or temple of God. We are a people who have been called by God and our ultimate destination is a heavenly home.

But we haven't arrived at our destination yet – we're still en route. How will we pass the time? What will we think about? Holy brothers and sisters

Theme: Fix Your Thoughts on Jesus

1. He is faithful, as Moses was
2. He is worthy of greater honor than Moses was
3. He is the fulfillment of what Moses said

Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. This text is full of noteworthy phrases and thoughts. The description of Jesus as the apostle and high priest whom we confess is another phrase which strikes us unique. We're at least somewhat familiar with Jesus and his high priestly office. We look to him as the one who offered the perfect sacrifice for our sins when he shed his holy innocent blood and offered his perfect life for us on the altar of the cross. The book of Hebrews has a great deal to say about the High Priesthood of Jesus who not only laid down his life for us but who also serves as our high priest by giving us access to the throne of grace and mediating a new relationship with God for us. (Take some time to scan through the first several chapters of the book of Hebrews to help you fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom you confess.)

It's easy for us to see Jesus as the one who serves as our High Priest but we might wonder why our text urges us to fix our thoughts on Jesus, the apostle. Whom do you think of when you hear the word apostle?

Most likely you would think of the Apostle Paul or the Apostle Peter. But The Apostle Jesus? That just doesn't roll off of our tongues does it? In fact this is the only place in the entire New Testament where we hear that phrase.

If you recall what the title apostle means you will, with just a bit of thought, understand why we can speak of Jesus as THE apostle. An apostle is someone who is sent. Jesus often described himself as the one sent by the Father. For example on one occasion when Jesus was in Nazareth he was invited to speak in the synagogue. He opened the scroll of Isaiah to the words: "**The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19) to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20) Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21) and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."** (Luke 4:18-21 NIV)

Jesus is the one sent by his Father to seek and to save the lost. He is the one who was faithful to the one who appointed him and who provides us with eternal salvation. And so we fix our thoughts on Jesus who was faithful as Moses was.

He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Both Jesus and Moses were found faithful in their appointed callings. Moses was called and sent to deliver his people from their slavery in Egypt. He was known for his faithfulness to God and to his people. He faithfully represented his people before God and faithfully proclaimed God's decrees and promises to his people. He even interceded for his people when they sinned against the Lord and incurred his righteous wrath.

The faithfulness of Jesus is also well known to us. He came to do the will of the one who sent him. **My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."** (John 6:40-40 NIV84) He was faithful to his Father and to us even going so far as to lay down his life for us so that might have eternal life and live with him in his kingdom in eternal glory following our resurrection.

When we fix our thoughts on Jesus, **we see [him], who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10) In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. 11) Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.** (Hebrews 2:9-11 NIV84)

Moses pointed ahead to Jesus and said, **The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.** (Deuteronomy 18:15 NIV84) Because Jesus is the one of whom Moses testified He is worthy of greater honor than Moses was.

Our text elaborates on just that point. **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.**

It really isn't shocking news to us that Jesus is of greater honor than Moses. But when we recall that these words were originally written the Hebrews – to people who took pride in the one who had spoken directly to God, who shared with them the Laws of God and who under God's direction led them their forefathers through the wilderness to the land of promise, it is easy for us to see the importance of these words. To put things even more in perspective Moses regarded so highly that even the New Testament mentions him more than 80 times – that's more than even Abraham or Jacob or Isaac. It would have been difficult for a Jew to

think of anyone who was greater than Moses. They needed to set aside that thinking and fix their thoughts on Jesus.

You and I can apply these words to ourselves as they remind us not to give greater honor to the messenger than we give to the one who has provided the message. We rejoice that God gave Martin Luther to the church to point it back to Christ but we must also agree that Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Luther. Or we may have a favorite pastor who pointed us to Christ but again we must agree that Jesus is of greater honor than our pastors.

Moses, Luther, our pastors – they are simply part of the household of believers. They together with us are stones in the church of God as the apostle Peter reminds us: **you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.** (1 Peter 2:5 NIV84)

Jesus is the one who established this house. He is the one who **“In [whom] the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”** (Ephesians 2:21 NIV84) Jesus is the builder of everything. Jesus is the one who gave Moses life – both physical and spiritual life. Therefore he is worthy of the greater honor.

Indeed as we fix our thoughts on Jesus we will be focused on the one who is the fulfillment of what Moses said. Moses greatest service to his people was testifying to what would be said in the future. **Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future.** Jesus told the Jews of his day, **If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.** (John 5:46 NIV84)

In the book of Genesis Moses under inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote about Jesus when he wrote about the seed of the woman who would crush Satan's head. (Cf. Genesis 3:15. Moses was writing of Jesus when he recorded God's promise to Abraham that all nations of the earth would be blessed through one of his descendants (cf. Genesis 12:2)

Jesus is the one gives us the true Sabbath rest that Moses spoke about in the third commandment. The other ceremonial laws given to the people by Moses concerning what they could eat and drink, the festivals they were to celebrate, the sacrifices they were to offer – all of these were a shadow of things to come. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:17 that the reality is found in Christ.

Everything Moses did and said, he did and said as a servant in the Lord's house. **But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house.** Christ is the one who established the household of God, he is the one who is worthy of honor from the nations and is a blessing to the nations. He is the one who provides us with the true and lasting rest of heaven. His sacrifice is the one which established peace between us and God. His merits and his righteous are the ones that have been credited to our account. Christ Jesus, God's own Son is the one who has brought us into the house and household of God as his brother. He shared in our humanity so that he could set us free from the fear and power of death by his death and resurrection. (cf. Hebrews 2:14-15) He has gone into heaven to prepare a place for us so that we might be with him in his Father's house forever. (cf. John 14:2-3)

Therefore let us look away from our own works and worth, let us look away from the great servants of the Lord and let us fix our thoughts on Jesus.

Holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling hold on to the courage and hope of which we boast: eternal life, forgiveness, heaven, glory, eternal rest and joy. Fix your thoughts on Jesus who alone can enable us to remain faithful to him and to confess him in any and every circumstance.

Fix your thoughts on Jesus. Take his promises into your heart, build your hopes of happiness and joy on those promises, hold on to the courage and hope which he has won for you. Amen.