

“In 2006 Let Us our Eyes on Jesus Fix!”

Hebrews 12.1-2

New Year's Eve, 2005

The Word of God for our sermon meditation this New Year's Eve is recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 12th chapter, verses 1-2 where we heard these words “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The past week, let alone the past month, you may have seen and heard the prognosticators telling us what to look for in 2006. Though some of them generally agree, it is a bit amusing to find those instances where they do not. It really makes you wonder if they are looking at the same data. Each of them in some way is telling us to fix our attentions on this trend, this company, and a myriad of indicators, products, and information to get and stay ahead in our finances, relationships, and lives in general.

Of course, as we know, there is no guarantee that if we follow their advice all will turn out well. There are too many variables, too many unknowns, too many things beyond our control, let alone a nation's control. This may make us wonder is there anything on which we can fix our attentions and know what to expect? Is there one to whom we can look and know will direct us in the right direction? Tonight on this New Year's Eve we learn there is as the Holy Spirit exhorts us in 2006 let us our eyes on Jesus fix!

The Scriptures relate that there is really only one constant in all this creation and for all eternity – the Lord of heaven and earth. He and He alone does not change and, in fact, our Incarnate Savior Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is He whom the author to the Hebrews has labored to show is the eternal High Priest and Son of the Father through his Epistle. He almost painstakingly walks the reader through the Old Testament demonstrating that Jesus is truly all the believer and convert to the Christian faith needs.

For His readers have been taking their eyes off of Jesus as of late. Their attentions had been diverted and redirected because of the heat and trouble they are receiving for being followers of Jesus.

Their lives, livelihoods, and futures are at risk all because they are Christians. They are wavering in their faith and contemplating forsaking Jesus so that they can escape the shame and disgrace that has been dumped on them as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth.

In order to dissuade them from running to Hell by such an action and to encourage them to remain on course, the holy writer in the chapter preceding our sermon reading relates how the Lord supported His saints through the ages from Noah and Abraham to Moses and Joshua to David and Daniel and more. All these and more were supported, defended, and upheld by God's mighty hand and grace and remained true and loyal to their God.

Therefore, the holy writer says, do what they did – fix your eyes on the Lord. More specifically, fix your eyes on Jesus who gave you your faith and will bring it to its end, namely, eternal life. Take hope and courage as did the saints of old and trust in He who changes not, whose promises are from everlasting to everlasting, who for the joy of fulfilling the Father's will and securing your salvation, endured the suffering and shame of the cross and now reigns on high.

By fixing one's eyes the author literally means rivet your attentions on Jesus and do not look away no matter the distraction might be. Like an athlete fixes his or her eyes on the prize and does all to win it, so are we as God's children, as disciples of Jesus, to fix our eyes on Jesus in all things in our life knowing all things are subject to Him and that He will guide and direct us, leading us as our Good Shepherd through everything.

And how we want to do that, right? We, like the first audience of this Epistle to the Hebrews, want to do this. By faith we want to fix and rivet our attentions on Jesus. Like St. Peter we want to step out of the boat, right into the thick of our lives with all its storms swirling about us and see only Jesus. Sometimes we do this, although feebly, but more often than not we become distracted by the boisterous waves, by the whistling winds, and by the depth of the troubles and trials of our lives.

And so, we take our eyes off of Jesus and fix them instead on our troubles, our trials, our woes, and the like. This was getting the Hebrew believers nowhere in their lives and faith and, in fact, was

threatening to distract and divert them onto the wide path to Hell! The writer to these early believers expends a bit of ink warning them of what happens to those who, having taken their eyes of the Lord, fall from faith and into unbelief.

Where and what does it get us when we do the same? Well, our blood pressure rises. We get a headache or a stomach ache. We lose our cool and snap and bite at loved ones and others. We fret and worry about this and that depriving ourselves of sleep and relaxation. And, if we really stop to look at ourselves in the mirror, we can see that we have drifted away from our Lord and forgotten His promises. It is little wonder that we often feel engulfed by life.

What can we do at such times? Resolve to do better? That wouldn't have helped Peter when we was sinking would it? Redouble our efforts? Try as they did, this wasn't working for the Hebrew believers. So, "whence comes our help?" to quote the Psalmist. "My help," he tells us, "comes from the Lord." Just like St. Peter there is only one thing that we can do. By faith, in repentant faith we fix our eyes on Jesus and cry out, "Lord, save me!"

And save us He has for the Author of our salvation has endured the cross to deliver us from all our sins, from sinking into the very depths of Hell. Jesus, the eternal Lord, entered our time the first Christmas to bear the shame and the disgrace of our sins of unbelief, of a lack of trust in Him and His promises, and for looking to other things and other people for aid and comfort in our lives. He came and was hanged on a tree on Calvary's hill so that we may look to Him in our sins and know that He is our Help, our Savior, and our Lord and King.

Jesus was laid in a hollowed out hill and rose the third day to guarantee us that we can look to Him for all things in life, at death and even beyond the grave. The Lord Christ, our Redeemer, sits at the right hand of the throne of God ruling and directing all of history for the sake of His Church even as He is with each one of us to the end of this age. As our crucified and resurrected Lord who has brought us to faith, we can rest assured that He will, as the Finisher of our faith, bring us to faith's goal – eternal life. Yes, He will, as the Psalmist states preserve our coming out and our going in from this time forth, and even forevermore.

So great is our Lord's desire that we be His people and remain His people that He not only redeemed us from our sins, but He also assures us that He will be with us to guide us and to lead us in our lives. In fact, He has given us His holy Word to lead us and teach us His ways so that we do not fall prey to every prevailing wind in this world of ours today. He has given us His rock-solid guarantee that His Word and counsel will never steer and lead us wrong. He has assured us that we can expect from Him every good gift for our faith and life with Him.

This assurance, guarantee, and guidance is ours as we ponder the sign of the cross on which Jesus endured the shame and sentence of our sin to give us the glories of His everlasting kingdom. If we should ever need proof that what Jesus tells us is the truth, that no matter what the variables, uncertainties, and unknowns are, that He is with us to the end of history and into eternity, we need only look to His Word that announces He secured our salvation and rescued us from Hell's torments on His cross.

With such a Lord and Savior, who being true God would be made true Man and suffer all that we by our sins deserved and die on a cross, is there anyone else or anywhere else we should look and fix our attentions? Is there anyone else to whom we should turn for direction and assurances for our lives?

Therefore, in 2006, let us our eyes on Jesus fix when lonely and deserted knowing He is with us always even to the end of the age. In 2006 let us our eyes on Jesus fix when the heat of life is bearing down on us and know He will be our shade and shelter. In 2006 let us our eyes on Jesus fix when tempted and tried for He will preserve you from evil and give a way to escape. In 2006 let us our eyes on Jesus fix night and day for He does not slumber nor does He sleep but watches over us as the apple of His eye. In 2006 let us our eyes on Jesus fix who is the Author and Finisher of our faith and know that if He is our Help who endured the cross and its shame, He will be our help in anything and everything in 2006 and beyond. God grant us such faith that in 2006 we our eyes on Jesus fix to the glory of His name. Amen.

+Soli Deo Gloria+