

Have you ever thought about all the people who try to get our attention? Think about it. There is the teacher in front of the classroom desperately trying to keep all eyes focused on her, the preacher trying to hold you for 20 minutes, your child tugging at your pant leg or screaming from the highchair. Marketing agents and commercial creators who don't want you to turn the channel so they'll get paid, the creditors trying to squeeze late payments and fees from you. There's your doctor who can't get you to do what he tells you to do for your own good. LOTS of people vie for our attention and with the craziness of life, we are so easily distracted and sometimes find it hard to keep up with everything.

I'm going to ask something of you this morning. I'm going to ask you to pay attention, to focus—not just to me and not just for 20 minutes. There is one important person to fix your eyes upon. And it's a lifetime focus. The writer to the Hebrews urges you to

FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS!

1. TO SEE YOUR KING
2. TO BE ENCOURAGED IN YOUR FAITH

The disciples fixed their eyes on Jesus on that first Palm Sunday. They listened attentively as Jesus gave them instructions on just what to do. He told them just where to go and what to get. So they went to the village down the road, untied a colt that belonged to total strangers, answered the owners just as the Lord instructed, and they brought it to Jesus. This was the donkey Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

The Jewish crowds that gathered around Jesus as he rode into the Holy City also paid attention to Jesus. Their eyes were fixed on Jesus because they viewed him as their King. And for their king they spread their coats and clothes before him. Palm branches were waved before him and thrown in his path. And they shouted praises to him: **“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” (Luke 19:38)**

Even the Pharisees fixed their eyes on Jesus! They, however, did not like what they saw...or what they heard! Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, **“Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” (Luke 19:39)** They were appalled that those following Jesus were shouting praises reserved for the One who would come as the promised Messiah. They, of course, did not see him that way at all and considered this blasphemy. They had wanted to kill Jesus for quite some time and now they were totally focused on doing so—it was an outrage for Jesus to accept those praises!

As you hear the events of Palm Sunday, there is no question that Jesus is the central focus. Everyone was watching him and reacting to him. What about you? What does it mean to focus on Jesus your King today? Well, as you view the events of Palm

Sunday, maybe you get an idea of ways we would do that. The people in the crowd saw him as their Savior. They showed it as they were willing to lay down their coats and clothes—allowing them to get filthy, maybe even with donkey stuff! They didn't care because they weren't concerned about that. Their eyes were **FIXED ON JESUS!** He was important to them! They also showed that they saw him as the Savior as they waved palm branches and acclaimed him as the King sent by God to rescue them.

If we have our eyes **FIXED ON JESUS**, what do we “lay down” before Jesus our King? We give things up for him in order to pay tribute to our King, don't we? We give him our time—using it in ways that please God, offering to serve at church, helping others outside of church things. We give generous offerings to him so that the saving gospel of sins forgiven in Christ can be shared with others in a variety of ways and the Lord's people can be served with the Word. We use the talents that God has given to us to serve him. And we offer these talents and treasures and time to our Savior with the unselfishness displayed by the crowd. Their concern wasn't dirt and donkey stuff and the opposition of the Pharisees and we aren't concerned about the time, the money, the effort and what others think of us. That's our attitude as we **FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS** and show him with those things that he is our King and Savior.

And consider the praise of the people as they **FIXED THEIR EYES ON JESUS**. Do you see how natural and spontaneous it was on that Palm Sunday? It's just that natural for the God's people today as we worship our Savior here in church on Sundays or other times, as we offer daily prayers at different times and in various circumstances. You notice how public their praises were too. We also have opportunities like that. Every day presents chances to tell people about Jesus. We can give witness to our Savior as we speak of God's love and his forgiveness and salvation. Spontaneous opportunities are presented to us in times of illness and challenges or in times of tremendous blessings, at the birth of a baby or an engagement. A Christian praises God with others and to others.

You and I have chances every day to praise our King in a world that is accustomed to hearing nit-picking of every ruler, every king, every president. That's not possible with Jesus and verse 2 of Hebrews 12 tells us why: **Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** This is the reason is our King and why we **FIX OUR EYES ON HIM**. He went to the cross, he rose from death and he ascended to heaven. He did what his Father anointed him to do—he secured our salvation, paid for our every sin with his blood, and went back to heaven to prepare a place for us there. Jesus now sits on the throne of heaven ruling over all things. That's why we **FIX OUR EYES ON Jesus!**

The author of Hebrews urges us to do that and consider what he went through for us **SO THAT you will not grow weary and lose heart (v.3)**. Why would we get tired and lose heart? Why would we need encouragement? He's talking about our life of faith

and our attitude toward God. So do you ever get weary? Is your faith ever weak? What about when you're sick and it just seems to drag on? What about when someone close to you dies? Or when you can't find a job...or keep a job? When you're lonely? When you have too much to do—or maybe too little to do? Do you ever start to wonder if God is even paying attention to you? Do the theories and explanations of your professors ever start to make sense and you begin to question the truth that there is one God and one way to heaven?

You realize that this is a focus problem, right? When we do this, we are looking at the wrong things. We're looking at our troubles more than Christ. We are looking at the bad things in the world rather than Christ. We're looking at the world's wisdom instead of Christ. These things hinder us in our race of faith. Picture trying to run a 100-yard dash wearing a nice, fluffy, comfy, white bathrobe! Imagine how it would get tangled up in your legs! That's the image in this text as the Hebrews writer tells us to throw off the sin that so easily entangles so that we can run the race of faith.

And let's call it what it is. It's sin when we lose focus and we doubt God and we listen to voices contrary to God's Word. And we all do those things. You might not want to think that it's a big deal to doubt, to waver, but it's damning sin. In those moments, we are not **FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS**, we're choosing to forget him and put our attention elsewhere. And if you looked at the things the way God looks at things—if you were *able* to look at things the way God looks at things—you would see any sin as a gross violation, a breaking of God's perfect expectations. And if you could see things that way—with holy eyes—you would agree that everyone who sins ought to be condemned to hell. And you would see yourself as the condemned sinner.

But keep listening to these words from Hebrews: **Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS** he says. The "opposition" Jesus endured was more than the Pharisees on Palm Sunday who didn't like what they saw in Jesus and heard from the crowd. And this week we are so mindful of the opposition of sinful men. Consider the list of those we know of—Judas, the temple guard, an angry crowd of Jews who no longer shouted "Hosanna!" but instead "Crucify him!", Pontius Pilate, Herod, the Pharisees, Sadducees, the Roman soldiers.

FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS this week, this Holy Week, and see your King putting up with that opposition in order to pay for your sin. The betrayal, the unfair trial, the beatings and cruel death—all he endured because of your doubts, your wavering, your penchant for focusing on the distractions of life instead of your Savior-King.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are not easy to view because we realize that our King had to pay for our sins with his life. But notice one more thing in our text. It says of Jesus, **who for the joy set before him endured the cross**. When I hear the events of Palm Sunday, I picture him smiling as he rides and the crowds are cheering him. When

I hear the Pharisees telling Jesus to rebuke his disciples for praising him, I picture Jesus smiling as he says to them, **“I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”** He knew why he was coming into Jerusalem. This was the reason he came into the world. It brought him joy. YOU brought him joy—it was love for you that your King endured the cross. On that first Palm Sunday, Jesus was focused—on the cross, on you, on your salvation. There was no stopping him.

You are urged to focus on Jesus—FIX YOUR EYES ON HIM. Let nothing distract you; let nothing dissuade you. FIX YOUR EYES ON JESUS and you will one day see him and sing his praises for all eternity. Amen.