

Friday Evening - English

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Date: 14 February 2020

Preacher: Rev Andrew Macleod

[0 : 00] Let us return to God's Word to Hebrews chapter 12. We can read again verse 3. Hebrews 12 and verse 3.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted.

I am quite sure that there are very few people in here this evening who are not big fans of Mr. Andy Murray, the tennis player.

At least big fans every summer. We come around our televisions, we put the match on over the radio perhaps. You have had the pleasure of being there in the stand to watch him.

15,000 people crammed into centre court for every single one of his games. They would chant his name, they urge him on and they feel, you feel every ache and pain with him as he uses up all of his energy and shows all of his emotions.

[1 : 30] What an encouragement it must have been for him as he played his games out in centre court with all the crowd in the stand, especially his own mother and his wife and his family sitting around him.

It must have helped him. It must have helped him and energised him all the way to that championship. We come to the book of Hebrews and the writer tells us, tells you Christian, that we are to live with the knowledge that we are surrounded in verse 1 by so great a cloud of witnesses. The stadium, the stadium, the arena, the world that you and I are living in has these faithful men and women who have gone before us seated in the stands.

And it is in front of us and it is in front of us and it is in front of them that we are running our Christian race this evening. I don't know where you are spiritually tonight, what has brought you again here in the Friday night of our communion.

And perhaps you may be this evening at a low ebb in your Christianity, in your walk with Jesus.

[2 : 50] But the pattern of their faith, it encourages you and me to, as we see in verse 1 and 2, release our sin and to run our race and to refocus on the Lord, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

They are there for our encouragement and to know that they have endured it all and they have come out victorious.

The communion weekend, I always felt, was a great landmark, a milestone for the Christian. Whether this is your second or tenth or countless time coming to the Friday evening of another Stornoway communion and sitting around the Lord's table, I want you to be encouraged, to be thankful that you are here again.

How are you here again? Are you here again because of your own strength, your own ability, your own energy? Not at all.

We give thanks to the Lord who has led you to this point and he will lead us all the way to the very end. I want us very simply this evening to stop and to consider Jesus.

[4 : 25] I'm not sure if there is a more worthwhile task for us to engage in tonight or at any time in our lives than to consider Jesus.

So keep your eye and finger on verse 3. Consider him, Jesus. To consider him, it may sound similar to what we read in verse 2, that we are to be looking to Jesus.

But the word there in verse 2, it's about a shifting of focus. Shifting our eyes away. We're being instructed in verse 2 to look away from our sin and to look at Jesus our Lord.

But in verse 3, it is a totally different word altogether. The only time in the original language this word is used is here in this verse.

It has a much deeper meaning. It means to consider him. It means to keep a record. To note down. To contemplate.

[5 : 36] To meditate on the God-man, Jesus Christ. If you are a regular attender perhaps of this church and yet not a member of Christ's church, I would invite you especially to consider Jesus seriously this evening.

Don't leave it another communion or another Sunday or even another moment until you embrace our Jesus in your life.

As the years come and go, it surely is pressing upon us that we are not getting any younger. We are not getting any better. But only worse. Seriously, consider Jesus for yourself this evening. And make your decision about him.

So I want us in three ways to consider Jesus. Consider the passion and the presence and the purpose of Jesus.

[6 : 49] The passion, the presence and the purpose of Jesus. So we consider the passion. Some of you may be familiar with, even if you have not watched the film yourselves, the film *The Passion of the Christ*.

The word passion, it comes from the Latin meaning to suffer, to endure. That film, I've never watched it. I've never had the opportunity to watch it.

And I've never gone searching to watch it either. But I distinctly remember one of our professors at seminary saying to us as a class that he never wanted to watch it.

He never took the opportunity to watch this film. He didn't want Mel Gibson's version of events to be what displayed in his mind as he meditated on his Lord.

He wanted his lifetime of reading the scriptures and the working of the Holy Spirit to paint the passion narrative in his own mind as he thought of Jesus.

[8 : 06] Whatever picture displays for you when you think of the passion and suffering of Jesus, I'm sure it is not a pleasant scene in many respects.

It's gruesome. It's painful. It's heart-wrenching. It's shameful for his enemies. And yet, there is a beauty there.

Our beautiful Jesus on the cross at Calvary. If we consider what Jesus went through in the Garden of Gethsemane.

This blood pouring out of him. His friends letting him down when he needed them the most. Being just hours away from bearing the sin of the world.

Then you think of the spitting and the mocking and the beating and the crown of thorns jokingly dug into his head.

[9 : 18] And this is only to consider his physical pain. The spiritual trauma is what he feared the most. As we read in Isaiah 53.10. It was the will of the Lord to crush him and to cause him to suffer.

The Father gave the Son. He gave his Son for this reason. When Jesus will cry out into the vacuum of the darkness, He says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

That is the question. Why? For what reason? Why did he go through it all? Why did he have to leave the riches and perfection of heaven to be born into a sinful world?

To be misidentified and mislabeled all of his life before enduring the cruelest of deaths that they could think of?

He endured it all for the possibility of our sins to be forgiven. You know, I say possibility because I believe there are some of you this evening who have not yet availed yourself of this gracious, amazing gift.

[10 : 49] We have said, you have said, no thanks to Jesus. Or perhaps more likely, you have said, not yet.

Not yet. Maybe once I feel better, once I'm over this sickness, once my children have moved out, once I have finished university and got a job, then I will consider Jesus.

There's no time for that. Tonight, He is asking you to consider Him and to make your decision about Him.

We consider the passion of Jesus. And alongside of that, I want you to consider the suffering that you and I endure.

Now, I don't want to, for one moment, minimize the pain, the suffering that anybody is going through this evening, whether personally or in your own family circles.

[11 : 54] you know, we can cope with it because Jesus coped with everything that He went through. And He knows everything that you are going through.

Isaiah 63, in all their affliction, He was afflicted too. He feels your pain. That is what makes your Jesus so unique, so unlike any other supposed God or religion.

Your Jesus of Christianity is the only one who has become one of us. He became man to identify with sinners, to take our pain and to set us free.

Whatever trial, your trial is from the past or is ongoing even this evening, consider the suffering of Jesus.

He endured it all, more than any of us, all to save us. I just finished reading Corrie Tim Boone's book, Not I, but Christ.

[13:17] And then, it was a remarkable book. And one of the chapters she speaks very vividly about the day that she was waiting to be released from the Nazi concentration camp where she had experienced unimaginable pain and suffering.

When somebody came up to her and reported to her that two specific ladies had died. And so Corrie, she turned around and gazing out at this camp once more, she says audibly, Thank you, Lord, that you brought me here even if only for these two women who were saved for eternity. how could she say thank you for this place, for all that she has suffered, the abuse and the torture. And she went on to say it is worth living and dying if we are being used to save others for eternity. the Lord wants to use all of us. He wants to use you wherever you are, whatever you are going through, even through our pain, to have the privilege of guiding sinners to their saviors.

[14:51] As we consider the passion of Christ, think about his power, the power he had here on earth to bear the infinite suffering.

Consider him now in heaven at the right hand of God, the almighty one. If we are to face trial, we ought not to be alarmed, but to know that he is mighty to help you through every situation.

The Lord doesn't measure out what afflictions you are going to go through according to your faults, according to your sin, but he does it according to our strength.

We ought not to say to the Lord, take the trial away, but rather take me through the trial. Ask for your shoulders to be broadened in God's gymnasium.

As I thought of that, I thought back to the Christmas holidays in Tain. The sports centre, which I would go to, it just basically shuts down for these two weeks or so.

[16:01] So I had to venture to this other gym in the town and this is a much bigger gym. It's got so many more machines, I didn't even know where to start.

All the regular exercises and machines are there that you could think of yourself, but there was other bits of equipment that I had no idea what to do.

Do I put my head in first? Do I put my feet in first? I just didn't know. But I eventually ventured on, only to wake up the next morning discovering all sorts of pain in my body, where muscles I didn't know were muscles, because of all the different exercises I did.

You know, in God's gymnasium though, He takes us on a different course, on a different workout to the normal. why does He do it?

He does it to build you up, and to strengthen you, and to make you ready. Now, this doesn't happen overnight, but over a lifetime, as we consider the passion of Jesus Christ, we are to consider our own suffering, to be a joy, to be a preparation, we consider the passion.

[17:27] Well, let's move on, secondly, and consider the presence. No, there has not been one moment in your life, one second, when Jesus has not been present with you.

Just consider that. Consider that His presence has been with you in every moment of your life. life. Now, that may make us blush, embarrassed, when we think of some of the places that you have been to, some of the periods of your life that you have been through, through.

But more than that, tonight it should bring you immense comfort to know that in these darkest of days of your life, the light of the world was shining into you.

That's not just a nice line that the minister tells you to take away from the communion this evening. That is the truth of the gospel for every Christian in here to take with them.

[18:35] This is the promises that we find countless times throughout God's word. Isaiah 41.10 Fear not, for I am with you.

Deuteronomy 31.8 The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Joshua 1.9 Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.

Psalm 23.4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, you are with me. Now for the whole of 2020, you can find a verse from the Bible for every single day to encourage you not to be afraid.

You can scour the text yourself, you can have it sent to you in an email, you can buy a devotional with it. Whatever you do, be in no doubt this evening, my Christian friend, that the Lord is with you wherever you will go.

And he will be with us, he will be with you to the very end, to your very last breath. Ebenezer Erskine was a Scottish pastor who tells the story of a lady in his congregation who was nearing the end of her life and he went to visit her and asked her, are you ready to die?

[20 : 14] And she replied, yes, I'm ready to die. How can you be so sure? The pastor asked. Well, because of what you have told us from the pulpit, that I cannot slip out of God's hand.

The Bible says, Christ is the head and we are the body. I am attached to him, so it is impossible for me to fall from his grasp.

It is impossible for you to be separated from his presence. There is no valley too low, there is no mountain too high. The psalmist writes, if I ascend to heaven, you are there.

If I go down to the depths, you are there. Fear not, for the Lord your God is with you. Well, we come thirdly to consider the purpose and to align our focus with this communion we can.

what was the purpose in Jesus coming at all? Well, Jesus came to do the Father's will.

[21 : 26] He was so chiefly concerned with bringing glory to heaven, to bring delight to the divine court, so that the plan would be fulfilled, exactly as expected.

His whole life was God-centered. The way he acted, the manner and how he spoke, the people he spoke to, the miracles he performed were all for the honor and the credit of he who is on the throne. that is God's purpose for your life as well. By nature, we are not God- centered at all.

We are most certainly self- centered. You are concerned with yourself all too often. We focus on ourselves and it's hard to change that, isn't it?

We don't need to look at anybody else. We just look at ourselves as the case in point. Trying to scoop out that self from our character is a full-time job.

[22 : 45] And that is one of the reasons that we all must endure some kind of trial in our lives to one extent or another. Because through our trials and our temptations, we will be humbled.

We will be taught. We will seek God more. Our pride will be killed. We will be ultimately weaned away from this world and will ultimately depend and lean on the arms of our God.

Everything that God leads us through is for his glory and it is for our good. Everything which takes place down here is in preparation for what is waiting for us up there.

That is why it is so fearful that several of you in here this evening are gambling with your eternity. We are here today.

We are gone tomorrow. you know as the calendar changes once again, it must act as a warning sign for us.

[24 : 04] The race began in the 1950s or 70s or 90s for most of you and now it is the year 2020.

2020. This may be the final year that some of us will experience on this earth. Whether we are old or young, the question is, are we ready?

Are we ready for the race to be over? Have we been looking to Jesus? Has our gaze been upon him? Another Scottish pastor who was by the name of Horatius Bonar.

He was walking past this church where the finishing touches were being made to it. He noticed this man working down in a little pit and he was carving away on some piece of stone and so Bonar asked him, what are you doing down there?

It looked dirty and dusty. It looked quite depressing. And the man said to him, well, you see the steeple up there?

[25 : 20] Yes, he replied, well, you see I am chipping away down here because what I am doing down here needs to fit up there.

Bonar went home greatly encouraged. You know, every trial that we are going through down here is God chipping away at us to fit us for glory all according to his great plan.

We try hard to cling on to life, but God wants his children to be with him where he is. We are just renting down here, but in glory we will be homeowners.

He has gone to prepare that place for us. So we have and we must continue then to consider Jesus, consider the passion, the presence and the purpose of Christ.

But just notice at the very end there of verse 3, if we need any more reason to take up this requirement to consider him, consider him so that you will not grow weary or lose heart.

[26 : 37] I don't know where you are this evening on your Christian journey, how you feel tonight, how you really feel in the depths of your heart as you have come out to the Friday night of communion.

Maybe you feel like you are trudging along in your faith. It feels like a spiritual winter. Maybe you are on the mountain top, wherever we are.

I urge you, I pray that you will look off unto Jesus, that it won't merely be a fleeting glance in the morning or in the evening, but that every moment of our day you would know his presence with you. As we bathe in the person and work of Jesus Christ, the snow of despondency will fall from our feet and our hearts will be set ablaze to do amazing acts, all for his glory and for the good of his church. We go into this weekend with our focus fixed upon Jesus. Consider all that he endured for you. Consider all that he is doing for you.

[27 : 58] Consider all that he is preparing for you. Let us keep on considering Jesus. Amen. Let us pray. Lord our God, we thank you for the reminder in your word and for the pointers to put our focus back onto you, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

we have all been through this week and encountered different challenges, different joys, going to work, going to school, doing the chores in the home.

And yet, Lord, we want to do all of these things with you by our side. And we want, Lord, this evening and this weekend to be a spiritual refreshment for us.

That we would draw again close to our Savior. That we would recognize all that you have been through for us. Recognize that you are always with us.

Recognize that it was all for us. To save us from our sin, to cleanse us, and to prepare us for what is sure, what is anchored true.

[29 : 27] Our hope is so secure. Our future is awaiting each one of us who have considered Jesus and who have decided and who now know, whose eyes have been opened to see that he is our Lord.

He is my Lord and he is my God. So we ask all of these things for the forgiveness of our sins. In Christ's name. Amen. Let us finish by singing together in Psalm 73 in the Scottish Psalter.

Psalm 73. It's on page 316. Psalm 73 from verse 24 down to the end of the psalm.

Thou with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide. Psalm 73 from verse 24 to God's praise.

hum A sing quote Turk who mills to me conduct and guide quenny thank you whoever Thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

[31 : 24] Whom have I in the heavens high, but thee, O Lord, alone.

And in the earth who might be thy, beside me, and is none.

My flesh and heart does fail and fail, but God does fail me never.

For of my heart God is the strength and caution forever.

For though they are not far from thee, forever perish shall.

[33 : 02] Then that thou haughtering from thee go, thou hast destroyed it all.

But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.

But in God thy trust, that of thy works I may be cleared abroad.

Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of you both now and forevermore. Amen.