

Focus on Jesus

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[0 : 00] Jesus is everything. And that's what I want to talk about this morning. I want to read from Hebrews chapter 1. Hebrews chapter 1, beginning with verse 1 to 13.

Long ago, God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. And now these last days, he has spoken to us through his son.

God promised everything to the son as an inheritance. And through the son, he created the universe. The son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God.

And he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.

This shows that the son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names. For God never said to any angel what he said to Jesus.

[1 : 15] You are my son. Today I've become your father. God also said, I will be his father and he will be my son. And when he brought his supreme son into the world, God said, let all of God's angels worship him.

Regarding the angels, he says, he sends his angels like the winds, his servants like flames of fire. But to the son, he says, your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.

You rule with a scepter of justice. You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.

He also says to the son in the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth and made the heavens with your hands. They will perish, but you remain forever.

They will wear out like old clothing. You fold them up like a cloak and discard them like old clothing. But you are always the same. You will live forever.

[2 : 18] And God never said to any of the angels, sit in the place of honor at my right hand until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet. Therefore, angels are only servants, spirits sent to care for people who will inherit salvation.

May God bless his word. And then let's sing, by faith we see the hand of God. Father, may we not only walk by faith, but may we live and think and pray by faith.

And may we listen by faith now for that specific word that you want to give each one of us. We thank you for our brothers and sisters, not only in this city, but around the world.

Whether they're gathered in the thousands or just by themselves. That you would anoint the word that would bless their lives and enable them to bless others.

And in everything to lift you up and magnify your name. And we thank you for this in Jesus' name. Amen. A very wise Christian leader used to remind me to keep the main thing the main thing.

[3 : 34] And I wonder if this is what Father God was trying to get across to Jesus' disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. As well as what the writer of Hebrews mentions in the scripture I just read.

From Matthew 17, it says that Jesus took Peter and the two brothers, James and John, and led them up to a high mountain alone. To be alone. As the men watched, Jesus' appearance was transformed so that his face shone like the sun.

And his clothes became as white as light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared and began talking with Jesus. Peter exclaimed, Lord, it's wonderful for us to be here.

If you want, I'll make three shelters as memorials. One for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But even as he spoke, a bright cloud overshadowed them.

And a voice from the cloud said, This is my dearly loved son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him.

[4 : 43] This is my dearly loved son, who brings me great joy. Listen to him. It's not about successful programs, magnificent buildings, a well-known ministry, or a multitude of theological

degrees.

The whole purpose of life is very simple and easily overlooked. It's Jesus, isn't it? And it's so easy, even as a minister, you get so busy in church, and I know I've been there at times.

You get so busy that you forget why you're there. And we do it in our Christian life, don't we? Life is about Jesus.

He's beginning and the end, the author and finisher of our faith, Alpha and Omega. He's the one that holds everything together by the word of his power. Peter was so excited, and we would have been as well, wouldn't we?

We would have probably wanted to get their autograph, you know, before they left. Here was his two heroes, Moses and Elijah, were transfigured with Jesus.

[5 : 52] And he didn't know what to do. He was in the presence of two of his biblical heroes and was overwhelmed. It's something easy to become awed by some anointed Christian speaker or minister and neglect the most amazing one of all who resides in us by his spirit.

I get a little anxious at times when I hear different Christians come up and say, oh, wow, they get so enamored with a Christian minister. And forget the one who, as we just sang, went to the cross. God set Peter straight. He says, it's my son. Focus on him. Father God wasn't putting Moses or Elijah down, even as he's not putting down ministers who are faithful to the word or faithful Christians, especially as they so faithfully served the Lord in their generations.

He just wanted to make it clear that there's a major difference between these men and his son.

They were there to keep the main thing, the main thing.

No doubt, this is why the writer of Hebrews begins the book with Jesus. And in those 14 short verses I read, the whole message of the kingdom of God is revealed. God initiated his desire for reconciliation with mankind through his prophets and now through his son.

[7 : 21] I noticed in a number of those hymns and songs that talked about creation. And you see that in Hebrews, it talks about that here was the beginning.

Jesus was there fully involved in creation, as John explains in his gospel. In the beginning, the word already existed. The word was with God and the word was God.

He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him and nothing was created except through him. The word gave life to everything that was created and his life brought light to everyone.

Then John writes in verses 14 and 18. So the word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory.

The glory of the father's one and only son. No one has ever seen God. But the unique one who is himself God is near to the father's heart.

[8 : 22] He has revealed God to us. The very God, Jesus cleansed us from our sins. And as John declares again in that first John or John chapter one.

He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

They are reborn, not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. Having accomplished his mission to save us, Jesus sat down at father God's right hand in glory.

He radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God. And he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command.

I encourage you to read that first chapter of Hebrews. Well, just get into the word of God. It's all good. But just to meditate on that first chapter of Hebrews talking about Jesus.

[9 : 32] Jesus. And just imagine this. The creator of the universe. The one whom God proudly declared, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

Loves you and me so much that he gladly left the glory of heaven to become a human being. Take upon himself our sin. And die that we might live.

It's amazing, isn't it? Just to think about. I know that some people look, I had some friends that, you know, that my wife's grandfather, who's died a few years back, he lived to 102.

So he was able to get a card from the queen. And there are people who are looking forward to that. Maybe their 60th wedding anniversary. Or a 100th birthday.

I don't think I'll be around for either one of those. And I'm sure the queen won't still be around, even if I am. But, you know, and what an honor.

[10:38] And a kind thing of the queen to acknowledge something special like that. But here the creator of the universe became a man that we might have life.

How can we ever have a greater honor or privilege than this Jesus that we love? Love loves us so much that he would step out of his throne, become a little baby, allow human parents to change him, change his nappy, feed him, raise him, till he became a man.

And then this amazing being, the most powerful and wonderful being in the universe, walking to the cross and taking your sins and my sins upon himself.

You know, scripture says that he became sin. And I, you know, I'm repulsed at times at some of my thoughts and things from the past.

And yet he took that. He became that. That I might be free. This is a joyous truth we have to wake up to each day.

[11:55] This is a good news we have to share with others. We are known and loved by the most powerful being in the universe. The one who holds it together by the word of his power.

Our names are written on the palm of his hand. And he has gone to prepare a place for us. To be with him forever. To prepare us for this place and help us keep the main thing, the main thing.

Paul and the writer of Hebrews gives us some wise counsel. And I want to read from Philippians chapter 2, verses 5 to 11. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names.

[13:02] That at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

But it wasn't just Jesus elevated to a place of honor, though, was it? Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 2, 6.

For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

We need to remember where we are, don't we? Sometimes we forget who we are, who we belong to, who paid the price for us.

That last song about our worth. We're unworthy, but we are eternally valuable to the most valuable being in the universe.

[14:03] He raised us there in that heavenly place for a purpose. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness towards us.

As shown in all he has done for us, we are united with Christ Jesus. When this is real and you and me, others notice. Just in case we don't, the writer of Hebrews gives a caution in chapter 2.

So we must listen very carefully to the truth we have heard, or we may drift away from it. For the message God delivered through angels has always stood firm, and every violation of the law and every act of disobedience was punished.

So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself, and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak.

The Bible makes clear just how much God loves us and desires the salvation of every man, woman, and child. This is why Jesus came to take upon himself our sins and judgment to reconcile us to God.

[15:19] It's important to remember, however, that God is also holy and will judge sin, not condone it. Society, our flesh, and Satan do everything they can to draw us away from the truth or distract us with compromise.

Too many have embraced society's values instead of God, thinking that they are still following Jesus. There are consequences to playing with fire.

We must guard ourselves and warn those who stray. Paul challenges in Colossians 3. Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven.

Sometimes I forget that. I get caught up in the demands of this world, and I forget where we're going. That we're on our way.

We're moving out from our house of 23 years in about a month from now. And it's a little challenging.

[16:27] I'm a little... I can feel my roots being up, you know, taken up after 33 years in Edinburgh. And I feel a little unsettled.

But I need to remember where my true roots are. They're in heaven. I think it was Stuart and when we were... Or was it Stuart?

One of our brothers in the prayer meeting that would just say we're passing through. We're aliens. And we are aliens, aren't we? I'm an alien here in Britain.

But we're all aliens. We're just passing through, aren't we? And we need to remember and set our sights on the realities of heaven.

Where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. For you died to this life and your real life is hidden with Christ in God.

[17:25] And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. Put on your new self. And be renewed as you learn to know your creator and become like him.

In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, American, Scots, English. It doesn't matter if you're circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, civilized, slave or free.

Christ is all that matters and he lives in all of us. Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace and always be thankful.

[18:37] Let the message about Christ and all its richness fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. In this wise and practical counsel, two important things stand out.

Set your sights on the realities of heaven. And let the message about Christ and all its richness fill your lives. Let's keep the main thing the main thing.

And the main thing, the main one is Jesus, isn't it? This is what it's all about. Jesus, the creator of the universe, loving us and preparing an amazing place for us in heaven.

And we're passing through this life. We need to remember that we who believe are already seated in heavenly places with him. May we keep the main thing, the main thing.

[19:50] Knowing, loving and following Jesus. Then sharing him and his great love and salvation with others. All life begins and ends and begins again with Jesus.

May we keep him close and enjoy him through it all. Let's pray. Lord, thank you.

That Jesus is the main thing, the main one. And that Father, forgive us for the times that we get distracted and get so worried or worked up about things in the world.

And take our eyes off Jesus. Help us to refocus. That our hearts would be filled with faith. Even as one of the last songs talked about.

That our hearts would be filled with faith. And grow even more in love with him. Lord, thank you. In Jesus' name.

[20:53] Amen. And let's finish with the last song. One of my favorites. Jesus shall take the highest honor. Amen.