
“Eyes on Jesus”

HEBREWS 12:2

JUNE 11, 2023

PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

Christians follow Jesus. It's what do. To follow Him, we gotta keep our eyes on Jesus. Check out this week's sermon on Hebrews 12:2.

INTRODUCTION

In case you couldn't tell, we start our Vacation Bible eXperience this evening with our family night at White Water Junction. It's not too late to make plans. We have about 100 more spots available, get your free tickets today! It's not just for families with kids in kids min. It's going to be a beautiful evening so get your tickets and come on!

I wanted to step away from Romans 6 today because our kids are going to be taught this week what it means to follow Jesus, to go all in for Him, and to keep our eyes on Him. I thought, what a shame if the kids get that message and take it to heart and they go home and their parents haven't. If our kids get the vision of every member a missionary – taking the gospel across the street and around the world, and we don't...that would be a shame. So, I want you to turn in your bibles to Hebrews 12:2. One verse this morning. One compelling verse.

HEBREWS 12:2

Hebrews 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The author had just described the heroes of the faith in chapter 11. He began verse 1 with, “Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses” – those who have gone before us and have been faithful even though they never got to see the object of their faith, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ – in light of their witness of faithfulness recorded in scripture and highlighted in chapter 11, “let us also lay aside every weight and sin and run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

In other words let us live our lives, or run our race, with as much faith as the heroes of faith. Let us, who have the benefit of knowing Jesus as our Lord and Savior, live as if Jesus is in fact our Lord and Savior; the very One those heroes of faith looked for but never saw.

Let our witness rise up to the clouds and be joined together with the witness of those long gone. Let us throw off whatever hinders us – sin and selfishness – whatever keeps us from running with endurance.

WE DON'T RUN AIMLESSLY

But we're not running aimlessly. In a road race there are signs that point the runners in the direction they should go to stay on the course. If you leave the course, most times you're disqualified. You forfeit the competition.

And in our race, what we call life, there are no signs that point us in the direction we must go, which is why the next thing the author says in **verse 2** is, **looking to Jesus**.

We are running this race of life aimlessly if our eyes are not on Jesus. Recently I met with a man who has some exciting business opportunities coming up and he and his wife want to make sure they are doing what the Lord wants them to do. I walked him through a couple things to consider, but first and foremost I encouraged him in His walk with Jesus. Unless we're connecting to the Lord daily, it's difficult to really know we're doing what He wants. I urged him to prioritize His time in prayer and reading the Word.

THIS IS HOW WE LOOK TO JESUS

This is how we keep our eyes on Jesus. We look to Him in His Word. We seek to know who He is, what He said, how the leaders of God's people, the kings and prophets of the Old Testament anticipated Him in their life and ministry. We seek to understand His priorities so that our priorities will align with His. We seek to love Him as He has loved us.

And we pray because our God is a personal, intimate, knowable God. He is close. In fact, the Holy Spirit indwells us and He *"intercedes on our behalf with groanings too deep for words."* Romans 8:26

We cannot run the race set before us without our eyes on Jesus. The author tells us to keep your eyes on Jesus, **the founder and perfecter of our faith**. Jesus is the **founder of our faith**. He is the foundation of our faith. Jesus is the initiator of our faith. And Jesus is the object of our faith. It is all about Jesus.

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS

We live for Jesus, not virtue. We live for Jesus, not morality. We live for Jesus, not benevolence. We live for Jesus, not Bible study. For Jesus, not church. He's the subject of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and He is the head of the Church. And Jesus certainly inspires virtue, morality, & benevolence. More than inspires, He commands these things.

But it is in obedience to Jesus, and specifically obedience because we love Jesus, that these find their rightful places in our lives. These things are not the end. Jesus is the end. Church, bible studies, virtue, good works, none of these are the end of man. According to the Westminster confession of faith, the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.

John Piper is famous for adapting that to "The chief end of man is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever." And we enjoy God, we glorify God not primarily by the works we do for Him, but through a personal relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus; a relationship from which we do all these things.

WE WERE SAVED FOR GOOD WORKS

When Paul described our salvation to the Ephesians, he said things like "we were dead in sin" and "made alive together with Christ." That we are "saved by grace through faith" and that this salvation in its entirety is a gift of God so that no one would boast. Jesus is the founder of our faith. What we do for Jesus, for God, amount to nothing to merit His salvation.

But before Paul transitioned away from salvation by grace through faith, he described the works we were saved for, in *Ephesians 2:10*, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Salvation is a gift from God, but it’s a gift that comes with a new purpose in life, a purpose in life that once again, we can only understand and achieve if our eyes are on Jesus.

Paul said in *Galatians 3:3*, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” It is foolish, to imagine that the life that honors Christ is to be lived by our own understanding, in our own strength, to our own ends. It is foolish to think that the works prepared beforehand for us can be achieved with our eyes fixed on anything BUT Jesus, not only initially at salvation, but the entire course of our life.

IT'S A JOURNEY

Jesus is the founder of our faith and Jesus is the **perfector of our faith**. We did not do anything in our own strength to begin in the faith and we do not do anything in our own strength to be perfected in the faith.

Notice Paul used the phrase in *Ephesians 2:10* “that we should walk in them.” In *Hebrews 12:1* we read that we’re running in a race. In *Matthew 4:19* Jesus called His disciples Peter and Andrew to “Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.” In *Luke 9:23* Jesus expanded the call to anyone who would come after Him to, “take up his cross daily and follow me.”

Over and over again this week our kids are going to be learning what it looks like to follow Jesus, not just know about Him. But to move. To act. To respond to His lead. To obey. The life of a Christian is one in which our faith is being perfected as we follow Jesus in obedience. How can we follow Jesus if our eyes are not on Him?

Adults, wouldn’t it be a joy if the kids who will be here all week learning about following Jesus on this journey of faith, who are being encouraged to keep their eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of their faith, would go home each day to parents who were committed to doing the same?

WE HAVE A VISION

At Wildwood Church we have a vision that is phrased “Every member a missionary – taking the Gospel across the street and around the world.” We believe that every single Christian is called to be an ambassador for Christ wherever they go. And that every Christian ought to have their eyes on Jesus asking Him where they ought to go.

We believe the Lord would have us equip and send out every member of our congregation to do ministry in their homes, their neighborhoods, workplaces and schools, restaurants and gyms, parks and playgrounds, locally, nationally, and globally. We believe the Lord would have us equip and send 50 of our own people out to long-term global missions in the next 24 years. And I am personally convicted that many of those who will go are currently in our nursery, pre-school, and kids and youth ministries. They are the ones who will hear this week that going all in for Jesus is not only good, but really the only way we ought to live.

Obviously we hope that our kids go further than we do in the faith. We want them to take the Gospel further and wider. We don’t want to be out-done in obedience, faithfulness, & service to Jesus, though. If we’re asking our children to get ready, to get set, and to move, shouldn’t we be setting the example? Yes, we want the next generation to go far in the faith, but imagine if we set the pace for them and lead by example!

IS ANYTHING TOO MUCH TO GIVE JESUS?

Consider this: is anything too much to give to Jesus? What is He not worth? Career? Is Jesus worth your career? If He invited you give it up and enter the ministry or mission field, would you do it? Safety? If Jesus called you to enter in an unsafe environment, would you go? Family? If Jesus asked you to leave your parents, your adult children, your siblings, your grandparents, cousins, nephews and nieces, would that be asking too much for His kingdom? Financial stability? If Jesus asked you to give 50% of your income to fund His kingdom work through the church, would you say no? What about 25%? How about 10%? What about your intellect? If Jesus asked you to put your mind to work innovating for His cause but you had to sacrifice your time, would you do it? Would you give what otherwise you could be paid handsomely for? What about simply agreeing that whatever circumstance He has you in for His glory is good and is also for your good? Would you be willing to concede that? Is there any cost He might ask you to pay that Jesus is not worthy of?

Be careful how you respond to those questions because although I have no idea what's going on in your heart right now, Jesus does. Unfortunately in life, and in the Kingdom, it's not the thought that really counts, but the follow through. It's not enough that Jesus had nice thoughts about going to the cross. Our salvation is available only because He followed through. And if our eyes are on Jesus, how can we not be struck by the fact that He is the One **who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God?**

JESUS HELD NOTHING BACK

Jesus achieved what He was sent to achieve. He did the will of Him to sent Him. He is our perfect model of obedience. Christians follow Jesus and Jesus led by example. We are to keep our eyes on Jesus and Jesus held nothing back from the Father. Paul said in Philippians 2, He *"...did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped."* *Philippians 2:6*

He held nothing back but emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant, becoming like us, suffering with us, and dying for us. And God exalted Him, God accepted His sacrifice on our behalf. God seated Him at His right hand in glory *"so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* *Philippians 2:11*

Jesus is God's own Son who died and rose again winning salvation, the forgiveness of sins for anyone who believes. This is the message we are being sent out into this lost and dark world to proclaim. This is what we are teaching our children this week that they should surrender their entire lives to proclaim. He is worthy of whatever price we must pay and whatever hardship we must endure.

The Gospel of Jesus has been worthy of absolute surrender for countless Christians the last 2000 years and it will always be worthy of absolute surrender of your life and the lives of your children and your grandchildren and theirs.

Part of what we do when we celebrate the Lord's Supper is reflect on our own hearts. Have we really come to believe the Gospel ourselves? Do we perceive that the bread represents the body of Christ broken for us? The juice represents His blood poured out?

It's one way we keep your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith and follow Him wherever He leads. We know every time we observe this ordinance, we are proclaiming to the world, and to ourselves, the death and burial and resurrection of King Jesus. This morning as you examine your own heart, consider what price Jesus paid for your redemption. And consider the price you

would otherwise pay for your sin. Then consider if there's a price you're unwilling to pay to follow Jesus. Then decide to go all in.