

# LOOKING unto JESUS



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## **A Word From Pastor Mark ...**

What a delight it is for me to make this series of messages available to you!

'Looking Unto Jesus – Fixing Our Eyes Upon Jesus' is a far more potent activity than I had ever imagined.

My life has been powerfully impacted by the truths discovered in the process of developing and delivering these messages. I trust that yours will also be as you read them and then as you perhaps 'view' them at our Church website –

**[www.sonlifecommunitychurch.com](http://www.sonlifecommunitychurch.com)**

Jesus is '*on the job*' ministering on behalf of His Own every single day. Our every-day lives will be profoundly affected once we begin to '*focus in*' on what those 'ministries' are.

I trust that your mind will be expanded and your heart invigorated and your will re-energized as you encounter and embrace the wonder of the twelve '*Present Day Ministries of Christ*' as discovered in God's Word and presented here in these lessons.

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**“LOOKING UNTO JESUS”**

*‘Introductory Message’*

**Intro ...** So **‘What Next?’** That’s the question that’s always raised whenever we finish a series of messages. One variation of that question that I particularly like to hear is ... ‘I Can’t Wait To See What’s Next?’

Usually when we have just concluded a series of messages, that’s the one I phrase myself ...

I, as the preacher/teacher, am as eager as any of you to have that question answered – sometimes though it’s not answered until the Friday before ‘Introduction Sunday’.

It usually takes that long because until the **Final Thot** is shared in the Final Message and the **Final Cell Lesson** developed for the final Cell Group Discussion, my mind and heart and energy are all focused and engaged in the series at hand. ‘Fueled By Faith’ had me completely captured.

I approach the study of the week the way that I trust most of you approach every Sunday’s message ...

*“I’m eager to see what he’s got to say this week.”*

There’s no time and no desire and no energy to consider the ‘Next Topic’ when we are knee deep in the current one.

But last week was the final week of that three month long *“Fueled By Faith”* series and today is, in fact, ‘Introduction Sunday’ ...

However, this time, the answer to the question on the screen before us **‘What Next?’** came to me earlier than this past Friday because it was suggested by a Scriptural Directive and a Sermon Statement formulated two weeks ago.

The **Scriptural Directive** is found in Hebrews 12:2 (KJV) and has given rise to the title of this *‘New Series of Messages’* which is ...

**“LOOKING UNTO JESUS”**

The **Sermon Statement** made two weeks ago was this ...

*“Fixing our eyes upon Jesus is not merely focusing upon an Historical Personage ... Fixing our eyes upon Jesus means embracing the fullness of the Easter Message and casting our gaze into the Heavenly Realms themselves where this very moment He sits at our Heavenly Father’s Right Hand. See Him there - Fix your eyes upon Him!”*

Since I made that statement, I have been caused to ask myself several **key questions** – questions that have stimulated this series of messages.

Here they are ...

**FOUR KEY SERIES-STIMULATING QUESTIONS ...**

1. To What **DEGREE** Do We View Jesus As An **HISTORICAL** Personage – that is, to what degree do we focus our **ATTENTION** upon His **EARTHLY** ministry?
2. What’s **WRONG** if that is **HOW** We **DO** View Him?
3. What Can We **KNOW** About His **CURRENT** Ministry?
4. How **MIGHT** A Greater Knowledge Of His Current Ministry **AFFECT** Us?

Let’s take them one by one ... Let’s walk through them the same way that I have walked through them ... Let’s see if you reach the same conclusions that I have reached ... Let’s see if, when we are done with this introductory message this morning, you want to hear more.

**Here we go ...**

**SERIES-STIMULATING QUESTION ONE ...**

To What **DEGREE** Do We View Jesus As An **HISTORICAL** Personage – that is, to what degree do we focus our **ATTENTION** upon His **EARTHLY** ministry?

**SERIES-STIMULATING ANSWER ONE ... ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY!**

- \* We reference His ministry in the **GOSPEL** Records
- \* We remind ourselves to '**WALK** In His **STEPS**' (1 Peter 2:21)
- \* We seek to have the '**MIND** of Christ' (Philippians 2:5)
- \* We 'remember him' in the Service of **COMMUNION** (1 Cor. 11:23-26)
  - \* We fantasize about a Trip to the Holy Land –  
'To **WALK** where Jesus walked'.
- \* We give time and energy to declaring and defending the **VALIDITY** of all his **EARTHLY** deeds: (His Miraculous Birth – His Sinless Life – His Many Miracles – His Resurrection – His Ascension)
- \* We **PICTURE** him in our minds with **IMAGES** from our childhood days.
  - \* Almost exclusively does our **KNOWLEDGE** of Jesus and our **VIEW** of Jesus come from the years he walked upon this earth –  
A walk that **ENDED** almost 2,000 ago.

**Indeed** we almost exclusively view Jesus as an Historical Personage – as one who walked this earth and, who as a result, drastically changed everything.

The Good News of the Gospel is directly tied to the fact that ...

*'God so loved the world that he gave His Only Begotten Son  
(sent him to earth) that whosoever believes in him  
should not perish but have everlasting life.'  
(John 3:16)*

Would you not agree that the fact of Christ's **Incarnation** – the Eternal Son of God taking on human flesh – is the most important fact **of** all Human History?

**So yes**, we focus on him almost exclusively as an historical personage – as the one who forever changed Human History as a result of him entering it.

Now that assessment of things – that recognition of the way we generally handle things – that acknowledgement of the seeming appropriateness of the way that we do in fact generally handle things concerning Jesus, leads directly to the consideration of ...

**SERIES-STIMULATING QUESTION TWO ...**

What's **WRONG** if that is **HOW** we **DO** view Him?

With so many denying him and even distorting his words and ministry actions, isn't it imperative that we give almost exclusive focus to 'Guarding the things that have been handed down to us' regarding His Time on Earth?

In light of the world we live in what would be wrong if we even took the adverb 'almost' out of that answer and simply said we do, in fact, view him exclusively as an Historical Personage – that his ministry on earth is all we think about or desire to fill our minds and hearts with?

A potent question is '**Series-Stimulating Question Two**'.  
It definitely caused me to open my Bible and my mind ...

And having done so, here are some reasons why I have concluded that it is wrong – dangerous even - to view Jesus exclusively as an historical personage and his earthly ministry as the sole or even primary focus of our Christian Walk.

Together they generate **SERIES-STIMULATING ANSWER TWO.**

It is wrong, dangerous even, to view Jesus primarily or exclusively as an historical personage because ...

\* It **LIMITS** us ...

We can become mere 'Keepers of **HISTORY**' and far too '**EARTH-Focused**'.

We can actually miss the main story – the current story – the ongoing story by focusing exclusively upon the things that have already taken place.

\* It **LIMITS** Him ...

We see him in his '**LOWERED State**' – His willingly '**LIMITED Condition**'  
We can wind up with an **INACCURATE** and thus **INADEQUATE** view of him.

Jesus on earth was a mere shell of His Eternal Self – His Divine Self.  
The various translations of Paul's statement to the Philippians regarding Christ's descent into this world declare that:

'He made himself nothing' (NIV)  
'He emptied Himself' (RSV and the ASV)  
'He stripped Himself of all privilege' (Phillips)

The Jesus who 'humbled himself and took upon himself the nature of a lowly servant' was a momentary (33 year) blip in the great big picture of things. Continuing to see him in that 'lowered, limited state' might well cause us to relate to him in less than appropriate ways.

**We might** think that we can debate with him – like Peter did. **We might** think that we can demand things of him – Like the mother of James and John did. **We might** think that we can accuse him – like both Mary and Martha did. **We might** think that can flippantly 'buddy up with him' – like any number of current preachers/teachers suggest we should.

All of these are dangerous thoughts ... for if HE were to come into this room right now it would be obvious to us all that 'He's not that guy anymore'!

Here now are two even more compelling reasons why such an 'earth -determined' view of Christ is harmful ...

\* It **IGNORES** clear Biblical Instruction  
(*"Set your minds on things above"* – Colossians 3:1)

It's hard to have our minds '**set**' in two directions at once ... If, with regard to our thinking about Jesus, our minds are primarily set 'earthward', then we cannot follow this clear Biblical Instruction. You see, there is a '**Jesus**' that those who walked on this earth with him knew nothing about.

It would be a great loss if we who walk the earth today know no more about that '**Jesus**' than they did. Such a loss is the result of us ignoring some clear Biblical Instruction.

\* It falls **SHORT** of proper Biblical Understanding  
(*"Your life is hidden with God in Christ"* – Colossians 3:2)

Here is a fundamental truth of the Christian Life – a truth that, sad to say, vast numbers of Born-Again Believers miss. Our life and the blessings that are part of that life are all spiritual and eternal – they and it (Paul says) are 'hidden' (secured and safe-guarded) in Christ'.

Those who '*set their minds on things above where Christ is*' – those who come to understand more fully who Christ is and what He is currently doing – are the ones who tap into the blessings of that Awesome, Eternal Life.



Those who don't so '*set their minds*' can easily get side-tracked into thinking that the '*Abundant Life*' that Jesus promised is provided in some form of earthly success or privilege or pleasure.

Their focus on the '*Earthly Jesus*' causes them to think in mere '*earthly terms*' about almost everything having to do with their Christian Life.

Preachers and Teachers who promote those '*earthly benefits*' reveal a lack of proper Biblical Understanding.

Well ... **Series-Stimulating Answer Two** certainly leads us right to ...

**SERIES-STIMULATING QUESTION THREE ...**

What Can We **KNOW** About His **CURRENT** Ministry?

Who is this '*other Jesus*' – this one that those who walked with the '*Earthly Jesus*' knew very little about.

Who is this '*Christ*' in heaven who has our '*Blessed Eternal Life*' all securely kept within Himself?

What has He been doing for the past 2,000 years and how should what he is doing impact our lives today?

If we '**set**' our minds, our hearts, our eyes upon Him, what will we see?

**So...** In response to **Series-Stimulating Question Three**, here is ...

**SERIES-STIMULATING ANSWER THREE...**

"What can we know about His Current Ministry?"

\* **MORE** than we might have imagined – Enough for a **TWELVE** week series.

This past week, I have felt like a miner heading underground seeking out some precious gems ... I believe that the search has been richly rewarded. There is enough for at least twelve weeks.

This morning let me just preview the '**Gems**' that we will seek to fashion into an absolutely dazzling display – **Gems of Truth** that will create the very view of the Heavenly Christ that He Himself desires us to see.

I'll hold each of them up just for a moment.

These next several months as we spend time '**Looking Unto Jesus**', we will see Him ...

In His **EXALTATION** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HIGH PRIEST** (and)

In His Ministry as our **SHEPHERD** and **OVERSEER** (and)

In His Ministry of **EVALUATION** (and)

In His Ministry of **INTERCESSION** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HEAVENLY HOST** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HEAVENLY DEFENSE ATTORNEY** (and)

In His Ministry of **CHURCH CONSTRUCTION** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HEAVENLY WEDDING PLANNER** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HEAVENLY VINDICATOR** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HEAVENLY LIBERATOR** (and)

In His Ministry as our **HEAVENLY GUARDIAN**

That's quite a collection of ***Biblical Gems***, wouldn't you agree?

Perhaps some of them are quite familiar to you and you will be eager to gaze upon them again. Perhaps others of them you have never seen before and you are eager to discover what they add to the over-all collection.

But regardless of what our present knowledge of Christ's Current Ministry might be, it's apparent that the Bible contains quite a bit of information.

The fact of that information in the Scripture leads logically to ...

**SERIES-STIMULATING QUESTION FOUR ...**

How **MIGHT** A Greater Knowledge Of His Current Ministry **AFFECT** Us?

Indeed what lies behind the **Biblical Directive** to us to ...

*'Fix your eyes upon Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before him (His Heavenly Ministry?) endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God.'*

What might be the outcome of us gaining accurate knowledge of Christ's Current Ministry – What might such knowledge (such a vision) do for us?

That's the final **Question** that has '**Stimulated**' this Series of Messages...

My hopes and aspirations are contained in this **final** 'Series Stimulating Answer'

**SERIES-STIMULATING ANSWER FOUR ...**

\* **SUCH** knowledge will **CAST** our gaze **OUTWARD** and **FORWARD** rather than merely **BACKWARD**.

Our Christian Life and Doctrine will rise above mere history – we will be profoundly aware of Christ's Involvement in current and future realities.

\* **SUCH** knowledge will **UNLEASH** never before felt **CONFIDENCE** in **CHRISTIAN LIVING**.

This is what I most surely hope for I have come to believe that the more accurately we view our Savior's Current Ministry in Heaven the more confidently we will carry out our Savior's Directives here on earth!

**Now** as we conclude this 'Introductory Message', let's both rejoice in and be motivated by this 'Final Thot' ...

**Final Thot ...**

Jesus '**PIONEERED**' our faith on **EARTH** (blazed the **TRAIL**);  
He '**PERFECTS**' our faith in **HEAVEN** (finishes the **TASK**).  
Let's **WATCH** Him **WORK!**

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR EXALTED LORD”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series)*

**Intro ...** Last Sunday we launched a brand new Sermon Series entitled:

**“LOOKING UNTO JESUS”.**

It grows directly out of the one we just completed: **“Fueled By Faith”**.

This new series has been inspired by the concluding message of that previous series which identified a ‘Clear and Compelling Focus Upon Jesus’ as a key component of a ‘Faith-Fueled Life’.

The **Key Scripture** of that message has become the **Key Scripture** for this entire series of messages and here it is ...

**OUR SERIES KEY SCRIPTURE ... Hebrews 12:2**

*“Let us **FIX** our **EYES** on Jesus, the pioneer and the perfecter of our **FAITH**, who for the joy that was set **BEFORE** him endured the cross, scorning its shame and **SAT DOWN** at the Right Hand of the **THRONE** of God.”*

This new series of messages has been stimulated as well by a statement made in that particular Easter Sunday message and here it is ...

*“Fixing our eyes upon Jesus is not merely focusing upon an Historical Personage ... Fixing our eyes upon Jesus means embracing the fullness of the Easter Message and casting our gaze into the Heavenly Realms themselves where this very moment He sits at our Heavenly Father's Right Hand. See Him there - Fix your eyes upon Him!”*

The obvious but unmentioned **question** that that verse raises is simply this:

*‘If we do indeed fix our eyes – focus our gaze – upon Jesus as he is right now in heaven, what will we see and most significantly how will what we see affect our lives here on this earth?’*

Last Sunday's introductory message, in partial answer to that question contained this statement which will become ...

### **OUR SERIES KEY CONVICTION ...**

The more **ACCURATELY** we view our Savior's Current **MINISTRY** in Heaven the more **CONFIDENTLY** we will carry out our Savior's **DIRECTIVES** here on earth!

Here then, as we commit ourselves to this confidence-stimulating investigation, is ...

### **Today's Key Concept**

Before we can truly **APPRECIATE** our Savior's **MINISTRY**  
We must clearly **APPREHEND** our Savior's **GLORY!**

*"Before we can truly appreciate our Savior's Ministry,  
We must apprehend (grasp, take firm hold of) our Savior's Glory!"*

**The truth is** ... Until we understand who it is that is working for us, we will not fully appreciate what is being done.

**The second truth is** ... Many believers neither know what is being done for them nor who it is that is doing the things that are being done!

**The third truth is** ... Many of us have a very limited view of the true nature of our Savior ... We know him almost exclusively in his limited, earthly condition. We might even think that that is the way that he would prefer to be known.

**The fourth truth is this** ... The only way to clear up our fuzzy and limited vision of Christ is to dig into God's Revelation and discover what it does in fact say.

That has been my delight this past week and that's what I would like to engage you in this morning.

This vision-sharpening exercise then has two phases – here is the first ...

### **PHASE ONE ... ENTERING THE MINE – DIGGING OUT THE GEMS!**

#### **GEM ONE: DISCOVERING CHRIST'S DESIRE ...**

*"Father, glorify me in Your Presence with the glory I had with you before the world began." (John 17:5)*

*Father, I want those you have given to me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world." (John 17:24)*

These are some incredible scriptures – They reveal the desire of our Savior's Heart ... They demonstrate his awareness that those who 'walked with him' during his earthly ministry were only being exposed to a most 'diminished view' of him.

He knew that they had no idea and really had no way of knowing the full scope of his divine nature – even when he stilled the storm of Galilee, they had to put it in human, earthly terms when they asked themselves:

*“What manner of man is this that  
even the wind and the waves obey him?”*  
(Mark 4:41 KJV)

### **Illustration:**

It would be like having Bill Gates (probably the richest man in the world) buy a modest house right next to you and befriend you. You have no idea who he is 'cause you never read the papers or follow celebrity news.

He seems to enjoy just being a '*normal guy*'. He watches your house and mows your lawn for you when you go on vacation. You play golf together and amazingly he always picks up the tab. You share meals together and he becomes your best friend.

And then the day comes when he sells his house and moves away. You miss him greatly and talk about your friend, Bill Gates, often. Finally someone who does read the papers and who does follow the '*celebrity news*' hears you talk and says:

***“Do you have any idea who he is?”***

Your mind is blown when you realize that your good friend and humble, helpful neighbor is, in fact, the '*richest man in the world*'.

The Disciples were like that ...

They had no idea and really had no way of knowing just who it was that they had been '*walking with*' ...

They had seen the Eternal Son of God in His most '*limited*' state ...

He was the most '*awesome man*' that they had ever encountered but

He knew they didn't know all that they could know about him ...

And so he prays:

*“Father, I want those you have given to me to be with me where  
I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because  
you loved me before the creation of the world.”*  
(John 17:24)

This then is our **First Great Discovery** – Our first great **Gem of Truth** – It is Jesus' **Desire** that we who claim Him as our Savior see Him as he really is!

As I dug a little deeper in the Mine of God's Word, I uncovered ...

## **GEM TWO: DISCOVERING A COUPLE OF PREVIEWS ...**

I discovered a couple of occasions when a fuller and truer view of the Glory of the Son of God **was** revealed .

We, who have the opportunity to dig gems out of both the mine tunnel called 'The Old Testament' and the one called 'The New Testament' have the privilege of seeing how they complement one another.

Here's an Old Testament Finding ...

*"In the year that King Uzziah died,  
I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted ...  
Above Him were seraphs ... and they were calling to one another:  
'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts- the whole earth is full of His Glory'."  
(Isaiah 6:1-7)*

This was the Divine Glory (of what we could call, the 'Pre-Incarnate Christ') seen by the eye and embraced by the mind and heart of the prophet Isaiah.

Here's a New Testament Finding ...

*"Jesus took Peter, James and John ... up a high mountain.  
There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became  
dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them."  
(Mark 9:2-3)*

Years later, Peter, who was one of the favored three on that mountain, wrote these words ...

*"We were eyewitnesses of His Majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory saying,  
'This is my Son whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'"  
(2 Peter 1:16 -17)*

**Majesty ... Glory ... Honor ...** these are the words Peter used to describe what he saw and heard that day. They were discovering that there was far more to their 'Friend' than they had ever imagined.

Obviously, Jesus wanted them to know Him more fully and He provided a most unique opportunity for them to do so!

Here now is the **Third** and Final **Gem** that has been brought up from the Mine for this lesson ...

### **GEM THREE: DISCOVERING THE FULLER STORY ...**

Check out these Scriptures ...

Here, first of all, is something the Apostle Paul wrote to the Believers in Philippi concerning their Risen Savior ...

*"God exalted Him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD ..."*  
(Philippians 2:9-11)

Here's what the Apostle John wrote in the Book of Revelation concerning what he saw in the vision the Lord gave him ...

*"Among the candlesticks was someone like the Son of Man ... His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters."*  
(Revelation 1:13-15)

Jesus obviously wants all of His Followers to operate with a clear and compelling vision of Him **as he is** which is even more than he was before He came to earth ...

He is now the 'Highly Exalted One' –  
He has now been declared to be officially 'LORD of all Created Beings' –  
He is now to be seen in all His 'Heavenly Splendor' –  
He is an Awesome Eternal Being!

Thus ends **Phase One** of this Lesson ...

**"Entering the Mine and Digging Out The Gems"**.

**Now it's time for ...**

**PHASE TWO ... ENTERING THE MIND - DETERMINING THE MEANING!**

Here in '**Phase Two**' I would have us consider ...

**Today's Key Question ...**

How should 'Seeing **JESUS** in His Exaltation' **AFFECT** Us?



Having entered my own mind this past week and determined what seem to me to be four valid 'affects' or 'outcomes' of these Scriptural Gems, I would ask you now to enter yours and see if you agree.

**First of all ...**

## **SEEING JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR, IN HIS STATE OF EXALTATION**

### **1. SHOULD INCREASE OUR SENSE OF DESPERATION ...**

Here was Isaiah's response to his vision of the Holy One (expressed in a generous paraphrase) ...

*"Woe is me!"*

That's what he actually said.

Here's how I would paraphrase some of the rest of what he said ...

*'I am outclassed – I am not Top Dog!'*

*'I require God's continual intervention in my life.'*

That is what happened to Isaiah, one of the Greatest of the Hebrew Prophets – that was the automatic, knee-jerk reaction of one who could easily see that he was '*fallen and flawed*' when he gazed upon the Holy One Himself.

He was impressed that he was in the presence of one who (can we say?) clearly '*Outclassed*' him.

Like the force of an Atomic Bomb would '*outclass*' protective walls of wood and stucco, so the Holiness of God overpowers man's best efforts to '*be good*' or '*look good*'.

Isaiah also knew, in the presence of the Holy One, that there was no way that he was '*top dog*' in the universe.

He knew that there were in him things that were absolutely opposite of the Glorious Holiness he was viewing.

He knew that unless the Holy One chose to intervene in some merciful way, he would be utterly consumed.

We should draw the same conclusions – In and of ourselves we don't hold a candle to Jesus Christ's Holiness and Majesty.

But that sense of **desperation**, though appropriate, is not at all where Christ would have us remain, for He is a merciful Savior.

Here's how Isaiah experienced that mercy ...

*"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand that he had taken from the altar. With it he touched my lips and said ...  
'Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for'."*

**Next week** we will see how Jesus Christ provides that merciful ministry for us.

**SOOOOO ...**

***A Sense of Desperation, though initially felt,  
is not intended to remain!***

**Secondly now ...**

**SEEING JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR, IN HIS STATE OF EXALTATION ...**

**2. SHOULD INCREASE OUR SENSE OF DISTINCTION ...**

In the passage that we have already read from Paul's letter to the Philippian Believers, Paul pointed out that ...

*'Someday every knee will bow.'*

Someday the entire world of men will see Christ as He truly is – they will be literally knocked to their knees by the splendor of His Glory. He will rule over them in the final demonstration of God's Mercy and Grace before the end comes.

However, in the end, Satan will find among them many who will rally around Him in opposition to the Risen, Glorified, Exalted Christ. They will show themselves to be no different than unbelievers today – unbowed before the Son of the Almighty Himself.

Here's the wonderful thing ...  
*'Our knees are bowed already!'*

We are wonderfully distinct from the unbelievers around us.  
We are tuned in and turned on!

We belong to that incredible 'company of faith witnesses' we identified several weeks ago.

Every time we gather for worship; every time we come to the Lord in prayer we should feel distinctively different from the way we once were and from the unbelieving world around us. We bow before Christ willingly and eagerly! It's a fantastic feeling.

A Sense of **Momentary Desperation** – A Sense of **Definite Distinction** ...

Here now is a **third thing** that should happen as a result of us 'Seeing Our Savior in His Exalted State' ...

**SEEING JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR, IN HIS STATE OF EXALTATION ...**

**3. SHOULD INCREASE OUR SENSE OF DEVOTION ...**

Here's what the Apostle John said happened to him as a result of 'Seeing his Savior' as he reported in Revelation Chapter One ...

"When I **SAW** him,  
I fell at His **FEET** as though **DEAD.**"  
(Revelation 1:17)

Notice John didn't say that he **was dead** and he didn't say that he (like Isaiah might have said) felt like he 'was in danger of **being made dead**' but he said he 'Fell at His feet **as though** (he was) dead'.

Here's the **meaning** my mind wraps around that statement.

I take that statement to mean ...

'Dead to **ANYTHING** that would **RIVAL** him.'

Compared to **His Magnificence** what in this world could 'captivate me' – 'enthral me' – 'tantalize me' ... Indeed what could in any way 'rival Him'? Could there be anything that would even possibly 'compete' with him for my allegiance – for my devotion?

I'm believing that there simply could not be any such thing ... not if we keep our eyes 'Fixed on Him' and 'See Him in His Glorious State of Exaltation'!

And now we come to our final **Mental Determination** of the morning – the final thing that ‘*Seeing Our Savior In His State of Exaltation*’ should do for us.

And knowing me, you should know that I would save what I consider to be the best for last and also knowing me you should not be surprised that I would put this one at the top of the list.

**Fourth** and **Finally** this morning,

**SEEING JESUS CHRIST, OUR SAVIOR, IN HIS STATE OF EXALTATION ...**

**4. SHOULD INCREASE OUR SENSE OF DELIGHT ...**

Here’s how our Savior (while he was still on the earth) further revealed His heart in that great prayer of his that we accessed earlier (John chapter 17).

That prayer is where we discovered his strong **desire** that those who are His Own would one day ‘*See Him in all His Glory*’ ...

Here now is the ultimate **reason** for that expressed desire (verse 13)...

“Father I say these things ... so that so they may  
have the full measure of my joy within them.”  
(John 17:13)

A sense of **desperation** (and the cleansing that follows) leads to a sense of clear **distinction** from this fallen, sin-filled world which in turn leads to a deepened sense of **devotion** to the Glorious One who has saved us which in turn ultimately culminates in an increased sense of ‘**DELIGHT**’.

It is Christ’s Intention that His People walk through life with a ‘**Smile on their Face**’ – a smile generated by their continual gaze upon Him, their Exalted Savior! .

Filled with His Joy, they gaze steadily upon Him, eagerly seeking to **understand** and **benefit** from His Heavenly Ministry for them.

And so we come to **today’s final thot** ...

**Final Thot ...**

**SEEING** Christ ‘**as He Is**’ readies us to **SERVE** Christ ‘**where we are**’!  
Like Isaiah we find ourselves saying ... “Here am I – **SEND** (use) me.”

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series – Hebrews 3-13)*

**Intro ...** “Looking Unto Jesus” is the title of this new series of messages that we began just two weeks ago. The image that we have chosen for this series pictures one who is ‘Looking’ exuberantly, expectantly, heavenward for that is where Jesus presently is. The Holy-Spirit inspired writer of the Book of Hebrews directs us to ...

*‘Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher (the pioneer and the perfecter) of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the Throne of God.’  
(Hebrews 12:2)*

Our intention throughout these weeks is to ‘See Jesus as He Is Now’ not just as He was when He walked upon the earth.

Last week we ‘Saw Him In His State of Exaltation’ ... highly exalted and given a Name that is above every name. We saw him as the Glorious One before whom someday all living beings will bow – the One who is presently and will be on that day recognized as Lord of All. What a privilege and delight is ours to willingly and eagerly ‘Bow Before Him Now’!

But there is so much more to ‘See’ ... So much more to understand about His Current Heavenly Ministry on our behalf.

Today, as we prepare to gather around the Lord’s Table in Communion, I would encourage you to ‘See Him Ministering As Your Great High Priest’ ...

Check out ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

*“Fix your **THOUGHTS** (your mind, your heart) on **JESUS**, the apostle (the sent one) and **HIGH PRIEST** whom we confess.”  
(Hebrews 3:1)*

This Scripture provides us with our very first look at the ‘Heavenly Ministry’ that the Lord Jesus is carrying out on behalf of all those who are His. It encourages us to ‘wrap our minds around’ His ‘High-Priestly Ministry’.

It would not be inaccurate to say that the entire book of Hebrews is written to highlight this ministry and we shall see in the coming weeks that other 'Heavenly Ministries of Christ' are outgrowths of this one – results of His Identity as our Great High Priest.

The essential elements of this vision are distributed throughout eleven chapters of this Great Epistle (chapters 3 thru 13).

The Epistle to the Hebrews was written specifically to Jewish Followers of Christ who were being encouraged to see Christ within the context of their Ancient Faith – a faith that was built around the marvelous sacrificial system God had provided for them to deal with sin – a system that was itself administered by a band of amazingly dedicated Priests of God.

The writer identifies Jesus as the Great High Priest of the New Version of that faith. Notice what the Holy Spirit has him say.

**Imagine** how these things would strike your ear if you were a Jewish Follower of Jesus whose family and friends were accusing you of forsaking your heritage. Let them strike your non-Jewish ear in a similarly wondrous way.

The Writer of this Epistle is telling you that your faith in Jesus Christ is in fact a continuation and culmination of that ancient faith – what the earthly priests foreshadowed, Jesus Christ has fully expressed. It's because of the realities shared in this Epistle that it is recorded in Acts chapter Six that ...

'A large number of priests became obedient to the faith'.

Let's just itemize the points that he makes regarding **Jesus, Your Great High Priest** - Let's simply allow the Scriptures to speak ...

**\* JESUS IS SUPERIOR TO ANY HIGH PRIEST WHO EVER LIVED**

(Hebrews 7:26; Hebrew 7:24)

*"Who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens."*

Jesus Christ is the substance of which the earthly priests were the shadow – they always needed to deal with their own sin first before they could minister on behalf of the people. He was perfectly sinless.

*“Because Jesus lives forever,  
He has a permanent priesthood”*

Every generation required its own body of priests – no one priest, not even the best and most righteous of them, could serve forever but Jesus can.

**\* JESUS HAS DONE WHAT NO PREVIOUS PRIEST COULD EVER DO**  
(Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 9:14)

*“He entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s Presence.”*  
(Hebrews 9:24)

The earthly High Priest could only enter the Most Holy Place of the earthly tabernacle and he could only do that once a year on the Great Day of Atonement. Jesus, our Great High Priest, has entered into the Presence of the Holy One in heaven and remains there continually to serve us.

\* \* \* \* \*

*“He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood,  
having obtained Eternal Redemption.”*  
(Hebrews 9:12)

The earthly High Priest brought the blood of innocent animal sacrifices into the Holy Place every single year to make atonement for sin. Jesus brought his own precious blood as the ‘*Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*’ and his one offering provides eternal redemption.

\* \* \* \* \*

*“How much more then, will the Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit  
offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts  
that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”*  
(Hebrews 9:14)

Jesus’ sacrifice has accomplished far more than the blood of bulls and goats could ever do ... not only has it provided an **eternal redemption**, it has provided an **internal renovation**. It changes us internally so that we can ‘*step away from acts that lead to death*’ and rather engage ourselves in things that ‘*serve the Living God*’.

**Indeed** Jesus Christ is superior to any earthly High Priest who ever lived and He has done what no earthly High Priest could ever do!

And here's the final thing ...

**\* JESUS IS STILL DOING IT!**

(Hebrews 8:1)

*"The point of what we are saying is this ... 'We do (in fact) have such a High Priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man'."*

And there is the point I would highlight today ... Jesus' High Priestly Ministry is a 'Present-Tense Ministry' ... He 'Serves in the Sanctuary' on your behalf.

And so, on this 'Firstfruits Sunday', in keeping with our Series Theme, we come to ...

**TODAY'S KEY DIRECTIVE – Part One ...**

See Jesus Christ, your **GREAT HIGH PRIEST**,  
**SERVING** in the Heavenly Sanctuary on your **BEHALF!**

**\* SEE HIM OFFERING HIS OWN SHED BLOOD BEFORE THE ALMIGHTY ...**

**\* SEE HIM SPRINKING HIS BLOOD UPON YOU –  
CLEANSING YOU NOT ONLY OUTWARDLY BUT INWARDLY AS WELL ...**

For here now is ...

**TODAY'S KEY** (and absolutely essential) **CONCEPT ...**

Christ's blood **CLEANSSES** far more than just our '**RECORD** in **HEAVEN**'.

Christ's blood **CLEANSSES** our **CONSCIENCE** here on **EARTH!**

**GUILT** is gone; **DESIRE** to **SIN** is gone.

We are '**DECLARED** Holy' and we are made capable of '**BEING** Holy'.

Understanding and embracing that **Key Concept** will ready us to enthusiastically embrace ...



**TODAY'S KEY DIRECTIVE – Part Two ...**

See Jesus Christ, your **GREAT HIGH PRIEST, SERVING** in the Heavenly Sanctuary on your **BEHALF!** See Him **CLEANSING** you of **SIN** both **POSITIONALLY** and **RELATIONALLY** in the great **ETERNAL NOW**. **FIX** your **EYES** upon **HIM!**

In 'earth time' these things happened nearly 2,000 years ago. In 'Heaven's Eternal Timelessness', they can be understood to be happening right now. Fasten your eyes upon Him as he ministers on your behalf.

**TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ...**

What will **HAPPEN** if we do?  
(Hebrews 10:21-25; Hebrews 13:15)

What will happen?

Our earthly life will be powerfully and permanently impacted!

**Let's allow** the Writer of this Great Epistle to the Hebrews to tell us how ...

*"... **since** we have a great priest over the house of God  
(and since we have the privilege of 'seeing' him work on our behalf [MAM]) ...*

***Let us** draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith,  
having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience  
and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

***Let us** hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

***Let us** consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.*

***Let us** not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but*

***Let us** encourage one another ..."* (and)

*"Through Jesus, therefore, **let us** continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise ..."*

**In other words ...**

**\* WE WILL COME INTO GOD'S PRESENCE CONFIDENTLY**

**\* WE WILL HOLD ON TO OUR HOPE FIRMLY**

**\* WE WILL SEEK TO SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TOWARD GODLINESS**

**\* WE WILL REGULARLY MEET FOR ENCOURAGEMENT**

**\* WE WILL IMMERSE OURSELVES IN WORSHIP**

And we will do these things because we will have come to realize that ...

**Final Thot ...** Our Great High Priest is concerned to do far more than simply **FORGIVE** our **PAST** – He desires to **CHANGE** our **PRESENT!**

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR SHEPHERD AND OVERSEER”**

(‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series)

**Intro** ... “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus” ... Could there possibly be any more profound or provocative directive in all the Scripture than that?

That's what the Writer of Hebrews has instructed us to do and that is what we as a congregation are endeavoring to do. But do we have a clear ‘Fix” on Jesus ... Do we know what and who it is that we should have our eyes ‘riveted’ upon?

You see it's our ‘Risen Lord’, our ‘Ascended to Heaven Lord’, our ‘One Day Coming Again Lord’, our ‘Present Day Ministering on our Behalf Lord’ that we are to zero ourselves in on.

And surprisingly the New Testament reveals quite a bit about ‘That Lord’ ... the one who has entered into the Heavenly Realms and taken His Place at the Right Hand of the Heavenly Father’s Throne.

Two weeks ago we ‘fixed our eyes’ upon Him in all His **Exalted Glory** ... ‘LORD of Lords’ is the only term that could possibly express what we saw.

Last Sunday we ‘fixed our eyes’ upon Him as our **Great High Priest** – entering the Heavenly Sanctuary and Offering His Precious Blood in payment for our sins. We saw him as well ‘Sprinkling’ that Sacred Blood upon us that we might be ‘Cleansed from Actions that lead to death’ and thus enabled to actually ‘Serve the Living God’. It's an awesome thing to realize that the Eternal Son of God ministers on our behalf in such a Destiny-Changing Way!

An additional ‘Focus’ for us is provided by the Apostle Peter in ...

**TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

“Now you have returned to  
The **SHEPHERD** and **OVERSEER** of your **SOULS**.”  
(1 Peter 2:25)

Now there is a thought-provoking, heart-stirring image – it arose from Christ's earthly ministry and He carried right into heaven with him.

What an awesome day it was during the earthly ministry of Jesus when he announced to the crowd of eager listeners who surrounded him what I'm calling ...

**TODAY'S KEY IDENTIFICATION ...**

*"I am the **GOOD SHEPHERD**"*  
(John 10:11)

Those words brought to his listeners' minds the beautiful imagery of the **23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm** – a Psalm of David that had long brought comfort and confidence to the Hebrew People – the '*Lord is my Shepherd*' psalm.

But on that awesome day, Jesus was not content to just make that great announcement – He was not content to simply identify himself as the Great God of Israel in whom the '*Shepherd King*' himself had put his hope and trust.

In that setting on that day, Jesus went on to declare some of the '*Shepherding Tasks*' that he as '*The Good Shepherd*' would perform.

*"I know my sheep and my sheep know me"* (vs. 14)  
Key Word: **Relationship**

*"I lay down my life for my sheep"* (vs. 15)  
Key Word: **Sacrifice**

*"I lay down my life only to take it up again"* (vs. 17)  
Key Word: **Resurrection**

*"I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen"* (vs. 16)  
Key Word: **Expansion**

*"There will be one flock and one shepherd"* (vs. 16)  
Key Word: **Assimilation**

*"I shall lose none of all (the Father) has given me"* (John 6:39)  
Key Word: **Preservation**

**Here's the point today ...**

Jesus' '*Shepherding Ministry*' – Jesus' '*Overseeing Ministry*' – did not cease when he returned to heaven.

Peter says that we as believers, though we had once gone astray, have ...

**“Returned to the Shepherd and Overseers of our souls”**

This is Peter’s Post-Resurrection, Post-Ascension assessment of Jesus Christ.

This is Peter speaking of The ONE who has been exalted to the Highest Place - The ONE who sits at the Right Hand of the Throne of the Almighty – The ONE who ministers as our Great High Priest ... That’s the ONE who continually functions as the ‘Shepherd and Overseer’ of all those who are His!

Now from that ‘Apostolic Assessment of Christ’s Current Ministry’ and from a careful examination of a handful of additional ‘Gems’ brought up from the Mine of God’s Word arises ...

**Today’s Key Concept ...**

Jesus personally ‘OVERSEES’ all that is taking place in our LIVES.  
Generally, the Holy Spirit GUIDES us from within but when necessary  
JESUS Himself will directly INTERVENE!

Far more of this ministry than I would have imagined is recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament. Consider the observations drawn from these clarifying Scriptural Gems ...

**GEM ONE:** Jesus CONFRONTS boldly

Consider these three accounts in the Scripture (involving three separate individuals) of Jesus Himself directly and boldly intervening in earthly situations.

\* Saul on the Damascus Road –“Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4-5)

*“I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.”*

Christ’s Great Apostle and Evangelist is being chosen for the task!

\* Peter on the Rooftop–“Don’t call ‘impure’ what God has made ‘clean’” (Acts 10:15)

The Door is being opened to the Gentiles – Old distinctions no longer apply.

Peter will be the one to lead the way and convince the Church.

\* John on Patmos – “When I saw Him as feel at his feet as through dead” (Rev.1:17)

The Great Judgment upon those who reject Christ is about to begin.

The ultimate judgment upon Satan Himself is declared.

Jesus reveals Himself to John in all of His Exalted Glory.

The Scripture is clear ...When necessary, Jesus will directly and boldly confront those upon whom His attention has fallen, those upon whom some part of the Plan of God for this earth depends.

In our day today there are reports of such activity in Muslim Lands – appearances to those who know nothing of the Love of a Savior. Here's the testimony of an Iranian Pastor that I recently came across ...

*"A factory manager recently showed up at our church. We didn't need to share the gospel with him. We didn't need to persuade him of anything, which was good, in a way, because many in our congregation are terrified to share their faith. But this man already believed because Jesus had spoken to him in a dream."*

Who knows what Jesus' plans for that man might be and for the many others like him that testify to just such encounters. The point is that **Jesus**, when he determines it to be necessary, will engage in a ministry of 'Bold Confrontation'.

Here's now a **Second Gem** brought up from the mine clarifying this on-going Shepherding, Overseeing Ministry of our Exalted Lord. Not only does He confront boldly but ...

### **GEM TWO:** Jesus **DIRECTS** precisely

In these moments when Jesus Himself steps back into the earthly picture, he does so for a purpose and he gives precise and usually pretty urgent directives. This foray into the mine added two more names to our list of 'confrontees'. The first new name is that of ...

\* **Ananias** (a believer in Damascus) ...

*"Go to Straight Street and ask for a man named 'Saul' ...  
This man is my chosen instrument"* (Acts 9:11 and 15)

A direct human touch was needed – a clear human voice was required – Ananias was chosen to provide both and was given precise directions concerning what to say and do.

\* **Paul** – *"Quick, leave Jerusalem immediately"* (Acts 22:17)

Years after the fact the Apostle Paul recounted the events of his early call and conversion to a crowd of hostile Jews in Jerusalem. He testified to the 'Blinding Confrontation' on the Damascus Road and then he pointed out this encounter when Jesus (in a dream) directed him to 'Leave Jerusalem immediately' – a very precise directive.

Here's another new name ...

\* **Philip** (one of the Seven Deacons) – “Go south to the Desert Road” (Acts 8:26)

Here in this passage this very precise directive is given to Philip by ‘an angel of the Lord’ – a direct intervention of the Lord.

\* **Peter** – “Get up – Dress yourself and follow me.” (Acts 12: 7-8)

This was also an occasion when the Lord sent ‘His Angel’ to deliver his message. Peter was in jail awaiting trial and perhaps death and the ‘Angel of the Lord’ struck him on the side and basically said ... ‘Get dressed, we are getting out of here.’

A direct, purposeful intervention of Peter’s Overseeing, Shepherding Lord.

\* **John** – “Write what you have seen” (Rev. 1:19)

This was John on the Island of Patmos – the day the Lord Jesus so boldly and gloriously confronted him. Let’s expand the statement a bit ...

*‘John, there is a purpose for this intervention in your life.  
I want you to write down and thus preserve for all time what you have seen.  
My people need to know these things.’*

So we see that when Jesus chooses to intervene in the lives of His Sheep ... He confronts boldly and he directs precisely ... There is no doubt that it is Him and there is no doubt about what He wants us to do ...

Here’s the **Third Scriptural Gem of Clarification** brought up from the mine ...

When the Lord Jesus, the Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls, intervenes in our lives He not only confronts us boldly (we know it’s Him) and He not only directs us precisely (we know what he desires) but additionally we see that ...

**GEM THREE:** Jesus **COMMUNICATES** convincingly

This Bold and Precise Word of the Lord accomplishes its purpose – It communicates convincingly and thus it results in obedience.

Check out the responses of those we have been watching ...

\* **Ananias** – “The Lord Jesus who appeared to you ... has sent me.” (Acts 9:17)

\* **Peter** – “God has shown me that I should call no man impure or unclean” (Acts 10:28)

\* **Paul** – “King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the Heavenly Vision.” (Acts 26:19)

When Jesus Christ directly and purposefully intervenes in the lives of those who are His, Obedience results ... His sheep hear His Voice and they follow. He Communicates His Purposes Convincingly!

**And now** there is thankfully this last **Gem of Clarifying Truth** ...

For in addition to Confronting us Boldly (we will know it's Him) and Directing us Precisely (we will know what He desires) and Communicating Convincingly (we will willingly follow) note finally this morning that ...

**GEM FOUR:** Jesus **MINISTERS** encouragingly

\* **Stood by Paul** – “Be of Good Courage, You will testify in Rome” (Acts 23:11)  
(Fear of the hostile crowd – might be stuck in a Jerusalem jail forever)

\* **Assured Paul** - ‘My power is made perfect in (your) weakness’ (2 Cor.12:9)  
(Agony over a debilitating condition)

Though the Word of God communicates God’s Eternal Truth and though the Spirit of God communicates God continual Presence, there are times when our Great Shepherd Himself will communicate encouragement to us in a way that only He can - reminding us ‘I am your strength – I am your provision’.

This is (in my opinion) the most wondrous of them all ... Hearing and Understanding and Following the Voice of our Shepherd will probably lead us into times of great challenge. How good to know that at such times, He himself will ‘Stand By Us’ and supernaturally sustain and strengthen us!

**Five Times** over the course of my ever-lengthening life, I believe that the Lord Jesus Himself has directly intervened in my life and left me with words of specific instruction – specific words that have altered my life. I’ve never ‘*formalized*’ them in quite this way ever before.

**The First:** ‘Mark: Your life belongs to me now’ (Elementary School)

**The Second:** ‘Mark ... You must go to Wheaton College.’ (High School)

**The Third:** ‘Mark ... This (Dallas Theological Seminary) is not the place.’ (College)

**The Fourth:** ‘Mark ... My grace will be sufficient for you.’ (First Pastorate)

**The Fifth:** ‘Mark ... I am releasing you from this responsibility.’ (Second Pastorate)

**Final Thot ...**

Take **HEART** in this ...

If Jesus **NEEDS** to directly **INTERVENE** in your life, He **WILL!**

He is your **OVERSEEING SHEPHERD**. Fix your **EYES** on Him.

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY INTERCESSOR”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(Hebrews 7:25 – Romans 8:34 – Revelation 3:8)*

**Intro** ... Several weeks ago we began this brand new series of messages entitled: **“Looking Unto Jesus”**.

Here is ...

**OUR SERIES KEY SCRIPTURE ... Hebrews 12:2**

“Let us **FIX** our **EYES** on Jesus, the pioneer and the perfecter of our **FAITH**, who for the joy that was set **BEFORE** him endured the cross, scorning its shame and **SAT DOWN** at the Right Hand of the **THRONE** of God.”

Here is ...

**OUR SERIES KEY CONVICTION ...**

The more **ACCURATELY** we view our Savior’s Current **MINISTRY** in Heaven the more **CONFIDENTLY** we will carry out our Savior’s **DIRECTIVES** here on earth!

So far we have ‘Seen Jesus’ ...

**‘In His State of Glorious Exaltation as Lord of Lord’**

(and)

**‘In His Role as Our Great High Priest’**

(and)

**‘In His Role as the Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls’**

Today we will see Jesus ...

**‘In His Role as Heavenly Intercessor’**

And as we do so we need to be prepared to ‘take off our shoes’ spiritually speaking for we (like Moses of old) are approaching Holy Ground.

Here are ...



### TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...

"He is able to **SAVE** completely those who **COME** to God through him **BECAUSE** he always lives to **INTERCEDE** for them."  
(Hebrews 7:25)

"Christ Jesus ... is at the **RIGHT HAND** of God  
and is ... **INTERCEDING** for us."  
(Romans 8:34)

"See I place before you an **OPEN DOOR** that no man can **SHUT.**"  
(Revelation 3:8)

These Scriptures declare that The Risen, Exalted Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest and the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls is in fact continually 'Interceding' for us.

Out of those Scriptures arises ...

### TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ONE ...

#### 1. WHAT IS **INTERCESSION** – What does the word **MEAN**?

#### **INTERCESSION** – 'entunkano'

Only used five times in the entire New Testament.

It **doesn't** mean '**to pray**' ... there are several Greek words that translate into our English language as '**Pray**' or '**Prayer**' or even '**Beseech**' or '**Plead**' that are used (as you can imagine) many, many times in the New Testament but this word is different from them. This word was chosen by the Holy Spirit only five times and every time the English word '**Intercession**' is used to translate it.

According to a standard **Greek Dictionary** the word has a variety of meanings ...

to 'encounter', to 'fall in with', to 'meet', to 'visit', to 'converse',  
to 'entreat', to 'accost' (even), and (of course) to 'intercede'.

**Webster's Dictionary** defines **Intercessor** as ...

'A mediator between two or more parties'.

And so we come up with the definition you have on your note sheet this morning ...

“To **ARRANGE** a **MEETING** – To **MEDIATE** – To **ENTREAT**”

If we seek to put it all together like the *Amplified Bible* does so wonderfully, we might end up with something like this ...

*“**Intercession** is the action whereby the Lord Jesus makes it possible for human beings to freely enter into the Presence of The Almighty without fear of refusal or reprisal.”*

This is an awesome thing ... This, throughout the bulk of man's existence, has been an impossible thing ... Fallen man, sinful man, rebellious man, self-centered man, condemned man has never had such a privilege.

Even a man that God himself declared to be the most righteous man on the face of the earth (Job) lamented the fact that he could not meet with God face to face and plead his case.

But now in these last days – in this last great chapter of God's dealing with man - there has emerged ONE who has in fact made such a 'meeting' possible.

The 'Intercession' has been done and is continually being done. The Scripture says that because Jesus 'always lives' He is able to **continually** provide the benefits of this **INTERCESSION MINISTRY**. The door to God's Holy Presence (thanks to Christ's continual intercession) is always open.

As I was reflecting upon and (I would have to say) rejoicing in that fact this week, I saw these words Jesus spoke in Revelation chapter three to the struggling saints in the Church in Philadelphia in an entirely new light.

Those words comprise our third **Key Scripture** of the morning. Here's what Jesus said to encourage them in their struggles ...

*“See I place before you an open door  
that no man can shut.”*

The Door into God's Glorious Presence has been opened by the Great Intercessor, the Exalted Lord Jesus Himself ... our Great High Priest, the Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls ... and He has taken it upon himself to **keep** it open!

That awesome image of the ever-opened door now leads to ...

**TODAY'S KEY QUESTION TWO ...**

**2. WHO QUALIFIES FOR CHRIST'S INTERCESSION – Who is it FOR?**

Who gets to walk through this always-opened door into the  
Gracious Goodness of the Almighty Himself?

The answer is right here in the text ...

*“He is able to **SAVE** completely those who **COME** to God through  
him **BECAUSE** he always lives to **INTERCEDE** for them.”*

Or as you have on your note sheet ...

*“All those who **COME** to God **THROUGH** Jesus.”*

There is nothing that we say this morning more important than this.  
This is the signature teaching of the Faith called '**Christian**' ...

Jesus Himself said ...

*“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life;  
No one comes to the Father except through me.”  
(John 14:6)*

That's what He declared during His Earthly Ministry and that's what He is now  
demonstrating in His Heavenly Ministry ...

All those who would seek to come to God by some other means will find  
the door to God's Presence tightly sealed!

That is the fundamental belief of the Christian Faith – that is the thing that  
makes the Christian Faith so offensive to so many.

The Christian Faith says ...

**'IT'S JESUS OR NOTHING!'**

Only through Jesus, who has been declared Lord of Lords - Only through Jesus,  
who ministers in the Heavenly Sanctuary as Great High Priest – Only through  
Jesus, who functions as the Great Shepherd and Overseer of Souls – Only  
through Jesus, the Wonderful Intercessor, can any formerly sinful man enter  
into the Blessed and Glorious and Life-Giving **Presence** of the Almighty God!

## **But through Jesus we can ...**

Through the Cleansing of our Sins by His Shed Blood which He continually offers on our behalf in the Heavenly Sanctuary, through our identification with Him as our Shepherd and Overseer and as a result of His awesomely effective and continual ministry as our Intercessor, we hear His Voice saying ...

**“Come right on in – He’s waiting for you.”**

And so, in light of all this that Jesus has done for us, the writer of the Book of Hebrews entreats ...

*“Let us then approach the Throne of Grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*  
(Hebrews 4:16)

That’s one of the verses that gives credence to the **Series Conviction** we shared at the beginning of this message ...

*“The more accurately we view our Savior’s Current Ministry in Heaven the more confidently we will carry out our Savior’s directives here on earth!”*

Jesus’ intercession does not anticipate a nervous, weak-kneed entrance into God’s Glorious Presence but rather a full-speed, confident dash through the door he has opened!

Now we might think that that great statement has answered the remaining question but let’s ask it anyway because our text of the day contains a most intriguing and thought-provoking phrase ...

### **TODAY’S KEY QUESTION THREE ...**

#### **3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST’S INTERCESSION – What does it ACCOMPLISH?**

Here again is our **text** of the day ...

*“He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him because he always lives to intercede for them.”*

**“COMPLETED SALVATION”** is the outcome of this intercessory ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The King James Version says 'saves to the uttermost' ...

Have you ever stopped to realize that 'Being Saved from Hell' is only the beginning of your salvation?

There is so much more included in the '**Salvation Package**'.

An entire Sermon Series could be devoted to it.  
Maybe that will be our next one.

Suffice it to say today that the fullness of our salvation is found at the Father's Throne.

Here's how Jesus put it in His **High Priestly Prayer** recorded in John 17 ...

"Now this is Eternal Life ...

(the full complete abundant life Jesus said he came to provide)

That they might know **YOU** the only true God  
and Jesus Christ whom **YOU** have sent."

**And** (might I add) ...

We come to know Him **best** 'face to face'.

**Final Thot ...**

Through His **CONTINUAL** intercession on our behalf,  
Jesus keeps the **DOOR** into God's Holy Presence  
continually **OPEN**.

See him **BECKONING** you in!

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY DEFENSE ATTORNEY”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(1 John 2:1)*

**Intro** ... What a weekend to investigate this aspect of our Lord’s current ministry in heaven! This is the weekend that we remember and honor those who have given their lives in the defense of our nation and our freedom.

Today we focus upon the ONE who is daily investing his life in the defense of our relationship with our Almighty Heavenly Father!

This is a relationship which is under continual attack and just like many Americans are unaware and/or too busy to note the extreme efforts that are made on their behalf to keep them safe and free so many Christians are unaware and/or too busy to note the extraordinary effort being made to keep the door to our Heavenly Father’s Presence open.

Introducing this amazing Heavenly Ministry of our Lord Jesus is ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

*“If anyone does **SIN**, we have one who **SPEAKS** to the Father in our defense (an **ADVOCATE**), Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”  
(1 John 2:1)*

Now that **Key Scripture** is part of a much larger passage. Here’s how that larger passage goes ...

*“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody **does sin**, we have one who speaks to the Father **in our defense** — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”  
(1 John 1:5-2:1)*

## TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...

Jesus' Ministry as our Heavenly **DEFENSE ATTORNEY** allows His Ministry of Intercession to **TAKE** place – it enables Him to keep that Door to Fellowship **WIDE OPEN**.

So maybe there's more involved in Christ's **Ministry of Intercession** than we saw last week ... Maybe there's more to it than immediately meets the eye ... Maybe keeping that Door to Fellowship open is not as easy as it might have appeared on the surface – as in '*once opened, always open*'.

'*Keeping that Door open*' to the Father's Welcoming Presence might entail from time to time some very specialized work on our Savior's part.

It seems like He might from time to time actually need to '*Defend our Right to enter through that door and enjoy that fellowship*'.

That would indeed be a very big and important task. Today I invite you to '*Watch Him At Work*'. Imagine yourself to be one of the '**accused**'.

**FOUR KEY ISSUES** need to be addressed ...

### 1. **WHY DO WE NEED A HEAVENLY DEFENSE ATTORNEY?**

\* **BECAUSE WE STILL OCCASIONALLY SIN** - Willful, Deliberate Disobedience

*"But if anybody **does** sin ..."*  
(1 John 2:1)

\* **BECAUSE SIN IS A SERIOUS MATTER** - Listen to these words ...

*"He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning (willfully, deliberately disobeying God) from the beginning. No-one who is born of God will **continue** to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot **go on** sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are ..."*(1 John 3:8 -10)

**Sin** creates a potential '*riff*' in fellowship.  
(*"What fellowship can light have with darkness?"*)

**Sin** provides a new challenge for God's Justice for **Sin** must be dealt with.

**Sin** compromises our testimony.

**\* BECAUSE SIN BRINGS ACCUSATION FROM THE ENEMY OF OUR SOULS**

*“The Accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.” (Revelation 12:10)*

**HERE ARE TWO POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING SATANIC ACCUSATIONS:**

**“THEY HAVE NO RIGHT TO COME INTO YOUR PRESENCE.”**

**“THEIR SIN DEMONSTRATES THAT THEY STILL BELONG TO ME.”**

Those are serious accusations indeed ...

Satan has his hand on that ‘open door’ even as he utters them!

Some of those accusations can trickle right on down into our own hearts!

Maybe even into the hearts of those who observe us.

Those ‘**Accusations**’ can be absolutely debilitating!

**2. WHAT IS OUR HEAVENLY DEFENSE ATTORNEY’S TASK?**

**\* TO LAY TO REST THE DEVIL’S ACCUSATIONS**

Let’s read that last Scripture again.

This time note the phrase that I skipped over the last time I read it ...

*“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are.”*

(1 John 3:8-10)

Did your catch the phrase that I left out in our previous reading?

**“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”**

Those potentially debilitating accusations must be addressed and laid to rest! Our Heavenly Defense Attorney has taken up the task!

**\* TO KEEP THE DOOR INTO THE FATHER’S PRESENCE OPEN**

Here’s an additional verse added to the one that we introduced in last week’s message on ‘Our Heavenly Intercessor’ ... Romans 8:33-34



Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen?  
It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died — more than that,  
who was raised to life — is at the right hand of God and is ... interceding for us.

And so we can say that the Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest,  
the Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls, intercedes for us in His Role  
as Our Great Heavenly Defense Attorney ...

He talks to the Father about our mess-ups and by means of His Work, He is able  
to 'Keep The Door Into God's Holy Grace-Filled Presence Open For Us'.

**So how does He do it?**

### **3. WHAT IS OUR HEAVENLY DEFENSE ATTORNEY'S ARGUMENT?**

Now TV cameras are not allowed into the Heavenly Courtroom any more than  
they are allowed in the Hallowed Halls of our United States Supreme Court, but  
(as a not completely uninformed and certainly most interested bystander) I believe that  
our Heavenly Defense Attorney's Presentation might go something like this ...

**'YOUR HONOR** (Father) ...

Let it be stipulated that deliberate, willful sin has been committed.

There is no denying or defending the facts of this case ...

The people in question have performed in a manner that is much more  
in keeping with the works of the Devil than with the works of God

**BUT** (and here begins His Defense Argument) ...

**\* WE KNOW THAT THEY ARE STILL FLAWED ...**

'In Our Own Word, that cannot be broken, we had the Apostle Paul,  
that great Apostle of ours, testify thusly to our Children in Rome ...

*"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature."*

(Romans 7:18a)

'But he went on to say' ...

*"I have the desire to do what is good (Father, we gave him that desire  
at his conversion, remember?), but (He admits) I cannot carry it out."*

(Romans 7:18b)

'He wound up concluding that' ...

*"When I want to do good, evil is right there present with me."*

(Romans 7:21)

'The bumper stickers that these children of ours sometimes put on their automobiles express absolutely accurately the reality of their condition' ...

**"THEY ARE NOT PERFECT"**

'They know it ... We know it ... And from time to time, their lives show it and then the Devil here tries to make an Eternal Case out of it.'

'But what He doesn't know is that though YOU are disappointed, YOU are not surprised by their failure and that YOU have already made rulings that provide for it.'

'For instance, Your Honor, I point out for the sake of this 'Arrogant Accuser of the Believers' that ...

**\* THEIR SIN HAS BEEN HANDLED ALREADY!**

'Remember how incredibly succinctly the Apostle Paul put it in his second letter to the Corinthians Believers?'

*"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him."  
(2 Corinthians 5:21)*

'**YOUR HONOR**, these sins that they have committed have already been paid for by the judgement you put on me that horrible day on Calvary and so I submit that ...

**\* THEIR RECORD IS CLEAN EVEN WHEN THEIR HEART IS NOT!**

'Here's what we had our insightful Apostle share so triumphantly with those Roman saints ...

*"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life has set me free from the Law of Sin and Death." (Romans 8:1)*

'It absolutely amazes me that the 'Accuser' here cannot keep that concept straight ... He acts as though their acceptance into YOUR **PRESENCE** is dependent upon them maintaining some standard of perfection.

I confidently submit that it is not and thus His accusations must be set aside.'

'But **YOUR HONOR** (Father), there's more and I present these additional items with the hope that the Accuser might cease and desist from any more attempts to win this case (though I know that he won't) ...

**Here's the Fourth Line of Argumentation** that I would submit before you ...  
You and I know this and he should know this for the fact is ...

**\* YOU HAVE SET YOUR LOVE UPON THEM ...**

Now I made sure that all my disciples knew that when I was personally with them on earth. Here's how my beloved disciple John recorded my testimony in his earthly record ...

*"The Father himself loves you because you have loved me  
and have believed that I came from God."  
(John 16:27)*

And then, Father, remember what I prayed to you the very night that I was betrayed?

*"I have given them the glory that you gave me,  
that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me.  
May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that  
you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."  
(John 17:22-23)*

'That's really at the heart of this whole defense ... All that YOU have done is because you love them deeply and completely ... That's why Our Own Holy Spirit inspired Paul to share this testimony with the believers in Rome ...'

*"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,  
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth,  
or anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from  
the Love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."  
(Romans 8:38-39)*

'And on that triumphant note I could 'rest my case' but there's something else and I mention it so that the 'Accuser' here is forced to admit that these he accuses (though they have fallen into deliberate sin) do in no way any longer belong to him.'

**\* THEY HAVE CONFESSED AND REPENTED ...**

'They like the Apostle Paul himself are well aware that there is still at the very core of their being a sin nature that is hostile to the things of God and that it challenges them and their new life every step of the way.

They recognize that there are times when they succumb to temptation and do deliberately sin – they intentionally do things that they know to be wrong. On the surface they appear to be no different than those who are, in fact, still the Devil's Own.

But here's the difference ...

Almost before the deed is done, our Holy Spirit chides them and their new nature cries out in anguish. They fall to their knees either literally or figuratively and they confess the sin that so repulses them and they resolve to turn from it.

This is what each of these before us today has done. They are YOUR children **not HIS** – They have come to YOUR Throne to find grace to help them in their time of need ...

We must not allow anything to hinder them; we must not ever turn them away for there is no accusation that can stand against them, and on that note ...

As their Heavenly Defense Attorney,

***I REST MY CASE!***

Can you see it?

Can you 'see' the Lord Jesus Christ, your Heavenly Defense Attorney, ministering on your behalf? Isn't it an awesome sight?

One final 'issue' remains ...

One whose answers should be obvious to us all.

**4. WHAT DOES OUR HEAVENLY DEFENSE ATTORNEY NEED FROM US?**

(So that he can make the strongest possible case and silence the accuser)

**\* HONEST CONFESSION ... \* SINCERE REPENTANCE ...**

**\* RENEWED COMMITMENT ...**

**Confession** means to 'Own Up To It' ... It means to call sinful behavior by its right name: "**SIN**" – To 'agree with God about it'.

**Repentance** means to 'Turn From It' ... To head in the opposite direction.

**Commitment** means to 'yield to Christ and His Call upon your life' – to make serving Him and pleasing Him your highest goal.

Doing these things puts everything that he needs in his hands – He walks into His Father's Presence representing one who has already returned to the fold.

Do not 'tie his hands' – Do not withhold from him the things he needs to completely counter the Devil's Accusations.

**Confess – Repent – Commit** and then come without fear of rebuke or reprisal into the Father's Presence!

**Final Thought ...** When your case is being heard before the **HIGH COURT** in Heaven itself, there is no better **DEFENSE ATTORNEY** than Jesus Christ.

**GIVE** Him all He **NEEDS** to Work on your **BEHALF**.

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY CONTRACTOR”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(Matthew 16:18)*

**Intro** ... To borrow and alter a famous phrase from one of our greatest American presidents, let me begin this message today by sharing with you what we might call an ‘Apple Valley Address’ ...

*‘Four weeks and 14 days ago, we launched a brand new series of messages entitled ‘Looking Unto Jesus’ ... drawn from the Scriptures and focused upon the Heavenly Ministry in which our Lord Jesus Christ is currently engaged.*

*Over these weeks and days, we have involved ourselves in a process of Great Discovery ... convincing ourselves that there is in fact much that our Blessed Risen and Exalted Savior is currently doing on our behalf.*

*We have involved ourselves as well in a process of Intentional Obedience, seeking in fact to continually ‘Fix our Eyes Upon Him’ and thus carry out the Biblical Expectation that rests upon us.*

*Today, here in this place, we continue that process and it remains to be seen what will emerge from a body of believers, in this day and age, that is accurately and obediently ‘Looking Unto Jesus’.*

Is that how you feel about our current endeavor as a congregation?  
Do you feel that you are involved in both a process of great discovery and a process of intentional obedience?

Are you eager to see just what happens in the midst of a body of believers who resolve to ...

*‘Fix their eyes on Jesus –  
The pioneer and the perfecter of their faith’?*

Well, let me tell you ... that's certainly how I feel about our current endeavor and that is indeed what I am eager to see play out in our midst!

So far we have seen Jesus as our Exalted Lord and we have seen him as our Great High Priest and as the Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls and as our Heavenly Intercessor and then just last week we saw him functioning as Our Heavenly Defense Attorney.

**Today**, as we continue in the process of discovery, we find Jesus performing yet another vital heavenly ministry – that of **Heavenly Contractor!**

It's suggested in ...

**TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

**"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH!"**

(Matthew 16:18)

**"I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH" ...**

If there ever was an ongoing, present tense ministry, this is it.

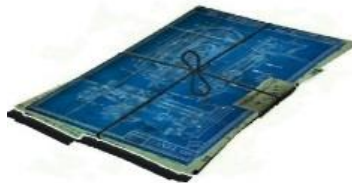
That purposeful, intentional commitment of Jesus Christ spoken in the presence of his earthly disciples gives rise to ...

**TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...**

The **BUILDING** of His **CHURCH** is one of the most important ministries that currently engages the **ATTENTION** and **ENERGY** of our Risen, Exalted Savior.

**Building His Church** – that's **what** He is doing but **how** is He doing it and **what** will be the final configuration of it?

Those questions drove me as it were into the Building Section of the Scriptural Archives and here's what I discovered – a set of blueprints for the Church of Jesus Christ!



There they were ...all thoughtfully drawn out by the Master Architect Himself and presently in the hands of our Great Heavenly Contractor.

With baited breath, I untied the bow and look a look inside.

This morning I invite you to take a brief look with me.

I would direct your attention to ...

**FOUR KEY SPECIFICATIONS** discovered in these **Working Drawings** ...

**#1 SPEC ... SIZE** (How many?)

There is no more relevant question than this – before construction can begin on any structure, we must know what **size** the structure is going to be. In this case, how many will this Church of Jesus Christ need to accommodate?

Here's the short answer ...

*'More Than Man Can **NUMBER**'*

Here's the Scripture from which that short answer arises ...

*"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count ... standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb."  
(Revelation 7:9)*

The Church of Jesus Christ, which has **size** been under construction since the beginning of time really is going to be **immense**.

**#2 SPEC ... SCOPE** (How broad?)

I'm sure we have all heard the jokes about the particular denominational member who, upon being admitted into heaven, is told to walk very quietly past a certain room because the people in that room (members of another denomination) *'Think that they are the only ones here'*.

But what do the plans say?

How broad is the scope of this immense Church of Jesus Christ?

Who all is included?

Here first of all is the short answer ...

*'From **EVERY** Tribe and Nation'*

Here are the Scriptures from which that short answer arises ...

*"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14)*

*" ... With your blood you have purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." (Revelation 5:9)*

### #3 SPEC ... SUBSTANCE (What type of materials?)

Now we are getting into the nitty-gritty ...

These are the specs that determine the quality of the Structure – whether it will last for centuries or for just a few years.

Today we ask and perhaps local building codes require that the materials we use for our earthly structures be 'non-toxic' ... be 'fire-retardant' ... be 'termite-repellant' ... be 'sun-resistant' and so forth ...

Here's the list of desired requirements for the materials that make up the Immense, World-Wide Church of Jesus Christ ...

Without a doubt these are materials of the Highest Possible Quality – stuff that will indeed stand the test of time.

We only have time this morning to identify them, though we could well spend an entire additional series of messages discussing them.

Here then are the qualities of the materials '*called out*' in the Plans for the Church of Jesus Christ. The materials for this construction are to be ...

#### **FLESH-Denying' ...**

*"Make no provision for the flesh"*  
(Romans 13:14)

There is no place for fleshly (independent, indulgent) behavior in the Church of Jesus Christ – the plans definitely point out that no '*provision*' should be made for it. Flesh-Denying Type Materials are essential.

**Secondly**, these building materials are to be ...

#### **WORLD-Defeating' ...**

*"Do not conformed any longer to the pattern of this world"*  
(Romans 12:2)

Nothing of a '*worldly nature*' is to be employed in the construction of Christ's immense world-wide Church.

The '**world**' with its 'person-centered, thing-obsessed, this present moment only' orientation severely compromises the strength and purpose of the construction. The materials used must be of the 'world-defeating' kind.



**Thirdly**, these building materials are to be ...

**‘DEVIL–Resisting’** ...

*“Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee from you”  
(James 4:7)*

Jesus, the great Shepherd and Overseers of our Souls, knows very well that the devil does not limit his warfare against us to the Ugly Accusations he makes before the Father’s Throne in Heaven. Jesus knows that the devil also ‘Attacks’ us on Earth.

He would completely destroy the Church of Jesus Christ if he could and so the materials called out in the plans for its construction must pass the test of being ‘Devil-Resisting’ ... They are the type that ‘stand firm’ and ‘hold their ground’ when the ‘Day of Evil’ comes.

So the materials that are called out for the construction of the Church of Jesus Christ are of the ‘flesh-denying, world-defeating, devil resisting’ kind. Powerful, potent, long-lasting materials indeed!

Now if we look at the architect’s notes in the corner of the materials page, we will discover the factor that enables these materials to function in this powerful, potent, long-lasting way.

There is a **fourth** quality about them that allows them to display the first three. They possess these ‘flesh-denying, world-defeating, devil resisting’ qualities because they are (and must be) ...

**‘SPIRIT-Enabled’** ...

*“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”  
(Galatians 5:25)*

The very **Spirit of God** ... sent by the Heavenly Father and the Son into the world is the most important material requirement of all for the construction of this Spectacular World-Wide Church of Jesus Christ.

He is the **ONE** who by His Powerful Presence infuses the materials that make up this Church with these ‘Flesh-Denying’ and ‘World-Defeating’ and ‘Devil –Resisting’ qualities. As they are ‘soaked’ in Him they become saturated with all the things the plans call for and they become a ...

*‘Flesh-Denying, World-Defeating. ‘Devil-Resisting, Spirit-Enabled*

**BODY of BELIEVERS!**

**So** ... our investigation of the Blueprints for the Church of Jesus Christ has so far revealed to us ...

The **SIZE** of Christ's Church

The **SCOPE** of Christ's Church (and)

The **SUBSTANCE** of Christ's Church

**One Final Specification** of Christ's Church remains to be discovered. From a construction standpoint it's the most important one.

Let's open the plans one more time.  
Consider with me ...

**#4 SPEC ... STRUCTURE** (How put together?)

This is where as we like to say '*The rubber meets the road*' or perhaps more importantly '*Where the hammer meets the nail*' or where the '*Architect's Ideas become the Contractor's Reality*'.

So how **does** it all get put together?

Once again we turn to the plans and we find them to be very specific.

The Construction of the Immense, World-Wide Church of Jesus Christ begins with the laying of ...

### **\* THE FOUNDATION**

**APOSTLES** and **PROPHETS** with Jesus Christ as the **CORNERSTONE**

Here's the larger passage from which that identification comes ...

*"Consequently you are ... built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone"*  
(Ephesians 2:19-20)

The Apostle Paul was pointing out to the Believers in Ephesus that the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ had already been solidly laid and set ...

They as newly born-again believers were being built upon that foundation.

Notice that that foundation is composed of the **Apostles** and the **Prophets**.

These are the ones who were chosen by Jesus personally to walk with him and to then carry on His Ministry after His Return to Heaven.

They were the ones who the Holy Spirit inspired to write the Word of God.

It would not be inappropriate or inaccurate to say that the Foundation of the Glorious Church of Jesus Christ is the Inerrant, Infallible Word of God.

Jesus Christ Himself as the Eternal Word of God is the Cornerstone that connects all the rest of God's Revelation together.

It cannot be stated too forcefully that the Foundation has been laid – the Work of the Prophet and Apostle is over – the Scripture has been completed!

Now upon that **Foundation** there arises ...

### **\* THE FRAMEWORK**

#### **EVANGELISTS and PASTOR/TEACHERS**

Here's how the Apostle Paul explained it ...

*“When he (Christ) ascended on high, he ... gave gifts to men.  
It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, and  
some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers ...”  
(Ephesians 4:8-11)*

The **Apostles** and **Prophets** are the **Foundation** and upon that foundation a structure begins to take shape as Jesus Himself provides for His Church those who will serve Him in useful 'Church-Building' ways.

#### **SOME WILL SERVE HIM AS EVANGELISTS ...**

These are those who specialize in the Gospel Message and who minister primarily among the unsaved.

These are those who feel the same urgency as the Apostle Paul who said:

*“Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel” (and)  
“It is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.”  
(1 Corinthians 9:16; Romans 1:16)*

**Billy Graham** has been the premier example in our day of a true **evangelist**.

**OTHERS WILL SERVE HIM AS PASTOR/TEACHERS ...**

These are those who seek to 'Declare the whole counsel of God'  
and who minister primarily among the saved.

They are ones who function as Christ's 'Under-shepherds' to His Flock and who seek to 'Watch over the souls of those under their care'.

As **Pastor/Teacher**, they seek to assist people in their journey toward Spiritual Maturity because as we see next ...

The Glorious Church of Jesus Christ would possess only a **Foundation** and a **Framework** if it were not for ...

**\* THE FURNISHINGS**

**GOD'S PREPARED PEOPLE**

*"To prepare God's People for works of service,  
so that the Body of Christ might be built up..."  
(Ephesians 4:12)*

Here is the **Glory** of the Church ...

Here is where the **True Ministry** of the Church of Jesus Christ resides ...

**God-Filled People doing God-Honoring Things!**

**Final Thot ...**

Jesus Christ is currently engaged in **CONSTRUCTING** the  
**#1 WONDER** of the **WORLD** – His Glorious **CHURCH**.

Take **NOTE** and **REJOICE** in His Work!

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY HOST”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(Luke 22:14-20; 31-34)*

**Intro ...** ‘Looking unto Jesus’ – what a profitable activity that is!  
It’s what we have been directing ourselves to do for the past seven weeks.

So far we have ‘**Seen Jesus**’ in ‘His Highly Exalted State in Heaven Itself’ (and) we have seen Him ministering on our behalf as ‘Our Great High Priest’ (and) as the ‘Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls’ (and) as ‘Our Intercessor’ opening the door into the Holy Father’s Presence (and) as ‘Our Heavenly Defense Attorney’ rebuffing all accusations from the Enemy of our Souls, the devil himself (and) as ‘The Heavenly Contractor’ building His Glorious Church.

This morning in preparation for a time of communion, I would urge you to ‘**See Him as your Heavenly Host**’ – the **ONE** who has actually prepared this meal and moment for you.

Today I would ask you to ‘*take this message very personally*’ as though you and I were the only one in the room ... I want today to be the most personal communion you will ever experience – I want you to see your Savior in a most ‘*one on one*’ way ... For today’s message, I have laid aside the plural pronouns ‘we’ and ‘our’ in favor of the singular ‘you’ and ‘your’ ...

Here are some **Key Scriptures** that urge me to urge you to ‘*Look Upon Jesus*’ in that particular way ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURES ...**

(Luke 22:15, 19, 32)

“I have **EAGERLY DESIRED** to eat this Passover with you...” (vs. 15)

“Do this in **REMEMBRANCE** of me” (vs. 19)

“I have **PRAYED** for you” (vs. 32)

Here's the larger passage from which those **Key Statements** come ...

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them,  
“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you,  
I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.”

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you.  
For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until  
the kingdom of God comes.”

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,  
“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,  
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.  
But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.  
And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”  
Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the cock crows today,  
you will deny three times that you know me.

### **TODAY'S KEY QUESTION ...**

When we ‘Look Upon Jesus as Our Heavenly Host’,  
**HOW** should we **SEE** Him?

### **FOUR IMAGES arise from Today's Scriptures ...**

When you ‘Look upon Jesus as Your Heavenly Host’, how should you see Him?

#### **1. SEE HIM ANTICIPATING YOUR FELLOWSHIP ...**

“I eagerly desire to eat with you” – vs.15

Here is where it all begins ... In the heart desire of Jesus Christ. If you miss this,  
then all you have is some cold doctrine and empty ritual. Jesus desires to  
participate in the very meal for which you are presently preparing yourself.

The Disciples did not know that this would be the ‘Last Supper’ they would  
ever share with Jesus in his earthly state but Jesus did ...

During the meal, I'm sure Jesus was recalling the 1000's of meals they had shared together. By the Sea of Galilee – In Capernaum – at Mary and Martha's home – out in the fields as they journeyed from place to place.

This meal would mean more to him than all the rest – In this meal He would share things never before shared - This meal would become a cornerstone event, a lasting memorial – an ongoing part of their Christian Experience.

This meal was as precious a thing to Him as it would become to them.

When you 'Look upon Jesus as Your Heavenly Host', how should you see Him?

## 2. SEE HIM ANTICIPATING YOUR NEEDS ...

\* You need to **REMEMBER** what He has **DONE**

*"In Remembrance of Me" – vs.19*

Forgetting what Christ has done on your behalf is perhaps the greatest mistake you could ever make. Forgetting what Christ has done on your behalf will cause you to lose perspective and even a sense of purpose in your life. The Almighty Eternal Son of God has willingly left the Glories of Heaven to descend into this fallen world to give His Life as a ransom for yours. He has paid for your sins and purchased your soul. You belong to Him - you are not your own.

To forget that fact – to lose track of that truth – in the midst of your life's struggles is to risk falling back into meaninglessness and despair.

Jesus knows how desperately you need ***to remember!***

\* You need to be **RESILIENT** in the face of **FAILURE**

*"Satan has asked to sift you as wheat" – vs. 31*

*'You will deny three times that you know me" – vs. 34*

*"When you have turned back"– vs.32*

Satan is no less desirous of 'sifting believers' today than he was in Peter's day. Satan desires to test you and demonstrate your weakness and thus find substance for his accusations against you. Satan is not behind or the cause of every one of your sins but (as Peter himself said) he does go about like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour – to disable and defeat.

Jesus knows that you will face such times – times that you will view as failures - and thus He also knows and anticipates your need of **resilience** – the ability to bounce back from and to rise above such moments.

Jesus anticipates your every need – your deepest needs – specifically your need to remember what He has done and your need to be resilient in the face of inevitable failure. See him ‘*Anticipating Your Times Of Need*’ – understand that He is neither surprised nor appalled by them.

But as you ‘*See Him Anticipating Your needs*’ be sure of this ...

There is no way that Jesus is merely a casual though highly informed bystander – He does not just come into your presence simply to watch you flounder.

Here now is *an additional image* that must capture your mind.

When you ‘*Look upon Jesus as Your Heavenly Host*’, how should you see Him?

### **3. SEE HIM ANTICIPATING HIS PROVISION ...**

Jesus knows just what is needed to address the needs that He has anticipated in your life. See him actively involved in the process of providing just what you need.

\* He provides Communion **ELEMENTS** to stir your **MEMORY**

“*This is my body given for you*” – vs.19

“*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*” – vs. 20

The Communion Meal is intended to ‘*Reactivate Your Memory*’ – to ‘*Refocus Your Attention*’ upon the most important thing that has ever been done on your behalf.

Communion is intended to raise you above things that have disappointed or distressed or possibly even defeated you and center you once again upon the fact that the Eternal Son of the Almighty God Himself has died for you and provided for you Eternal Life through His Blood ... blood that (as we have previously seen) He is continually offering on your behalf as your Great High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary.

Jesus has provided a way for you to ‘*Remember*’ that which you must ‘*Never Forget*’.

Now in addition to providing ‘*Communion Elements To Stir Your Memory*’ ...

\* He Provides **SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE** in your times of **TESTING**

“*I have prayed for you*” – vs. 32

“*I have prayed for you*” ...

Could there be anything more amazing than that?  
That the Son of God Himself prays for you?



Do you not think that Peter's mind went back to those words in the midst of his 'post-denial despair'?

*"Jesus has anticipated my failure and has prayed for me –  
prayed that I will 'turn back' and even be  
a source of strength for my brothers!"*

Who knows all that has been brought about over the years by the prayers of Christ? Who knows what has been accomplished to this point in your life?

Jesus would have you know that 'He prays for you' in His Role as your Heavenly Host in addition to all the other things that He does for you.

And now as we come to a close - one final image ...

When you 'Look upon Jesus as Your Heavenly Host', how should you see Him?

#### **4. SEE HIM ANTICIPATING THE ULTIMATE COMMUNION ...**

*"I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment  
in the Kingdom of God" – vs.16*

Could there possibly be a more prophetic statement ... There is coming a day when the Kingdom of God will be established upon this earth. There is coming a day when (as the Scripture says in Isaiah 11:9)

*"The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth  
the way the waters cover the sea."*

And on that day ... Jesus will stand at the head of the 'Ultimate Communion Table' with all those who have loved and longed for His Appearing – with all those who have anticipated that moment every time they themselves have experienced communion with him by faith over the course of their earthly life.

Allow your eyes to gaze forward – See Jesus your Exalted Savior as your Heavenly Host on **that** glorious day and then allow that vision to capture your heart and mind **this** day!

See Him as your Heavenly Host ...

Anticipating Fellowship with You **This** Day;

Anticipating Your Needs **This** Day;

Anticipating His Provision For Your Needs **This** Day

Anticipating (along with you) The Ultimate Communion On **That** Day!

**Final That ...** The LORD'S SUPPER is one of the most powerful CONNECTIONS we have with our RISEN SAVIOR. CONNECT YOURSELF!

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY EVALUATOR”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series*

*(2 Cor. 5: 9-10; Rev. 2-3)*

**Intro ...** “Looking Unto Jesus” – that’s the title of our current series of messages. Have you been doing it? Are you doing it right now?

**Are you able to envision Him** as:

*‘Your Exalted Lord Exercising Authority Over All Things’* and as

*‘Your Great High Priest Continually Offering His Own Shed Blood In The Heavenly Sanctuary On Your Behalf’* and as

*“The Shepherd and Overseer Of Your Soul Keeping Track Of Your Every Movement’* and as

*‘Your Heavenly Intercessor Keeping Open The Door Through Which You Enter The Father’s Presence’* and as

*“Your Heavenly Defense Attorney Squelching Every Accusation That The Devil Levels Against You’* and as

*‘Your Heavenly Contractor Fitting You Perfectly Into The Marvelous Church That He Is Building In This Fallen World’* and as

*‘Your Heavenly Host Inviting You To Commune With Him Regularly’?*

These are the seven **Current Ministries** of Jesus Christ that we have identified so far ... There are two yet to come.

The **Sixth Current Ministry of Christ** (a most sobering one) is identified in ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

*“We make it our goal to please him ...  
For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,  
that each one may receive what is due to him for the things done  
while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

*(2 Corinthians 5:9-10)*

From that passage of Scripture arises ...

**'Today's Key Life Reality'** and **'Today's Key Life Motivation'** and  
**'Today's Key Life Question'** ...

**TODAY'S KEY LIFE REALITY ...**

"We must all **APPEAR** before the **JUDGMENT SEAT** of Christ!"  
- He is the **ONE** who **EVALUATES** our **LIVES** –  
(2 Corinthians 5:10a)

**The FOCUS:** "**THINGS** done while in the **BODY** whether **GOOD** or **BAD**."  
(2 Corinthians 5:10c)

**The PURPOSE:** "That **EACH ONE** may **RECEIVE** what is **DUE**"  
(2 Corinthians 5:10b)

That '**Reality**' should give serious pause to those in this day and age who seem to discount the significance of our earthly life ... to those who might say such a thing as ...

*'My earthly performance doesn't matter' for Christ has completely provided and eternally secured my salvation.*

*God has already declared me to be 'sinless in His sight' and nothing can change that ruling so therefore it really doesn't matter how I live (how I perform) during my days in this fallen world.*

*I don't fret myself over whether or not I am achieving some particular level of righteous behavior.'*

There were those in Paul's day who said the same thing. To all of them, Paul identifies this **Key Life Reality** ...

You see, it does matter – It matters a lot.

Specifically, it matters to Jesus Christ whose name we bear – He not only notices what we do (after all, He **is** the Shepherd and Overseer of our Souls) but He evaluates the worth of what we do and He one day will announce His Evaluation – perhaps in front of the entire gathered community of believers.

Therefore it should matter to us – it should matter a lot. It certainly mattered to Paul.

It seems like a no-brainer at this point but Paul goes ahead and puts into print for those First Century Believers (and us) what we are calling ...

**TODAY'S KEY LIFE MOTIVATION ...**

*"We make it our **GOAL** to **PLEASE** Him"*  
(2 Corinthians 5:9)

*"We make it our goal" ... we 'strive mightily toward' ... **pleasing Him!***

Who wouldn't want a good evaluation from their Savior on that day?  
Who would not want His 'Official and Final Evaluation' of their earthly life to be an excellent one? Who indeed?

And so we come next to ...

**TODAY'S KEY LIFE QUESTION ...**

**WHAT** Is the **BASIS** for His **EVALUATION**?  
What is He **LOOKING FOR**?

Well, this (I'm pleased to report, since it is so important) is one ministry of our Risen Savior that we don't have to just guess about. And it's a good thing that we don't, for many could come up with stuff that is way off base.

It could be easy for us to invest our energies in activities that aren't actually on His Evaluation Sheet at all!

The Scripture provides us with an excellent opportunity (as it were) to 'See Jesus at work' in this Evaluation Task ...

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus instructed the Apostle John to send a 'Letter of Evaluation' to each of **Seven Churches** in the First Century Mediterranean World.

All seven of those letters have been preserved for us – they are found in chapters 2 and 3 of the Book. Each of the Churches was experiencing somewhat unique circumstances. Each of the Churches was addressed specifically - each evaluation report is somewhat extensive.

Each report shows Jesus' extensive knowledge of their situation and clearly communicates the elements of their behavior that matter most to him.

What I have sought to do for us this morning is to lift from each of these seven official evaluations what seems to me to be the '**Key Concerns**' of Christ – Seven things that truly **matter** to Him – things that obviously then should '**matter**' to us.

These things which identify seven '**areas of evaluation**' can form a kind of 'check-list' as we (like Paul) make it our goal to '**Please Him**'.

As you might imagine what we are going to do in the next few minutes could itself be the focus of an entire series of messages, a series that might carry the title:

*“Christ’s Letters To The Churches ...  
What do they mean for us today?”*

Today might serve as the '*Trailer*' for that '*Coming Attraction*'.

However, our task today is to see all these '*letters*' as part of and evidence for the on-going Ministry of Christ – '**Our Heavenly Evaluator**'.

## **SEVEN KEY AREAS OF EVALUATION ... “Letters to the Seven Churches”**

### **1. OUR DEVOTION ... (Ephesus) ... Revelation 2:1-7**

*“You have left your **FIRST LOVE**”*

*‘First Love’ is a beautiful thing.*

*‘First Love’ is a captivating and thus compelling thing.*

*‘First Love’ is an uncluttered and singularly focused thing.*

As odd as it may seem ...

*‘Service for Christ’ can sometimes actually  
get in the way of a ‘Relationship with Christ’.*

Jesus is continuing monitoring the level of our **devotion** – the level of our Heart-Felt Love for Him as our Risen and Exalted Savior. He is always looking for those like Mary who choose '*the better part*' and sit adoringly at His Feet.

## 2. **OUR FAITHFULNESS IN SUFFERING** ... (Smyrna) ... Revelation 2:8-11

“Do not be **AFRAID** of what you are about to **SUFFER**;  
Be **FAITHFUL** to the **POINT** of **DEATH** ...”

Suffering should not surprise us though it does surprise many who bear Christ's Name. Jesus told his disciples directly that as long as they were 'in the world' they would experience 'tribulation' – suffering of many kinds.

Jesus is not measuring how successfully we 'avoid suffering' ...

He is measuring how **faithful** to Him we remain in the midst of suffering – especially suffering that draws us near to or even into death.

## 3. **OUR MORAL PURITY** ... (Pergamum) ... Revelation 2:12-17

“You have people there who hold to the doctrine of Balaam  
who taught Balak to **ENTICE** the Israelites to **SIN** ...”

Here Jesus refers to an Old Testament Incident where a pagan king hired a well-known secular enchanter to 'Put a curse on the Hebrew People'.

Suffice it to say ... He wasn't able to do it.

God wouldn't allow 'words of cursing' to come out of his mouth - 'words of blessing' came out of his mouth instead.

However, though he could not 'curse them' he did figure out a way to 'corrupt them'.

He told the pagan king to send willing, sensual women among them to seduce them and then God would have to judge them.

Does sexual immorality matter to Christ? You better believe it!

If you are a believer, then your physical body belongs to Christ just as your soul does. To enter into an immoral sexual relationship is to bring shame to Christ's Name. It matters to Him a lot!

#### 4. **OUR DOCTRINAL PURITY** ... (Thyatira) ... Revelation 2:18-28

*“You tolerate that woman, Jezebel,  
who calls herself a **PROPHETESS**”*

Almost as soon as Christ's feet hit Heaven's Pavement after His Ascension and He took His Place at the Father's Right Hand, false teaching began to spring up in His Church.

He had provided that stable foundation of the Apostles and Prophets with Himself as the Chief Cornerstone and He had sent to the Churches Evangelists and Pastor/Teachers to prepare His People for works of service; but the devil has his counterfeits and quickly they arose.

False teaching is the bane of the True Church ...

Sometimes false teaching makes Christ look bad – Sometimes false teaching makes the True Church look bad – Sometimes false teaching just produces things that are bad.

Tolerating false teaching is not a sign of grace – it is a sign of surrender. It saddens Christ and it weakens His Church.

So, we see that Christ our Heavenly Evaluator is continually evaluating:

Our **Devotion** and Our **Faithfulness in Suffering** and  
Our **Moral Purity** and Our **Doctrinal Purity**

Incredibly important matters all ... **three to go**.

Jesus Christ our Heavenly Evaluator is also continually evaluating:

#### 5. **OUR OBEDIENCE** ... (Sardis) ... Revelation 3:1-6

*“I have not found your deeds **COMPLETE** – Wake up!  
Remember ... **OBEY** ... Repent.”*

I'm sure that in one way or another as we were growing up, we were all informed that 'Incomplete obedience is the same as disobedience'.

Our parents were never impressed by us saying ... “*But I did most of it*”.

Jesus isn't either ...

‘Wake up’ he says.

‘Get with the program – If I said it, I meant it.’

‘Just do it ... Obey my words.’

Repent of your ‘second-guessing’ and your ‘re-inventing’.

**Now** we come to the Letter to the Church at Philadelphia and though we are only reading words on the printed page, it's hard to miss the change in tone when Jesus dictates the letter to this special body of believers.

Here was a church He found worthy of His **Commendation** ...

In John's letter to this Church, we discover that Christ highly values ...

**6. OUR PATIENT ENDURANCE** ... (Philadelphia) ... Revelation 3:7-13

“You have kept my **COMMAND** to **ENDURE** patiently”

No more needs to be said ...

To endure patiently is the ultimate evidence of ‘True, God-Honoring Faith’-  
No complaining – No questioning – No doubting.

Patient enduring scores high with Our Heavenly Evaluator!

And now finally, by reading the seventh of the seven letters of evaluation, we discover that Jesus our Heavenly Evaluator, examines carefully ...

**7. OUR PASSION** ... (Laodicea) ... Revelation 3:14-18

“You are neither **HOT** nor **COLD**”

“You are **WRETCHED**, **PITIFUL**, **POOR**, **BLIND** and **NAKED**”

The only thing that can ‘exalt’ a believer, the only thing that can ‘make attractive’ a believer, the only thing that can ‘enrich’ a believer and ‘give true sight’ to a believer and beautifully ‘clothe’ a believer is a heart-felt, mind-captivating, soul-energizing ‘Love For God’ ...



Anything else compares spiritually speaking to 'The Emperor's New Clothes'.

Without true Love for God, all else we might do is but a sham ...  
meriting nothing in our Savior's eyes.

**Grantland Rice** the prosaic and prolific sportswriter of a by-gone generation expressed it pretty well when he wrote these words ...

*"For when the One Great Scorer comes to write against your name,  
He marks-not that you won or lost- but how you played the game."*

Jesus, our Great Heavenly Evaluator, is looking for qualities not just quantities;  
He is looking for substance not just surface things ...

He's looking for things like:

**DEVOTION** and **FAITHFULNESS** and **PURITY of MIND and HEART** and  
**OBEDIENCE** and **ENDURANCE** and **PASSION**.

These are key things on His Scorer's Card ...  
These are things that really matter to Him –  
These are the things that must really matter to us!

### **Final Thot ...**

There is no higher evaluation that our Savior can give than to simply say:

**"WELL – PLAYED!"**

He is **WATCHING** and **SCORING** every single **PLAY**.

Play so as to **WIN** His **COMMENDATION!**

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY WEDDING PLANNER”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(Revelation 19:7-8)*

**Intro** ... Could it be any more strategic, fortuitous, timely, even God-Ordained that I would have chosen weeks ago in this message on this Sunday to extend to you an invitation to focus your attention upon Jesus Christ as your ‘Heavenly Wedding Planner’?

Marriage is in the news – the Supreme Court of the United States has ruled 5-4 that gay and lesbian couples in this country have a ‘Constitutional Right to Marry’ if they so desire. This has been coming for some time. There have been many legal rulings that have led up to this momentous decision.

As I read through the official judgement yesterday, I was reminded of and once again struck with some of the things that I have shared with you over the past number of years regarding the difference between being an American and being a Christian – differences that we must constantly keep in mind if we want to function as proper Followers of Christ.

The decision as written by Justice Kennedy reflected the viewpoint of one who views life in a completely secular, though thoroughly American, way.

It reflects the viewpoint of one, who as a Supreme Court Justice, is committed to taking nothing else into account except the expectations and applications of the governing document known as the Constitution of the United States of America.

In handing down this ruling, 5-4 though it be, the United States Supreme Court has demonstrated once again the great **difference** between living under the *‘Authority of the United States Constitution’* and living under the *‘Authority of Jesus Christ’*.

They demonstrated this great difference in the decision they rendered in **1963** in the Madilyn Murray O’Hare case when they concluded that our constitution prohibits the imposing of public prayer upon students in our schools – students have a right to be free and protected from that kind of thing they said the constitution says.

We are not to act as though we are 'One Nation Under God' for constitutionally speaking, we are not, even though those very words are contained in the pledge of allegiance to our country's flag.

They demonstrated this great difference in the decision they rendered in **1973** in the Rowe verses Wade case when they concluded that all human life is not sacred and does not warrant protection. Parental choice takes precedence over such pre-natal protection they said the constitution says.

And now, just two days ago they revealed their decision that a behavior that God's Word decries and an institution that God's Word defines **is**, in the eyes of the Constitution of the United States of American, a matter of choice **and** a protected right.

This decision is nothing more than the logical extension of a clarification that began over 50 years ago. That clarification, that we have touched on before and that I mentioned a moment ago, is this ... There is a tremendous difference between being an American and being a Christian.

Allow me to spell a few of those differences out again ...

Let's call them ...

**TODAY'S INTRODUCTORY INSIGHTS ...**

**INSIGHT ONE ...**

The Highest Value enshrined in and protected by the United States Constitution and embraced by those who live exclusively under its authority is **LIBERTY**.

The Highest Value for those living under the authority of Jesus Christ is **SUBMISSION**.

Those are polar opposites!

**INSIGHT TWO ...**

**Submission** continually questions:  
“What does my **LORD** desire and require?”  
**Liberty** questions: “What do **I** desire and require?”  
These are also polar opposites!

**INSIGHT THREE ...**

An American need be only concerned with the question:  
“Is it **LEGAL** – Is it Constitutionally permissible?”  
A Follower of Jesus Christ must be concerned with the question:  
“Is it **BIBLICAL** – Is it Honoring to God?”

**So here's ...**

**TODAY'S BOTTOM LINE ...**

It's a lot tougher to be a Christian than it is to be an American!  
(And) the decision rendered two days ago makes it even  
tougher to be a Christian American.

**And now we come to ...**

**TODAY'S TWO KEY QUESTIONS ...**

What does this Supreme Court Decision **MEAN** for us as Followers of Christ  
(specifically as it relates to marriage) and what in the world does it mean  
for us to ‘See Jesus as our **HEAVENLY WEDDING PLANNER**’?

**Several things ...**

**THING ONE ...**

In the United States of America, there will be Two Distinctively Different  
**DEFINITIONS** of Marriage – One **SECULAR** and one **SACRED**.

To some degree that has always been the case.

The **Secular** will be defined by the continually evolving societal  
standards and the ever-adapting laws of the land.

The **Sacred** will remain defined by the unchanging Laws of Christ  
and hopefully fully reclaimed by the Followers of Christ.

## **Implications and Observations ...**

There may be coming a day when I will no longer feel free to 'act as an agent of the State of California', and perform 'legal' weddings and sign 'legal' wedding documents.

It may be that we as a church and Christians in general will plan and participate in 'Wedding Recognition Services' for those who have already obtained a 'proper' legal (secular) wedding certificate.

It may be that if I continue to define myself (for marriage purposes only) as such an 'agent of the State of California' that the state may feel that I must be available as their 'agent' to 'officiate' at any wedding service that the State deems to be acceptable.

It perhaps has come to the place where any follower of Christ, let alone a pastor in Christ's Church, should not in any way be officially associated with a Government that has so turned its back on Biblical Standards and Principles. Time and the Spirit's Leading will tell.

It will indeed be to the Honor of Christ, if this increasingly recognizable divide between the Sacred and the Secular with regard to marriage serves to awaken the entire Church of Jesus Christ to the view of marriage that Jesus Himself espoused.

*"A Sexually Pure – Life Long Commitment  
Between a Godly Man and a Godly Woman  
Broken only by marital unfaithfulness or death."*

That has not been the practice of the American Church or the policy of our American Courts for some time. Marriage was on the rocks in this country long before the Supreme Court decided that gay and lesbian people have a right to enter into it.

The sad truth is that many professing Christians have just as 'secular' a view of marriage as the unbelievers around them do. That's why so many such professing believers are celebrating this Supreme Court Decision right along with all those who are directly benefiting from it. That's indeed a shame.

### **THING TWO ...**

The **ENEMIES** of Christ and the enemies of our country will find yet another reason to consider the United States to be the 'Great **SATAN**'. Christ's Name will suffer because of America's identification as a **CHRISTIAN** Nation.

### **Implications and Observations ...**

It's a most foolish and potentially damaging thing to 'give ammunition to your enemy'. That's what this Supreme Court Decision has done. This decision has given all the Jihadists of the world a direct path to what they will consider to be the 'moral high ground' ...

They claim the same Old Testament Scriptures that we do – They claim the same Old Testament Morality that we do ... They now, however, will have one more reason to claim that they are living it while we are not.

On this issue, if only on this issue, they have a point and it's a point that they will drive all the way home.

All around the world those who profess the name of Christ will be linked to this Supreme Court Decision by the enemies of Christ. It will make their lives harder since they will be linked to us who will increasingly be known as 'Those American Degenerates'.

Those are two pretty sobering outcomes of this 'tragic but constitutionally permissible decision of our Supreme Court'.

Here are two more 'things' (hopefully encouraging things) that occur to me as I continue to ponder the situation in light of God's Unbreakable Word ...

### **THING THREE ...**

In the Church of Jesus Christ, there might well be a renewed understanding of the **HOPE** to which we are called – a **HOPE** that is wrapped up in a **MARIAGE ANALOGY** - an analogy that communicates **IDENTITY** and **INTIMACY**.

Our Hope as believers – our Relationship with the Almighty - is couched in 'Marriage Terminology' ...

Perhaps a rediscovery of that Biblical Terminology might draw attention back to where it should have been all along and stimulate once again a Biblically-Based Reality that should have been being practiced all along.

**Consider** as I read ...

**TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURES ...**

*"As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,  
so will your God rejoice over you."* Isaiah 62:5

\* \* \* \* \*

*"I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me  
and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown."* Jeremiah 2:2

\* \* \* \* \*

*"This is a profound mystery — but I am talking about Christ and the church."  
Ephesians 5:32-33*

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.  
(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)"* Revelation 19:7-8

\* \* \* \* \*

*"One of the angels who had the seven bowls full of the last seven plagues  
came to me and said ... 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.'"*

*And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and  
showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.*

*It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel,  
like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with  
twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve  
tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on  
the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations,  
and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."*

Revelation 21:9-14

## **Implications and Observations ...**

That's the way that Jesus Christ pictures His Completed Glorified Church – like a brilliant, brand new Jerusalem constructed out of all those 'Living Stones' we speak of each Sunday Morning.

And he refers to that awesome, glorious, unified body of people as '**His Bride**' ... a term that would have no real significance were it not for our human (earthly) experience.

**Christian Marriage** is intended to picture and to some degree pre-figure the eternal relationship between Jesus Christ Himself and His Church.

It would be a great thing if, as a result of this secular re-definition of marriage, all true Followers of Jesus Christ would recapture and re-affirm the sacred significance of their own earthly marriages.

**May it be so!**

### **THING FOUR ...**

Jesus is more than **CAPABLE** of keeping things straight.  
He knows who are His and He is anticipating the day when  
His **BRIDE** will be gathered into the Great **WEDDING FEAST**  
in the Father's **BANQUET** Hall.

He is preparing the **WEDDING GARMENTS** as His Spirit guides  
His People each and every day into paths of **RIGHTEOUSNESS**.

He is **SEEKING** the final members of this glorious company  
as He extends His **SAVING CALL** to those who still are **LOST** in **SIN**.

Here are some of the **final words** Jesus spoke to His Church ...

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!"  
Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes,  
let him take the free gift of the water of life.  
(Revelation 22:17)



## **Implications and Observations ...**

Now that is what is really going on in the heavens this very moment.

The Lord Jesus Himself, as our Heavenly Wedding Planner, is preparing for the Day when His Church – His Glorious Bride – will be assembled in the presence of all the Heavenly Host and will be officially (and no doubt formally) introduced to His Heavenly Father.

The most spectacular wedding garments will be needed and those are being prepared right now by His Holy Spirit – the Masterful Tailor himself.

Every good and righteous action performed by a Follower of Christ in this world is woven into the garment that that believer will wear.

Marriage proposals are still being extended – the Bride is still being completed – the Spirit on earth and the existing Bride on earth share in the process whereby the Lord Jesus offers Himself to all those who are still lost in sin.

**'Come'** the Spirit says (on the Savior's behalf) ...

**'Come'** the believer says (on His Lord's behalf) ...

A **proposal** from the Bridegroom is continually being offered ...

*'Come and join the Bride of Christ' ...*

*'Come and join the great company of those who are preparing themselves to be a 'Glorious Bride'.*

### ***Final Thot ...***

Jesus Christ is our **HEAVENLY WEDDING PLANNER!**  
See Him as such and busy yourself in **MAKING** yourself **READY!**

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY LIBERATOR”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series*

(John 8:36; Galatians 5:1)

**Intro ...** *‘Looking Unto Jesus’* – that’s the title of our current series of messages. *“Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus”* – that the Scriptural Directive that has stimulated it.

Firstfruits Sunday with its focus upon the Lord’s Supper provides an excellent opportunity for us to obey that specific directive.

Last month on *‘Firstfruits Sunday’*, I encouraged you to *‘See the Lord Jesus as your Heavenly Host’* – the one who extends to you an invitation to (as it were) *‘Come and Dine’*.

Today on this *‘Firstfruits Sunday’*, taking place on this Holiday Weekend celebrating the birth of our Nation, I encourage you to see Him as *‘Your Heavenly Liberator’* – the one who truly and eternally and continually provides *‘Life and Liberty’* for all who are His.

Here are ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURES ...**

“So if the **SON** sets you **FREE**, you will be **FREE** indeed!”

(John 8:36)

“It is for **FREEDOM** that Christ has set us **FREE**.”

(Galatians 5:1a)

Those are powerful, provocative and potentially puzzling Scriptures. They generate ...

**TODAY’S KEY QUESTIONS ...**

Set Free **FROM** What? (and)

Set Free **FOR** What?

In Jesus' day those words he spoke were challenged immediately if somewhat ignorantly by those who heard them ...

John reports in this very Gospel Account that these words were spoken to 'Jews who had believed him' that is, who had 'put their faith in him' - believing Jews to whom Jesus had previously said (John 8:32) ...

*"You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free."*

The truth is that though they 'put their faith in him' they were not able to wrap their minds around what he said.

And so they questioned him saying ...

*"We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"* (John 8:33)

What a pompously ignorant though politically correct, thing to say ...

One of the largest pieces of their national history as 'Abraham's Descendants' was their dramatic Exodus from Egypt and the Slavery they had experienced for years under Pharaoh's Iron Hand.

And even if they were ignorant of their history (like so many in any generation are), they certainly could not deny their current reality – they were living every day under the Iron Fist of Rome.

I'm surprised Jesus didn't just say (with undisguised amazement and maybe even a degree of irritation) ...

*"You have got to be kidding!"*

The People in the Galatian Church were doing the same thing – they thought that they were actually enjoying the 'freedom' that Christ had provided for them when Paul could see that they were heading right back into bondage.

Isn't it amazing how people can re-invent history and even re-define their current circumstances to their own ends? Isn't it amazing how blind people can be to the things that bind them – how ignorant we at times can be to what true 'Freedom in Christ' is all about?

That's our task today – to open our eyes, if necessary and to seek to wrap our minds and hearts around 'Jesus Christ, Our Heavenly Liberator'.

Here again now are those **Two Key Questions** that define our task:

What is it we are 'Set Free' **FROM** and  
What is it that we are 'Set Free' **FOR**?

**Here are Five Key Answers ...**

1. We Have Been Set Free **FROM** the **FEAR** of God's **CONDEMNATION**

*"I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. I will show you **whom** you should fear: Fear **Him** who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into **hell**.  
(Luke 12:4-5)*

*"Therefore, there is **now** no condemnation for those who are **in** Christ Jesus because through Christ the law of the Spirit of Life set me **free** from the law of Sin and Death..." (Romans 8:1)*

**The Truth is ...** There is ONE who has the power and authority and the responsibility to cast (condemn) some human beings to Hell – The Scripture says that 'All men have sinned' and that 'the wages of sin is death' and that 'It is appointed unto men once to die and after that to face judgment'.

Now that is a scary set of propositions for the truth is all human beings are born as 'condemned members' of Adam's Fallen Race destined for Hell!

It was a turning point night in my life when as a 9 year old boy I heard in a compelling way that Jesus Christ had provided for me an opportunity to be 'set free' from the Fear of Condemnation and I put my life under His Protection from such a calamity.

Set free from the fear of Condemnation – until we are truly experiencing that 'aspect' of freedom we are not ready to experience any of the others.

So I ask this morning – Have you put your life in Christ's 'Protective Custody'? Have you been set free – completely free – from the Fear of God's Condemnation?

Now it should follow, once we have truly been set free from the Fear of God's Condemnation and we know that we have been granted eternal life, that we realize next that ...

## 2. We Have Been Set Free **FROM** the **FEAR** of **DEATH**

*"He (Jesus) shared in their humanity so that by his death, he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil – and **free** those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." (Hebrews 2:15)*

The fear of death is a terrible fear – it's a fear that this scripture says is the Devil's stock in trade. Hear the devil shouting in your ear ...

*'Once you die, you're mine!'*

How men try to drown out that voice – every religion of man is an attempt in one way or another to silence that voice.

And yet in their attempts to free their adherents from the 'terror' of the devil's voice, they develop stifling systems of requirements and behaviors that play upon the very fear of consequence that they are seeking to overcome.

Only Jesus can truly free us from the fear of death – In Christ we find ourselves saying with the Apostle Paul (Philippians 1:23) ...

*"I desire to depart and to be with Christ which is better by far."*

Once Fear of God's Condemnation is gone; Fear of Death vanishes as well ...

However, sometimes the fear from which we need to be set free is not the fear of dying but rather the fear of living - the fear of 'living a life that falls far short of what we desire and what Christ deserves'.

Though we have silenced that voice of the **Devil** that would shout ...

*"Once you die, you're mine!"*

We still hear the voice of our **sinful flesh** shouting equally loudly ...

*"However, as long as you're alive, you're **mine!**  
I still own you and I control you. I will cause your Savior's Name to be blasphemed among the gentiles because of the way I will express myself through you!"*

What a frightening thought to a 'Follower of Christ'.

We know our history ... We know our natural weaknesses and tendencies – We know the very things that caused us to understand in the first place that we were sinners in need of saving and now the more we read the Bible the more we come to know how much of our natural attitudes and behaviors are antithetical to God's.

We know that in and of ourselves we are just one more Christian Failure waiting to happen – Our sin nature does at times seem to have the upper hand and that fact can 'scare us to death'. If there is any fear remaining that we need Christ to liberate us from that would be it ...

Well, here's some **good news** – that too is part of His **Liberation Package** ...

### 3. We Have Been Set Free **FROM** the **FEAR** of Sin's **DOMINATION**

*"Sin shall **no longer** be your master"*  
(Romans 6:14)

God's Grace provided for by Christ, my liberator, and administered in my heart by the indwelling Holy Spirit enables me to actually 'squellch' – 'drown out' - the voice of the flesh and say confidently ...

*"You are not running the show any longer."  
I can't throw you out of my life yet, but I can tell you to 'sit in the corner and be quiet'.*

And understanding that new 'state of affairs' in me spiritually, I can now follow the advice that the Apostle Paul gave to the Galatian believers when he wrote ...

*"Do not allow yourselves to be **burdened again** by the yoke of **slavery**."*  
(Galatians 5:1b)

#### **Rough Paraphrase** ...

*'Don't allow yourselves to get 'sucked into' religious practices or attitudes that are far more 'flesh-driven' than 'spirit-given' for these will undermine your freedom and simply imprison you once again.'*

So don't allow the **flesh** to run your life and don't allow **man's rules and regulations** to run it either.

And then, when it comes to the **devil**, the enemy of your soul, the one who would seek to harass you and accuse you and point out to you all your inadequacies and thus steal from you your delight in your salvation, **do this ...**

**Submit** yourself to God.  
**Resist** the Devil and **he will flee** from you."  
(James 4:7)

The point Paul is making and that I am firmly believing and regularly experiencing is this ...

*"The devil cannot and will not remain in the presence of one who is consciously and willfully 'Submitted to God' ..."*

Let me say that again ...

*"The devil cannot and will not remain in the presence of one who is consciously and willfully 'Submitted to God' ..."*

He knows that the battle (at least for that day) is lost and there is no reason from him to remain ... In fact he can't stand being in such a place.

That's why I believe that one of the 'safest' and most 'devil-free' places we can ever be is where we are right now - in a gathering of submitted souls.

And that acknowledgement leads us to the answers to our **second key question** of the morning ...

### **What Has Christ Set Us Free FOR?**

**4.** We Have Been Set Free **FOR** True **WORSHIP** and **SERVICE**  
Here's what Jesus himself told us ...

**True worshipers** will worship the Father in spirit and in truth for they are the kind of worshippers the Father **seeks**."  
(John 4:23)

**We could say ...**

*'Those who come to possess God's Truth and Spirit automatically become 'True Worshippers' ... Submitting themselves to God in Heart-Felt Worship is as natural to them as breathing.'*

## **We could certainly add ...**

*'And those are the kind of worshippers that the Devil hates.  
He can't stand being in their presence.'*

Now true worshippers of God become true servants of God. Here's how Paul expressed the testimony of the Thessalonian believers ...

**"You turned** (of your own 'freed' will) *from idols* **to serve** *the living and true God."*  
(1 Thessalonians 1:9)

And that 'Service' takes visible and noticeable and God-Honoring form ...

**Pray** for 'all those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives In all **godliness** and **holiness**'  
(1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Freed from the Domination of the Flesh – Freed from the Dictates of Man – Freed from the Diatribes of the Devil, we live peaceful, quiet, godly-pleasing, holy lives free from sin and self-centered striving. Free to be what Christ has in fact 'Called us to be'.

And now one last thing ... Experiencing freedom in Christ and through Christ lands us in a very special company ... a very special assemblage of people unlike any other on this earth. Though Christ ...

## **5. We Have Been Set Free For Genuine FELLOWSHIP**

*"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that **you also** may have **fellowship with us**. And **our fellowship** is **with the Father** and **with His Son**, Jesus Christ." (1 John 1:3)*

And so it has gone down through all the centuries ... The fellowship of true believers is a profoundly liberating thing. Here in this company, we sit (as it were) in the presence of the Apostles themselves who consciously sat in the Presence of their Savior who himself walked in perfect fellowship with His Heavenly Father. This is the ultimate **purpose** of our Freedom!

### **Final Thot ...**

Those who fail to **ACT** upon the **FREEDOM** that they have been **GRANTED** in **CHRIST** are still living in **BONDAGE**.

**SEE** Him and **RECEIVE** Him as Your Heavenly Liberator **TODAY!**



**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY VINDICATOR”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series*

(Revelation 6:9-11)

**Intro ...** Unless something occurs to me before next Sunday, this will be the final message in our ‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series.

And what a profitable ‘look’ it has been! Our Risen Savior’s current ministry in heaven is extensive and exciting – His hands are upon and His heart is wrapped around a good many services on behalf of us who make up His Church. Next week we will review them all and make some concluding observations.

For today, let us remind ourselves that there is tremendous power in us following the instruction of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews to “Fix Our Eyes On Jesus” ...

Here then is (what will no doubt be) our final ‘Look into the Heavens’ at the awe-inspiring, mind-challenging, heart-encouraging, life-impacting current ministry of our Risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today I would encourage you to fix your eyes upon Jesus ...

**‘YOUR HEAVENLY VINDICATOR’.**

This eleventh and final look is made possible by ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

(Part of the Apostle John’s privileged ‘glimpse’ into heaven)

I saw under the altar the **SOULS** of those who had been **SLAIN** because of the **WORD** of God and the **TESTIMONY** they had **MAINTAINED**.

They called out in a loud voice, “**HOW LONG**, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you **JUDGE** the inhabitants of the earth and **AVENGE** our blood?”

Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to **WAIT** a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be **KILLED** as they had been was **COMPLETED**.

(Revelation 6:9-11)

**SEVERAL KEY OBSERVATIONS** arise from that passage ...

1. **LIVING** for Christ can be a **DANGEROUS** thing to do.

*"I saw ... the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God and the Testimony they had maintained."  
(Revelation 6:9)*

How many tens of thousands do they number?

By the time John wrote down this vision, all of his fellow Apostles were included in that number as was Stephen, the **first** Christian Martyr, whose death is recorded in Acts chapter seven.

This was not surprising to John for he himself had recorded these words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel that bears his name ...

*"If they persecuted me, they will persecute you ... A time is coming when anyone who kills you will think that he is offering a service to God."  
(John 15:20; John 16:2)*

That's what the Jewish Leaders believed – That's what the Magistrates of Rome believed – That's what the Jihadist's of the Moslem faith still believe. All of them believe that it is a noble service to God to end the life of one of those Christian Blasphemers!

And so the Apostle Paul, writing to the believers living right at the heart of the evil, pagan Roman Empire itself, testified ...

*"For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."  
(Romans 8:36)*

Indeed, History has demonstrated over and over again that ...

***"Living for Christ can be a (most) dangerous thing to do!"***

So it's hard to deny the validity of that 'Scripture-Based/History-Demonstrated' Observation.

***At this point***, in the interest of accuracy and clarity, we must ask ourselves:

Are these 'souls under the altar' pitiful victims of an unfair and prejudiced world ...  
Are they 'bemoaning the fact' that their lives were taken abruptly from them ...  
Are they possibly 'accusing the Lord' of some kind of negligence in either protecting them or avenging them?

What exactly is the 'mind-set' of one who has 'been slain because of the Word of God and the Testimony that has been maintained'?

Here, in answer to those very relevant questions, is a second observation that logically arises from and adds content and context to Today's Scripture.

**2. DYING** (suffering) for **CHRIST** is a **GLORIOUS** thing to do.

Allow these testimonies and statements of the Inspired First Century Writers to impact (and perhaps challenge) your mind and heart.

The **Apostle Paul** testified in his Epistle to the Philippian Church ...

*"I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death"*  
(Philippians 3:10)

In the **Book of Acts** it is recorded that ...

*"The Apostles left the Sanhedrin (where they had been ridiculed and flogged) rejoicing because they had been counted 'worthy' of suffering disgrace for the Name."*  
(Acts 5:41)

They were indeed 'Sharing In His Sufferings' even as the Apostle Paul had desired to do. This was a high privilege in their eyes – They knew that the members of the Sanhedrin would not be long satisfied with 'threatenings and floggings'. And the truth is, they weren't ...

*"But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the Glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God ... and while they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'."*  
(Acts 7:55, 59)

And as the first drops of 'Martyr's Blood' hit the ground, the Church of Jesus Christ took another giant step toward becoming His Glorious Church!

The Apostle Peter, one of those who walked away rejoicing from that Jewish flogging, wrote these words of clarification and exhortation to Believers everywhere in his first epistle ...

*'Do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering ... But **rejoice** that you participate in the sufferings of Christ ... If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed but **praise** God that you bear that Name.'*  
(1 Peter 4:12, 13, 16)

The Apostles and Believers spoke with one voice – they had one stated perspective on the matter ...

**“Suffering** (even dying) **for Christ is a glorious thing to do”.**

**Here now** is the **third observation** that arises from **Today’s Scripture** ...

**3.** The Lord Jesus Christ **FUNCTIONS** as the **JUDGE** of all the earth.

This is what John heard the martyred ones asking ...

*“How long, Sovereign Lord ... until you **judge** the inhabitants of the earth ...”*  
(Revelation 6:10)

There was no question in their minds who the one was who would eventually call the godless inhabitants of the earth into account – The Lord Jesus Christ was the judge of men and as judge He would eventually vindicate those who had willingly suffered in His Name.

The only question was ‘**When**’ ... How much longer would it be?

In partial answer to that question and in affirmation of the martyr’s conviction, James, the half-brother of Jesus and the acknowledged chief elder of the Jerusalem Church wrote in the Epistle that bears his name ...

*“The Lord’s coming is near ...the **Judge** is standing at the door.”*  
(James 5:8-9)

There is James putting this ministry of Jesus Christ once again in the present tense. He **is** ‘*standing at the door*’ ...

Even as he stood at the doorstep of heaven for millennia awaiting his descent into the Virgin’s Womb, so now he stands again at that same doorstep awaiting the initiation of the Day of Judgement of the Earth.

Once again it’s the Apostle John who sees far into the future and writes:

*“And I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His Presence ... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne ... and the dead were **judged** according to what they had done.”*  
(Revelation 20:11-13)

That is a place where you do not want to be - but all who fail to confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will stand there in the Brilliance of His Holiness and in the Fearsomeness of His Wrath.

The Judgment of Christ, the Eternal Son of God, will fall upon the earth and its inhabitants! And though a 1000 years is but a day in God's Eternal Reckoning, that '**Day**' will eventually come; and when it comes, there will be no doubt about who is the ONE who deserves and demands man's allegiance.

And now, identifying as a kind of parallel outcome to the Day of Judgment spoken of by those 'heaven-based martyrs' arises this **fourth observation** ...

4. All **EVIL** perpetrated against Christ's **CHURCH** will be **AVENGED** –  
His People will be **VINDICATED**.

That's the reality underlying the martyrs' question ...

*"How long, Sovereign Lord ... until you ... avenge our blood?"*  
(Revelation 6:10)

Nobody ever ultimately 'gets away with anything' ...

Revenge – paying back punishment for evil – is part of the universe we live in.

It's just that only God – or only God's designated agents – can execute it.

As God says repeatedly in the Scriptures ...

*"Vengeance (revenge) is mine; I will repay."*

There is coming a day when all evil done against the members of the Body of Christ will be 'avenged' ... There will be an acknowledging by all who stand before Christ's Judgment Throne that those who because of their commitment to Christ died (or suffered abuse and affliction) at the hands of the unbelievers do truly belong to Christ and are treasured by Him. What a day that will be!

Here's the Apostle John's 'take' and counsel on the subject ...

*"Rejoice, saints and apostles and prophets!*  
*God has judged her (Babylon) for the way she treated you."*  
(Revelation 18:20)

Do not worry about 'getting even' ... Do not worry about 'suffering unfairly' ...

Do not worry about your persecutors 'getting away with something' ...

There is coming a day when Christ Himself will 'settle accounts' with them!

Just one chapter later in His Great Revelation of 'Things Yet To Come', John paints this vivid 'Word Picture' ...

*"I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called 'Faithful and True'. With justice he **judges** and makes war ... On his robe he had this name written: 'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS'."*  
(Revelation 19:11, 16)

Can there be any doubt **who** that is?

Jesus Christ is indeed the 'Judge of All the Earth' and on the 'Day of Judgment' He will vindicate all those of His ... all those who have Stood Faithfully for Him – even unto the point of death.

And now there remains one final observation – a most necessary one.

**5.** Both **JUDGEMENT** and **VINDICATION** await **COMPLETION** of the **PLAN**

Here's how the Lord Himself responded to the martyr's plea ...

*"They were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed."*  
(Revelation 6:11)

Basically Jesus was saying ... 'The Band of Martyrs is not yet complete'. The struggle between the Church and the Forces of Evil has not yet 'run its course'.

To use the language of the Old Testament (words God spoke to Abraham some 600 years before His People would make their exodus from Egypt) ...

*"The Sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."*  
(Genesis 15:16)

Men and women of faith have questioned all through the years even as many of us would question today ...

***"How much worse can it get?"***

It takes a lot for God to finally say ...

*"I can't take it any more – it's time for judgment."*

The Apostle Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to grant this additional insight ...

*"The Lord is not 'slow' in keeping His Promise, as some understand 'slowness'. He is patient with you not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*  
(2 Peter 3:9)

God's Plan for Mankind involves more than Judgment and Vindication.

God's Plan for Mankind also involves Salvation and Peter tells us that God would much rather **SAVE** than **JUDGE** so He will wait just as long as he can.

For ***individuals***, He will wait '*until their last breath*' and then He can wait no longer for the Scripture says in Hebrews 9:27 ...

*"Man is destined to die once and  
after that to face judgment"*

For ***nations*** he will wait until their '*iniquities*' can be tolerated no longer.

And so for an individual or for a nation the writer of Hebrews urges ...

*"Today, if you hear His Voice,  
do not harden your heart."  
(Hebrews 4:7)*

So that now completes the **Five Observations** arising from **Today's Key Scripture**.

These are incredibly important to our understanding of Christ's Current and Coming Role as '*Our Heavenly Vindicator*' ...

1. *"Living for Christ can be a dangerous thing to do."*
2. *"Dying (suffering) for Christ is a glorious thing to do."*
3. *"The Lord Jesus Christ functions as the Judge of all the Earth."*
4. *"All Evil perpetrated against Christ's Church will be avenged –  
Christ's People will be vindicated."*
5. *"Both Judgment and Vindication await the completion of the Plan."*

Now as we draw to the close of this examination of Biblical Truth, allow me to draw for you ...

## **SEVERAL KEY APPLICATIONS ...**

Here are some ways that these Biblical Realities should impact our lives and our current understanding of things – ways that might help us resist being ‘tossed here and there by every impressive sounding would-be prophet’ ...

### **1. We are NOT currently living in the DAY of JUDGMENT**

Those who say that we are – those who act like God should be as ‘offended’ by what is going on as they are – those who get so ‘riled up’ by the evil perpetrated by twisted and broken men and women that they can see nothing but the ‘red of anger’ rather than the ‘red of Christ’s Shed Blood’ ...

Those people (many of them simply seeking their 15 minutes in the spotlight) are Biblically wrong and are leading many away from the clear teachings of Scripture and away from the desires of Christ.

**For you see** ... We are **not** currently living in the day of judgment.

### **2. We are living in the DAY of SALVATION and PERSECUTION**

This is the day the Church of Jesus Christ has been living in since the original ‘Day’ of Pentecost.

The number of names in the Lamb’s Book of Life has been growing steadily. The number of names in the Lord’s Book of Martyrs has as well.

Serving Christ – Winning others to Christ – Suffering For Christ ...

That’s what characterizes the Day we are living in and it will be apparent to all when that Day ends!

And now a most challenging but hopefully encouraging application of Today’s Biblical Truths ...

### **3. EVERY believer is called upon to be a MARTYR**

Did not Jesus say ...

*“If any man would come after me, he must deny himself (put himself to death) and take up his cross (an instrument of death) and follow me.”?*

(Mark 8:34)



Is not the enemy of our souls also the enemy of our bodies – the enemy of our minds – the enemy of our environment? From day one, did not the devil seek to destroy the Works of God ... Did not the devil seek to re-define everything that God had declared to be 'Good'?

Is it not accurate to say that ...

*'Every human being who dies is a victim of the Enemy'*

Without the enemy's interference in the Garden there would be no sin; Without the entrance of sin there would be no death – no sickness or sorrow at all.

Every death is a demonstration of the devil's work as he seeks to undermine – to destroy – to literally devour the Work of God. And so every death is a battle with the devil himself – a struggle with his will and wishes.

Death is the devil's ultimate 'gun' held at the head of a human being –

*"Curse God and die" he says ...  
"What has God ever done for you?"*

Knowing that to be true and knowing how many come to the point of death with anger or bitterness or sorrow or great disillusionment in their hearts, I say to you confidently this morning that ...

*"Every Believer who faces death with His Faith Intact  
is worthy of a martyr's reward!"*

Faithful unto death ... there is no greater thing that can be said of a 'Follower of Jesus Christ' – there is no greater privilege than to observe such a thing. That was my privilege this past Tuesday afternoon as I saw a true 'saint of God' slowly and peacefully pass from this world to the next.

And now just one more thing and all I have to do here is to just say it and then it's up to each of us to believe it and gain perspective from it ...

**4.** Just because the LORD hasn't INTERVENED doesn't mean He's not PAYING ATTENTION – He notices and notes everything! We can be confident that (as our final thought says) ...

#### ***Final Thought ...***

In the final analysis, no good deed done FOR Christ will go UNREWARDED  
and no evil deed done AGAINST Christ will go UNPUNISHED!

**“SEE JESUS AS YOUR HEAVENLY GUARDIAN”**

*‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(Colossians 3:2-3)*

**Intro ...** For those of you who were here last Sunday and those of you who ‘*watched the message on-line*’ this past week, you will remember how I began last week’s message: I said ...

*“Unless something occurs to me before next Sunday,  
this will be the final message in our ‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series.”*

Well, guess what? Something occurred to me!

In fact it was almost as though the Lord hit me over the head with Today’s Key Scripture and said ...

*“There’s no way that you can wrap-up this series  
without including this text.”*

Immediately upon being reminded of that Scripture, I agreed.

There is no way that I can wrap-up this series and even begin to consider it complete without including Today’s Key Scripture so here it is ...

**TODAY’S KEY SCRIPTURE ...**

*“Set your minds on things **ABOVE** not on **EARTHLY** things.  
For you **DIED** and your **LIFE** is now **HIDDEN** with Christ in God.  
(Colossians 3:2-3)*

Here the Apostle Paul adds to the exhortation of the writer to the Hebrews that we have been seeking to follow for the past 11 weeks.

This, of course, is how that inspired writer expressed it ...

*“Fix your 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.”  
(Hebrews 12:2)*

In Today’s Key Scripture – our passage of the day – the Apostle Paul exhorts ...

*‘Set your minds on things above’ (and we could easily add)...  
‘Where Jesus Christ your Risen Exalted Savior presently resides  
and carries out all His Current Heavenly Ministries.’*

Over the past few weeks, we have identified eleven vitally important heavenly ministries currently being performed by the Lord Jesus on our behalf. Today we will identify the 12<sup>th</sup> and final one as we do indeed 'wrap up' this series entitled "Looking Unto Jesus".

But before we identify that 12<sup>th</sup> and final ministry, allow me to draw your attention to ...

### **THREE GREAT INESCAPABLE FACTS THAT ARISE FROM OUR VERSE OF THE DAY ...**

#### **FACT ONE: "SALVATION REQUIRES A DEATH"**

**"For You Died ..."** - Colossians 3:3

One simply cannot be saved without going through a 'death experience'. And you cannot go through that 'death experience' without knowing it.

The Apostle Paul testified to that fact ...

*"I am crucified with Christ"* he wrote to the Galatian Church.  
(Galatians 2:20)

*"Old things are passed away"* he testified to the Believers in Corinth.  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

And so based upon the revelation given to him by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by his own experience, He says confidently to the Colossian Believers,

**'For you** (along with me and all true Followers of Christ everywhere) **have died!**

It's an indisputable fact of the Christian Life ...

**"Salvation requires a Death Experience"**.

**Consider** these truths with me this morning. As those who have surrendered themselves to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord ...

**WE HAVE ...**

\* Died to **SIN** – (Sin is) 'No longer my **MASTER**'  
"We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"  
(Romans 6:2)

What a blessing when confronted with some sinful proposition – some opportunity to engage in a sinful, ungodly behavior – What a blessing to be able to say, “Thank God, I’ve died to that.”

**You see ...**

*‘Sin is no longer my master because sin can no longer master anyone who is dead – Sin is only a problem for the living.*

**WE HAVE ...**

\* Died to **SELF** – (Self is) ‘No longer my **FOCUS**’  
“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself.”  
(Mark 8:34)

Now that is a true ‘death experience’ ...

The death of ‘Self-Centered Living’ – the Death of a ‘Self-Serving Focus’ – the Death of a ‘Self-Expressive Lifestyle’.

You cannot go through that and not know it but Jesus said unless we **do** go through it we will never know true ‘salvation’.

So followers of Jesus Christ have ‘Died to Sin’ and have ‘Died to Self’ – tremendously impactful ‘death experiences.

Here’s another ...

**WE HAVE ...**

\* Died to Human **STRIVING**  
(Human Striving is) ‘No longer my method of **OPERATION**’.  
“Are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?”  
(Galatians 3:3)

Oh how normal and natural it seems to ‘strive after’ that which we believe is God’s Will – How normal and natural it is to seek to ‘fix things’ and ‘control people’ – For some of us that seems more normal than for others of us but we all can fall prey to it.

Paul says this too (this human striving and conniving) must have the executioner’s noose placed around its neck. It’s got to go. Yielding not striving is a key secret to the Christian Life.

**SO THERE IS 'FACT ONE' OF THE MORNING ...**

**"SALVATION REQUIRES A DEATH"**

We must experience death before we can experience life!  
The Salvation experience is intended to provide that death.

**Here then Is A Key Question – A Question each of us must ask ourselves.**

*'Have I Experienced and Am I Experiencing Spiritual Death?'*

Have I died to **Sin** and to **Self** and to **Human Striving** as a result of me surrendering myself completely to Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord?

And if I haven't, then the question, of course, is:

*'Have I actually 'surrendered myself' to Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord?  
for the truth is, all truly born-again believers are involved in this 'death process' ...  
the very nature of salvation requires it.*

But **salvation** involves much more than just this '**death process**'.

This required '**death experience**' is where salvation **begins** but it is by no means where it **ends**.

**FACT TWO: "SALVATION GENERATES A RE-BIRTH INTO NEW LIFE"**

***"For you died and your life ..."*** – Colossians 3:3

Here's the thing that the unbelieving, un-surrendered world will never understand - 'Spiritual Death sets the stage for Spiritual Life' ...

The **death** comes first and the **life** follows.

Here again is the Apostle Paul's personal testimony ...

*"I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live ..."*  
(Galatians 2:20)

That's the beauty of this Christian Experience ... once Sin as a Lifestyle and Self as a Life Purpose and Human Striving as a Life Methodology is eliminated, the stage is set for something really extraordinary.

Jesus pointed out the possibility to the man, Nicodemus, when he said ...

*"No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again"* – John 3:3

But, of course, 'if a man is born-again' – if a man **does** experience this 'death to all that seems normal and natural – to all that is characteristic of this fallen sin-filled, self-centered world' – then such a man '**can see**' – that is, can enter into and fully experience the 'Kingdom of God'.

And in that process something that is wonderfully and spiritually alive arises from the ashes of that which was consciously and purposefully put to death.

And so the Apostle Paul, Jesus' uniquely chosen spokesman, says to the Corinthian Believers (and to us) ...

*"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ..."* –  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

And what a Glorious Multi-Faceted New Creation this is!  
What a multi-faceted life it provides!

**Consider** now these truths with me this morning – As those who have surrendered themselves to Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord ...

### **WE ARE ...**

\* Alive in **CHRIST** – John 10:10

*"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."*

This morning and every morning that we meet for worship in this place that verse is printed on the back of our bulletins explaining our '*Sonlife Mission*'.

We as a church community (the bulletin statement says) are:

*'Seeking the lost of our world with the Good News about Jesus'*  
which is *"I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."*

We understand that 'Death precedes that life' but we also understand that full and abundant life is the reason that death process was initiated.

The Christian Life is '*Life in Christ*' – it's life that is increasingly taking on the Character of Christ. It's a winsome life – a fulfilling life – it's eternal life.

**Now** in addition to those of us who have surrendered ourselves to Jesus Christ and experienced the 'death process' being '**Alive in Christ**' ...

**WE ARE ...**

\* Alive in **SERVICE** ... 1 Thessalonians 1:9

*'You turned ... from idols to serve the Living and true God.'*

This is what is at the heart of that new and abundant life that Followers of Jesus Christ enjoy ... Serving the True and Living God is what that life is all about.

The Apostle Paul pointed out that man in his fallen, sinful state tends to

*'worship and serve created things rather than the Creator'*  
(Romans 1:25)

All of these can properly be identified as idols – things to which we turn for comfort and joy and meaning and significance.

The True Follower of Jesus Christ finds all those things primarily in his relationship with the True and Living God.

To serve God – to carry out His Wishes – to sense His Approval and Pleasure upon all that we do ... This is the **essence** of true life.

This is the new and central focus of one who has passed through the 'death process' and been re-born into this new life.

Indeed as followers of Jesus Christ, we are 'Alive in Christ' and we are 'Alive in Service' and now as an absolutely logical consequence of those first two, we see thirdly that ...

**WE ARE ...**

\* Alive in **HOLINESS** ... Romans 6:22

*"You have been set free from sin and you have become slaves to God and the benefit you reap leads to holiness ..."*

Now there's a term that is not used a whole lot today. Somehow it has gotten a bad rap over the years – it's a word that the devil himself seeks to make offensive as though one cannot be 'holy' without possessing an 'holier than thou' put-down attitude.

And since no one wants to come across as having that '*holier than thou*' attitude (which is certainly one of today's most politically incorrect attitudes to have), there has developed a reluctance to even use the word or to encourage followers of Christ to pursue it.

And yet '*holiness*' is actually what the Christian Life is all about.

Holiness simply means '*Set Apart For God's Use*'.

According to the verse we just read, holiness is a benefit – a blessing – a direct and almost automatic outcome of the **death** and **birth** experience.

Did you pick up on the sequence in the verse just read?

\* "*You have been set free from sin ...*

There's the *death process* – I'm free from the hold that sin and self once had upon me because I have died to them both through the yielding of my life and allegiance to Jesus Christ and has a result (Paul says) ...

\* '*You have become slaves to God*'

Just like Jesus Himself was when he walked upon this earth. The more I experience '*Life in Christ*' the more I identify myself as a true and willing '*Servant*' (Bond Slave) of the Almighty Himself.

He is (as Paul told the Thessalonians) the '*True and Living God*'.

He is not just the subject of fables and legends –  
He is not just the subject of doctrinal statements.

He is the ONE we worship and serve – He has become our Heavenly Father and His wishes determine our daily agenda.

And so it naturally and logically follows that (as Paul points out) ...

\* '*The benefit you reap leads to holiness ...*'

You see, biblically speaking, holiness is a consequence (an outcome) of a life yielded to God ... and it's an almost automatic outcome. Anyone who is '*striving to be holy*' is '*putting the cart before the horse*'.

Holiness (living a God-Pleasing Life) happens quite naturally in the lives of those who are '*Alive in Christ*' and '*Alive in Service*' that is, surrendered to the Will and Wisdom of God.



**Here then is a second Key Question of the morning:**

*'Have I received and am I increasingly receiving New Life?'*

Can I say that since I have yielded my life to Jesus Christ  
as My Savior and Lord that I am ...

*'Alive in Christ' and 'Alive in Service' and 'Alive in Holiness'?*

These are the elements of the 'Abundant Life' that Jesus came to provide.

**Two Great Inescapable Facts** Down and One to Go!

**Fact One:** Salvation Requires A Death (Experience)

**Fact Two:** Salvation Generates A Re-Birth Into New Life (and now)

**FACT THREE: "SALVATION PROVIDES AN IRONCLAD SECURITY"**

*"Your life is now hidden with Christ in God"- (Colossians 3:3)*

This new life of ours is 'hidden' – 'tucked away' – 'linked' – 'kept secure'  
with Christ who continually ministers on behalf of His Church.

Just think of that for a moment – Just put that thought in the context of our  
past 11 investigations of the Current Heavenly Ministry of our Risen Savior.

**The One** with whom your life is 'hidden' – tucked away – kept secure is ...

*'Your Great High Priest Who Is Continually Offering His Own Shed Blood  
In The Heavenly Sanctuary On Your Behalf' (and is)*

*"The Shepherd and Overseer Of Your Soul Keeping Track  
Of Your Every Movement" (and is)*

*'Your Heavenly Intercessor Keeping Open The Door Through  
Which You Enter The Father's Presence' (and is)*

*"Your Heavenly Defense Attorney Squelching Every Accusation  
That The Devil Levels Against You" (and is)*

*'Your Heavenly Contractor Fitting You Perfectly Into The Marvelous Church  
That He Is Building In This Fallen World' (and is)*

*'Your Heavenly Host Inviting You To Commune With Him Regularly' (and is)*

*'Your Heavenly Evaluator Personally Assessing The Value Of All  
That You Have Done In His Name' (and is)*

*'Your Heavenly Wedding Planner Preparing For The Day When  
His Bride Will Take Her Place At His Side' (and is)*

*'Your Heavenly Liberator Setting You Free From The Fears That Enslave So Many!'*

Knowing the incredible ministry that awaited him in heaven, is it any wonder that Jesus would say about his own (while he was still on earth) ...

*"No one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28)*

And so we come at last to the identification of our Lord's **12<sup>th</sup> Heavenly Ministry**. It's expressed in ...

**TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...**

Jesus Christ is the **KEEPER** and the **GUARDIAN**  
of His Bride's **SPIRITUAL LIFE!**

My life – Our lives – the Lives of all who have surrendered themselves to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and who make up His Bride – are kept and guarded by Jesus Christ.

Our salvation provides for us an iron-clad – and eternal – security. Nothing and no one can snatch us away from our Heavenly Guardian. What a Savior – What a Security for all those who are His!

So then in light of this one more marvelous and captivating Heavenly Ministry of our the Risen and Exalted Lord Jesus, let us once more join what Paul has said to what the writer of Hebrews has said in this ...

**GREAT RE-AFFIRMATION ...**

*"**SET** your minds on things **ABOVE**' ... '**FIX** your eyes on Jesus.'*

**And that leads to our Final Key Question of the Morning** (and of the series):

*'Are My Eyes Set Upon Christ **As** He Is and **Where** He Is?'*

This we must remember to do each and every day ...

Wandering eyes lead to wayward lives!

So set your eyes upon Jesus Christ each and every day and on this day particularly rejoice in the truth conveyed in our ***Final Thot*** ...

***Final Thot ...***

Of all the ministries that Jesus currently carries out on our behalf,  
**GUARDING** our **SPIRITUAL LIFE** is right at the **TOP** of the **LIST**.  
**KEEP** your eyes **RIVETED** on Him!

**“SEE JESUS’ HEAVENLY MINISTRY AS THE REMEDY FOR ALL EARTHLY ILLS”**

(How to feel fantastic, no matter what!)  
‘Looking Unto Jesus’ Series  
(Conclusion)

**Intro ...**

It was three months and one week ago, Sunday April 19<sup>th</sup>, that I introduced the series of messages we conclude this morning ...  
“Looking Unto Jesus”.

It was based upon this ...

**SERIES KEY SCRIPTURE ... Hebrews 12:2**

“Let us **FIX** our **EYES** on Jesus, the pioneer and the perfecter of our **FAITH**, who for the joy that was set **BEFORE** him endured the cross, scorning its shame and **SAT DOWN** at the Right Hand of the **THRONE** of God.”

In that introductory message I shared four key ‘Series Stimulating Questions’: questions that I said had stimulated me to seek out the Biblical Truths that have filled the past three months of study.

**Here they are again ...**

1. “To what degree to we view Jesus as an Historical Personage – that is, to what degree do we focus our attention upon His Earthly Ministry?”
2. “What’s wrong if that is how we do view Him?”
3. “What can we know about His Current Ministry?”
4. “How might a greater knowledge of His Current Ministry affect us?”

Today as we draw this three month series to a close, it’s that fourth and final question that I would have guide us toward a comprehensive conclusion.

**Indeed** ... “How might (how should) a clear and accurate knowledge of Jesus’ Current Heavenly Ministry affect us?”

Now anyone who has been with us all through this series should be able to both ask and then answer that question as well as these related ones ...

‘How might such knowledge affect us; what should be the impact of such knowledge upon our lives and why should we focus our attention upon it?’

**Because** (as the title of this message today declares) ...

“Jesus’ heavenly ministry is the remedy for all our earthly ills!”

Or as my mother used to say: "It's good for what ails you!"

**Indeed it is** ... Seeing Jesus **where** He is and **as** He is will beautifully pave the way for us to be **what** we should be in **whatever** circumstances we find ourselves ...

**'Looking Unto Jesus'** is truly the **Remedy** For All Our Earthly ills!  
It's good for whatever ails us!

Walk with me this morning as we match 12 earthly conditions with their heavenly remedies. All the appropriate Scriptural references taken from each of the individual messages are included on your outline though we will not have the time to even note them. In the process we will review the entire series in one message.

Perhaps one or more of these 'earthly conditions' might apply to your life situation right now ...

If so, then I encourage you to (as it were) 'stop right there' and take a good long 'Look' at the ONE who is this very moment providing for you just what you need.

**So then** ... As the subtitle of our message today puts it, here's how "Looking to Jesus' can enable us to ...

**'FEEL FANTASTIC NO MATTER WHAT!'**

**\* When you feel DEFEATED or DEPRESSED**

That is, when the brokenness and the twistedness of this world has caused you to feel things are absolutely out of control and there is nothing worthwhile anywhere at all

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Exalted LORD'**

(Who is exercising authority over all things)

**And Experience ... Feelings of DEVOTION and DELIGHT**

(John 17:5, 24; Mark 9:2-3; Philippians 2:9-11; Revelation 1:12-17; John 17:13)

Oh, what a fantastic difference it makes when our hearts are filled with Devotion and Delight – to be completely 'sold out' to the ONE who is LORD of all, to bow before HIM in wonder and reverence is an awesome thing.

It brings us 'In tune' with the original 'Order of Things' and our hearts and minds are lifted upward on a 'Delight-Generating' tide of Praise and Worship.

So if you are feeling a bit defeated or depressed this morning,  
Fix your Eyes on Jesus Your Exalted Lord and Experience  
Feelings of Devotion and Delight!

**\* When you feel UNCLEAN or UNSERVICEABLE**

That is, when you are feeling like your past and maybe even your present completely disqualify you to serve the Lord in any way at all

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Great HIGH PRIEST'**

(Who is continually offering His own shed blood in the heavenly sanctuary on your behalf)

**And Experience ... Feelings of CLEANSING and CONSECRATION**

(Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 7&9; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:21-25; Hebrews 13:15)

There is nothing better for us believers than to feel completely cleansed of sin and completely 'Set Apart' as God's Consecrated Children - Bought and paid for by the Precious Blood of the 'Lamb of God Himself' which (as it were) is being 'continually offered' upon the Altar of God by the Lord Jesus Christ who serves as our Great High Priest.

Such a look should free us from the bondage of our past and even from the errors of the present as we understand that we are being continually cleansed and are being continually consecrated for Godly Service.

So if you are in anyway feeling unclean or unserviceable this morning,  
Fix your eyes on Jesus, Your Great High Priest and experience  
Feelings of Cleansing and Consecration.

**\* When you feel AIMLESS or EMPTY**

That is, when you are lacking a sense of purpose in your daily life, when it seems that you are ill-equipped for the demands that life regularly brings, when perhaps you have lost track of the fact that the Lord is personally involved in this life you are living, when you have lapsed into thinking like so many around you that:

"It's all up to you" and you don't actually feel 'Up to the Challenge' -

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'The SHEPHERD and OVERSEER Of Your SOUL'**

(Who is keeping track of your every movement)

**And Experience ... Feelings of DIRECTION and PROVISION**

(1 Peter 2:25; John 10:11-18)

Who of us has not at times felt the impact of those feelings ...

***Aimless***: Where am I going – What is the plan – Is there a plan?

***Empty***: If there is a plan, I am in no way equipped to fulfill it – this Christian Life is turning out to be more than I can either fathom or handle.

What a delight to 'See Jesus' functioning as the 'Shepherd and Overseer of Our Souls' – to come to understand that He is in charge of the journey and that as long as I remain consciously under His Care, I can neither lose my way nor fail to make progress.

So if you today are feeling any degree of aimlessness or emptiness, Fix your eyes on Jesus the Shepherd and Overseer of Your Soul and experience renewed feelings of direction and provision.

**\* When you feel UNWELCOMED or HESITANT**

That is, when your prayer life is suffering because you feel that either 'God is too busy' or that your needs are 'too insignificant' or that you personally don't matter that much to a Holy, Righteous, Omnipotent God

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus** ... 'Your Heavenly INTERCESSOR'

(Who is keeping the door open through which you enter the Father's Presence)

**And Experience** ... Feelings of ACCEPTANCE and CONFIDENCE

(Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; Revelation 3:8)

*"I set before you an open door that no one can shut" ...*

That's what Jesus said to the First Century Church in Philadelphia. The door into the Father's Presence is held permanently open by Our Heavenly Door Keeper Himself. Jesus provides that open door into the Throne Room of the Almighty by taking care of anything that would have kept us out.

The Father's Arms are always open to us – We are encouraged to come boldly and confidently and present ourselves before Him.

So if you in anyway feel unwelcomed or hesitant to come into the Father's Presence, Fix your eyes upon Jesus 'Your Heavenly Intercessor' and experience feelings of acceptance and confidence as you bring your prayers to the Throne of the Almighty One.

**\* When you feel ATTACKED and VULNERABLE**

That is, when you yourself can hear the Devil's snarling voice accusing you of failure and even fraud, when he does his best to convince you (as well as your Heavenly Father) that you are at best a hypocrite and certainly do not deserve the name: 'Christian', when because of your obvious lack of perfection, you find yourself wondering if the devil does in fact have a point, when you feel like you don't have a leg to stand on and wonder if his accusation will win the day

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly DEFENSE ATTORNEY'**

(Who is squelching every accusation that the devil levels against you)

**And Experience ... Feelings of PROTECTION and PRIVILEGE**

(1 John 2:1; Revelation 12:10; 1 John 3:8-10; Romans 8:33-34)

How marvelous to know that we have ONE who speaks in our defense in the Courtroom of Heaven itself – ONE who has never 'lost a case' – ONE who has an impeccable record and an unassailable presentation. He himself **is** our defense as well as our defender.

He reminds the 'Accuser of the Brethren' that our salvation depends upon His Righteousness not ours. He points out that it is by Grace appropriated through Faith that we stand forgiven and accepted. The Accuser slinks away with another loss on His Record.

So whenever you hear that accusing voice (even if at times it sounds a lot like your own), Fix your eyes on Jesus your 'Heavenly Defense Attorney' and experience feelings of protection and privilege.

**\* When you feel PURPOSELESS or UNPRODUCTIVE**

That is, when you feel like the proverbial 'sore thumb' that is only noted for its uselessness and you can't even begin to believe that you are making any contribution to Christ's Kingdom at all – when life and your role in it seems so pointless

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly CONTRACTOR'**

(Who is fitting you perfectly into the marvelous church that He is building in this fallen world)

**And Experience ... Feelings of SIGNIFICANCE and SUBSTANCE**

(Matthew 16:18; Revelation 5:9; Ephesians 2:19-20; Ephesians 4:8-12)

Jesus said: "I will build my church" ... What a relief to know that He is the Builder not us! How good to realize that He is aware of complexities in this structure that go well beyond our comprehension. He has said that every member of the Body is crucial and connected to the overall outcome.

So if you ever begin to feel somewhat purposeless or unproductive in the overall Work of God and the Building of Christ's Church, Fix your eyes on Jesus 'Your Heavenly Contractor' and know that He has a plan for you and that you are being fit into the final structure according to that plan and thus experience genuine feelings of significance and substance.

**\* When you feel DETACHED or LONELY**

That is, when friends seem few and far between and even God seems somewhat distant and you begin to feel like you are in this thing all by yourself

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly HOST'**

(Who is inviting you to commune with Him regularly)

**And Experience ... Feelings of CONNECTION and COMPANIONSHIP**

(Luke 22:15-34)

There are times when any of us can feel a bit isolated – alone – left somewhat to our own devices. How good at such a time to hear the voice of Jesus saying ...

*"Come and Dine ... Allow me to 'Set the Table' and provide for you a most intimate and personal fellowship."*

So if you are feeling at all detached or lonely at this time in your life Fix your eyes on Jesus 'Your Heavenly Host' and experience feelings of connection and companionship.

**\* When you feel CASUAL and COMPLACENT**

That is, when you begin to slow your pace as you follow Christ – when you begin to coast a bit and listen to those who have told you for years to quit taking things in your Christian Life so seriously. You know that you can't work yourself to heaven and so you have actually pretty much ceased to 'Work for God' at all. At such a time ...

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly EVALUATOR'**

(Who is personally assessing the value of all that you have done in His Name)

**And Experience ... Feelings of RESPONSIBILITY and ACCOUNTABILITY**

(2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Revelation 2 and 3)

It not unusual for a believer from time to time to need a bit of a 'wake-up call'. After all, the enemy of our souls is continually working to 'put us to sleep' and 'keep us asleep' to the things of God and to the Call of Christ.



It is easy to become complacent – to simply settle into a routine – to become more focused on earthly agendas than heavenly ones.

At such a time it is imperative that we remember that our Lord and Savior, Jesus, the one who provides so wonderfully for us and the one who so effectively defends us is also the one who will ‘*evaluate our lives*’.

He notes all that we do and assesses value and some day we will stand before Him and hear his evaluation.

He has given us ‘*Instructions for Living*’ and he expects us to follow them.

So if you find yourself becoming casual and complacent with regard to your Christian Life, Fix your eyes upon Jesus, ‘*Your Heavenly Evaluator*’ and experience anew feelings of responsibility and accountability.

**\* When you feel BLAH or DEFLATED**

That is, when your earlier felt exhilaration in your salvation and your excitement over your new life in Christ has diminished and life has become somewhat ‘*Ho-hum*’ and one day seems to just blend into the next and perhaps when some of the things that you had imagined would come to pass haven’t and there doesn’t actually seem to be much to ‘*Look Forward To*’ ...

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘Your Heavenly WEDDING PLANNER’**  
(Who is preparing for the day when His Bride will take her place at His Side)

**And Experience ... Feelings of ANTICIPATION and CELEBRATION**  
(Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 2:2; Ephesians 5:32-33; Revelation 19:7-8; Revelation 21:9-14)

“*Looking forward*’ is what a Christian should do best ...

There is a great day coming when all who belong to Christ will be gathered together and something like a ‘*Wedding*’ will take place.

It will be the most lavish event ever scheduled.

All who belong to Christ will be part of it.

Nothing earth has ever experienced will compare to it.

So if you ever begin to feel blah or deflated in this earthly life, Fix your eyes on Jesus ‘*Your Heavenly Wedding Planner*’ and experience genuine feelings of anticipation and celebration.

**\* When you feel BOUND UP or FRIGHTENED**

That is, when it seems that the world or the flesh or even the devil himself has taken hold of you and begun to influence your life once again, when old fears of failure have once again reared their heads, when perhaps you have even reached the point of resignation and begun to say ...

*'After all, I am just a sinner saved by grace; I shouldn't expect too much of myself' -*

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly LIBERATOR'**

(Who is setting you free from the fears that enslave so many)

**And Experience ... Feelings of FREEDOM and FEARLESSNESS**

(John 8:36; Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:1; Hebrews 2:15; Romans 6:14; James 4:7)

Jesus said, *"If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed"* ...

That means free from the judgment of God (and the fear it used to generate), free from the domination of sin, free from the dictates of the flesh, free from the devil's influence, free even from the fear of death which you know now is nothing more than a doorway into His Own Glorious Presence.

So if you are feeling bound-up or frightened by any of these things,  
Fix your eyes on Jesus: *'Your Heavenly Liberator'* and  
experience feelings of freedom and fearlessness.

**\* When you feel UNJUSTLY TREATED or even PERSECUTED**

That is, when you have suffered real wrong-doing because of your Faith in Christ, when you have in some way *'Stood Firm For Christ'* and it has cost you dearly

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly VINDICATOR'**

(Who is functioning as Ultimate Judge over all men – the One Who avenges His Own)

**And Experience ... Feelings of CONFIDENCE and COMMITMENT**

(Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:11-13; Revelation 18:20; 2 Peter 3:9)

There is not a *'drop of martyr's blood'* spilled either literally or figuratively that the Lord Jesus Christ does not commend and which He will not avenge.

So if you have been unjustly treated or even persecuted for your faith in Christ,  
Fix your eyes on Jesus: *'Your Heavenly Vindicator'* and  
Experience feelings of confidence and even increased commitment.

And now for our 12<sup>th</sup> and final 'earthly condition' that can be remedied by 'Fixing our eyes on Jesus'...

**\* When you feel INADEQUATE and UNCERTAIN ...**

That is, when life circumstances and possibly even false teaching impact your life and you are tempted to 'doubt your salvation' or perhaps your ability to 'hang on to your faith' through all the ups and downs and difficulties of life in this fallen world

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly GUARDIAN'**

(Who is keeping your Spiritual Life secure)

**And Experience ... Feelings of SECURITY and ASSURANCE**

(Colossians 3:2-3; Galatians 2:20; John 3:3; John 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9; Rom. 6:22; John 10:28)

Doubt is the devil's stock in trade ... If he can't keep a person from 'getting saved' in the first place, he will certainly seek to undermine that person's sense of security and confidence in his salvation as the next best thing.

Life provides many opportunities for us to the question:

*"Am I really saved?"*

*Would something like this be happening to me if I were really saved?*

*Would I have done what I just did if I were really saved?*

If we judge the reality of our spiritual life by the quality of our earthly life, then there will be many days when we find ourselves questioning things that should never be questioned – things that are intended to be foundational.

Jesus says in affect ...

*'I've got your life – your eternal life – firmly in my hand. You don't have to worry about whether 'you have it' or whether 'you feel saved or not' or whether you presently are 'living up to salvation standards' or not. The only question is: 'Are you trusting me for your salvation, for if you are then your future is all locked up – signed and sealed and soon to be delivered!*

**So ...** if you find yourself sometimes feeling inadequate in your performance as a Christian and thus uncertain about whether you really are one,

Fix your eyes on Jesus: 'Your Heavenly Guardian' (the one in whom you have put your trust) and experience feelings of security and assurance.

And there we have it - we've actually done it ... Reviewed and summarized the entire series and it all comes down to this final that ...

**Final That ...**

**"FIX** your EYES upon Jesus and experience the REMEDY for all EARTHLY ills!

# **“THE REMEDY FOR ALL EARTHLY ILLS”**

**How to feel fantastic, no matter what!**

**\* When you feel DEFEATED or DEPRESSED**

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘Your Exalted LORD’**

(Who is exercising authority over all things)

**And Experience ... Feelings of DEVOTION and DELIGHT**

(John 17:5, 24; Mark 9:2-3; Phil. 2:9-11; Rev.1:12-17; John 17:13)

**\* When you feel UNCLEAN or UNSERVICABLE**

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘Your Great HIGH PRIEST’**

(Who is continually offering His own shed blood in the heavenly sanctuary on your behalf)

**And Experience ... Feelings of CLEANSING and CONSECRATION**

(Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 7&9; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:21-25; Hebrews 13:15)

**\* When you feel AIMLESS or EMPTY**

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘The SHEPHERD and OVERSEER Of Your SOUL’**

(Who is keeping track of your every movement)

**And Experience ... Feelings of DIRECTION and PROVISION**

(1 Peter 2:25; John 10:11-18)

**\* When you feel UNWELCOMED or HESITANT**

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘Your Heavenly INTERCESSOR’**

(Who is keeping the door open through which you enter the Father's Presence)

**And Experience ... Feelings of ACCEPTANCE and CONFIDENCE**

(Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; Revelation 3:8)

**\* When you feel ATTACKED and VULNERABLE**

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘Your Heavenly DEFENSE ATTORNEY’**

(Who is squelching every accusation that the devil levels against you)

**And Experience ... Feelings of PROTECTION and PRIVILEGE**

(Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:34; Revelation 3:8)

**\* When you feel PURPOSELESS or UNPRODUCTIVE**

**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... ‘Your Heavenly CONTRACTOR’**

(Who is fitting you perfectly into the marvelous church that He is building in this fallen world)

**And Experience ... Feelings of SIGNIFICANCE and SUBSTANCE**

(Matthew 16:18; Revelation 5:9; Ephesians 2:19-20; Ephesians 4:8-12)

**\* When you feel DETACHED or LONELY**  
**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly HOST'**  
(Who is inviting you to commune with Him regularly)  
**And Experience ... Feelings of CONNECTION and COMPANIONSHIP**  
(Luke 22:15-34)

**\* When you feel CASUAL and COMPLACENT**  
**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly EVALUATOR'**  
(Who is personally assessing the value of all that you have done in His Name)  
**And Experience ... Feelings of RESPONSIBILITY and ACCOUNTABILITY**  
(2 Corinthians 5:9-10; Revelation 2 and 3)

**\* When you feel BLAH or DEFLATED**  
**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly WEDDING PLANNER'**  
(Who is preparing for the day when His Bride will take her place at His Side)  
**And Experience ... Feelings of ANTICIPATION and CELEBRATION**  
(Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 2:2; Ephesians 5:32-33; Revelation 19:7-8; Revelation 21:9-14)

**\* When you feel BOUND UP or FRIGHTENED**  
**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly LIBERATOR'**  
(Who is setting you free from the fears that enslave so many)  
**And Experience ... Feelings of FREEDOM and FEARLESSNESS**  
(John 8:36; Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:1; Hebrews 2:15; Romans 6:14; James 4:7)

**\* When you feel UNJUSTLY TREATED or even PERSECUTED**  
**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus as ... 'Your Heavenly VINDICATOR'**  
(Who is functioning as Ultimate Judge over all men—the One Who avenges His Own)  
**And Experience ... Feelings of CONFIDENCE and COMMITMENT**  
(Revelation 6:9-11; Revelation 20:11-13; Revelation 18:20; 2 Peter 3:9)

**\* When you feel INADEQUATE and UNCERTAIN**  
**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus ... 'Your Heavenly GUARDIAN'**  
(Who is keeping your Spiritual Life secure)  
**And Experience ... Feelings of SECURITY and ASSURANCE**  
(Colossians 3:2-3; Gal. 2:20; John 3:3; John 10:10; 1 Thess. 1:9; Rom. 6:22; John 10:28)