

“Refocus for 2014” (preached in January of 2014 at VOH)

Preached in January of 2023 at Doster Community Church

“Fix Your Thoughts on Jesus”

**Hebrews 3:1-3** Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. 2 He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house. 3 Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

[NOTE #1] Why are you sitting here in church this morning? What possibly possessed you to climb out of your warm bed on a dim, cold and quiet Sunday morning and come to church ... again?! Christmas is over, remember? For some of us, the tree is down, the ornaments put away, even the pine needles have pretty much worked themselves out of the carpet by now. There is no big liturgical holiday scheduled for this Sunday. And yet there you sit. I see you. Why? What are you looking for? Have you ever thought about the why? Is it because you like to be around a family atmosphere? Is it because you like the Pastor? Is it because it is just habit ... it’s what you do on Sunday morning? Or is it because you genuinely care about what the Bible says and you want to get help growing to be a little more like Jesus? [Note #2]

We are a destination-obsessed culture. When was the last time you slid behind the wheel of your car without the least idea of where you were going to go? The old tradition of taking a "Sunday drive" has gone by the wayside. You almost never hear of people just going for a ride anymore, except maybe recently because of Covid and people were getting cabin fever. We are busy people with crammed, jam-packed schedules. Just look at our business cards: name, address, work phone number, home phone number, cell phone number, fax number, e-mail address, web site, etc. No meandering about for us, we have helicopter traffic watchers that report to us how to adjust our driving routes around congested intersections and clogged arteries. We have so many places to go and appointments to keep that we keep our cellular phones always at hand. We don't have time to wander around or spend time without an agenda. But this culture is looking for something - desperately. [Note 3]

There is a quest for some sort of awakening, a deep hunger for spiritual renewal, lurking behind all the scheduled chaos that fills our lives. Not all recognize they are even searching for something more to add to their lives. But

there are a few who have become so consumed by their spiritual needs they have "dropped out" for the rest of their lives. For most others, pressed for time but hopeful to find "filling" for this gnawing emptiness deep inside the soul, the spiritual search erupts at odd moments and in peculiar ways. Perhaps it is our continuing commitment to "filling" our schedule that has made a boom market for spiritual "quick fixes". Spirituality has become a major consumer item. Whenever a spiritual ache twinges or an empty soul growls, we can run to the store and pick up the newest hot-seller on the spiritual-fulfillment list: a book, a charm, or a talisman. Unfortunately those who really don't know what they are "looking for" can begin to collect "spiritualities" like others collect stamps. For a while, our spiritual longings might seem to be answered by all the renewed interest in angels. For awhile angels were really popular. There were angel books, angel pillows, angel towels, angel statues, angel jewelry, angel stationery and angel calendars to fill your home, without ever producing an angelic spirit in its midst.

People want to fill the hole in their soul without having to change. They want to rely on crystals, pyramid power, animal spirit-guides, herbal potions, dream catchers, and shaman's secrets to provide the spiritual spark they are missing in our technologically processed, time-ticking daily schedules. The answer to the hole in your soul, the emptiness, the something that is missing is not in anything else but a personal relationship with the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, Jesus Christ. [Note #4]

Hebrews 3:1 tells us that we need to fix our thoughts on Jesus. As a family of God, Doster Community Church is seeking to become disciple-makers in the power of the Holy Spirit, by standing on the Word, walking in love, and resting in arms of Jesus. The only way to become disciple-makers and the only way to live by faith, walk in love, and rest in the arms of Jesus, is if each and everyone of us makes a concerted effort to refocus for 2023. We need to fix our thoughts on Jesus. You know how you move the focus wheel on a set of binoculars to get things in better focus? That's what we need to do as a church. We have been distracted by denomination stuff and other things and we need to re-focus.

The Author of Hebrews knew that there were a lot of wrong reasons as well as wrong ways for spiritual searches. Our world abounds today with counterfeit Christ's. It is difficult, in our society today, to be devoted followers of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to stay focused on becoming disciple-makers, stand on the word, walk in love and rest in the arms of Jesus. There is so much that pulls on us, that tugs us

away from devotion to Christ. Busyness, money, bills, family, Television, entertainment, conflict, Netflix, Pureflix, and the list goes on and on. [Note #5]

In chapter 3 of the book of Hebrews the author reminds us who we are and who Christ is. He addresses his readers as “holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling.” You could interpret it “children of God who have been cleaned and made holy.” In the first two chapters the author has proved that Jesus was superior to the prophets, superior to the angels, and now by the end of verse 6 that Jesus is superior to Moses. For the Jew in those days the law was everything and Moses was the author of the law. So, showing Jesus to be above Moses put Jesus at the very top of the heap, the priority, the supreme one, the King of kings and Lord of Lords. By calling us holy brothers and sisters he indicates that we are sanctified and may enter the presence of God because sin has been removed through the suffering and death of Jesus. Holy means set apart for God in an exclusive sense for the service of God. We are set apart to serve.

What if every Christian, by their own deliberate choice, would consider themselves as set apart for God’s service? Wouldn’t that change things? I mean there wouldn’t be church shoppers deciding which church meets their needs. People would be seeking a church that can use their unique gifts in the most effective way for the Kingdom of God. People would realize that they are not set apart to go to church, be nice people, and that’s it. If you start to identify, see yourself as God’s child set apart to serve God, you start to act differently.

Then the verse one of chapter three goes on to express that we share in the call from heaven and the call to heaven. We, “who share in the heavenly calling.” This is a call from God. Most people think of the Minister as being “called,” by God into ministry. When a Pastor goes to a church he/she doesn’t usually say I got a job. We usually say, “we have received a call,” to such and such church. There is some value in considering yourself called by God to do whatever job you are allowed to do. God gave you the gifts and talents that you have. So in a sense, your job, is a calling. Each of us is set apart for service to God, to make a difference in the lives of others by demonstrating God’s love, by being faithful, and displaying peace, joy, and hope in the way we live. The gospel of John chapter 15 and verse 16 reads, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.” The invitation there as here in Hebrews chapter 3, is to you individually and to us corporately as a church, to be the family of God. God is calling us to live like we are set apart for His service. The privilege of this calling comes with a command to fix our thoughts on Jesus and do this diligently. How

can we say we are doing this if we haven't even opened the Bible outside of church in the last month? The answer is we can't. We are distracted. We are busy, we are sick, we are ...fill in the blank. It is time to refocus and really think about what it looks like to fix our thoughts on Jesus. [Note#6]

If somebody were to look at your life from afar would they say, "that person is set apart for God's service."? Or would they say something more like, "that person believes in God and in His Son Jesus Christ, but it doesn't make a whole lot of difference in the way he/she lives?" I know ...that stings. It stung when I typed it. I did not feel good about the way I had to answer that question.

Each of us is set apart to serve God and each of us shares in a call from heaven and a call to heaven to live in a certain way. The main indicator that we are living this certain way is that we fix our thoughts on Jesus. [Note #7] Some versions read "consider Jesus". The Greek word is KATANOAINE which is a strong and thorough word. Anyone can look at something and not even notice a significant piece or look at it without really seeing the underlying meaning. This word means to fix one's attention on something in such a way that its inner meaning, the lesson it is designed to teach, may be learned. It refers to a concentrated gaze. Apparently the people to whom this is addressed were not doing this. Their attention was drifting away. They were being enticed to look at the world around them. Pay careful attention to Jesus because a personal relationship with Him is absolutely essential for eternal life. If you want to know that you are going to heaven when you die, then you must have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

As I wrote this sermon I was convicted. I asked myself, "Do I have a concentrated gaze on Jesus Christ?" Is my attention focused, fixed, concentrated on Jesus? Would others looking at my life and say that my life was focused on Jesus? I did not like my answer. So I am going to try to make some changes to the way I spend my time. I am going to cut out at least 5 hours of television this next week. I am going to spend at least an hour a day reading the Bible and a book on disciple-making. I am going to start going through the Missionary Pathway by KC Underground with my Pastor-friend Jerald Jones on Friday mornings [Note #8]

When we fix our attention on Jesus, when we consider how great and wonderful Christ is, we will realize that He is God's Apostle and High Priest. If we claim Jesus as our Apostle we are saying that we recognize Jesus Christ as God's perfect ambassador and representative. Apostle means sent out one and refers to one who has the same authority and voice as the one sending him. The apostle, the

sent out one, was forbidden to utter his own opinions outside of the one he represented. So when we recognize Jesus as our Apostle we are saying that the voice of Jesus is the same as the voice of God. We are saying Jesus has the same authority as the one who sent him. So, we must follow Him as God's perfect representative, ambassador, apostle. Another interesting fact about the word apostle is that the second part of the word (stowlun) describes a type of root that shoots forth from a plant in many directions having the capability of putting down a new set of roots. Like crabgrass. Have you ever tried to pull up crab grass? Roots are all over the place. So Jesus was sent out by the Father to establish a new "colony (root system) of heaven" called the Kingdom of God. Christ in turn, has given us that same authority to establish new colonies or churches all over the world. And I don't mean modern society's version of church. A colony or root system, a micro-church, is any group that shares worship, community, and mission. It is an extended spiritual family, led by ordinary people, who live in every day gospel community and own the mission of Jesus in a network of relationships. The last image of verse one is Jesus as our High Priest.

For the Jew the high priest was the ultimate representative of the people to God and God's representative to the people. The word priest comes from the root that means bridge-builder. The priest builds a bridge between man and God. In the system of sacrifices the high priest would consecrate himself and once a year would make a blood sacrifice in the holy of holies to pay the sin debt of the people. So Jesus is the perfect High Priest that builds a perfect and solid bridge between man and God so that we can enter God's presence and Jesus blood covers our sinfulness so that God can hear us and be in relationship with us.

In the next two verses the author of Hebrews establishes that Jesus was faithful and above even Moses. He is basically saying that we must keep our eyes, our attention, and our thoughts focused on Jesus Christ who is our leader in the way of life. **[Note #9]**

In one of his books John Maxwell writes that everything begins with a thought. What we think determines who we are. Who we are determines what we do. Our thoughts determine our destiny. Our destiny determines our legacy. We can change the way we think.

In my pre-marital counseling I always talk to couples about self-talk, which is basically the things we allow ourselves to think about. Love is a decision as much as it is a feeling. You can think your way into falling in love and you can think your way out of love. What you allow yourself to focus on is very important.

If you allow yourself to focus on negative thoughts regarding your spouse you will talk or think yourself right out of love. So I counsel couples to practice positive thinking when it comes to your significant other. Don't let yourself dwell on negative thoughts, but simply acknowledge them and then choose to focus on the positive things. Many marriage experts agree that the practice of dwelling on positive things and practicing dwelling on your partners positives is a characteristic of most marriages in which both parties are very satisfied. For the first 15 years of our marriage I kept a list of 31 things that I loved about Amy in my daily planner so when I was tempted to think negatively or feel frustrated, angry, etc. I would pull that out and read it to keep things in proper perspective. Now I pretty much have it memorized so I just remember the handful of big things that I appreciate and think about or remember those.

So in your relationship with Jesus, in your life, focus your thoughts on Jesus and let His Way, His love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control direct your will, your words, your thoughts, and your life. I think John Maxwell's words echo what the writer of Hebrews is telling us here. What you think about determines who you are. Think about Jesus! That is what our answer should be when someone asks, "why are you here?" "To learn more about Jesus, to make His thoughts my thoughts, and learn to be directed His way. Read the gospels, study His word, spend time in prayer. And you will find that Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Let's pray .... AMEN

**Sermon Notes for “Fix Your Thoughts on Jesus”**  
**Based on Hebrews 3:1-3 given January 8, 2023**  
**Given at Doster Community Church**

- I. Why are we in church this morning?
- II. We are a busy, destination-obsessed culture.
- III. People try to fill the spiritual void in their lives in many ways, most of them, not very effective.
- IV. Fill the Void with Jesus. Hebrews 3:1 tells us to “fix our thoughts on Jesus”
- V. We are holy brothers and sisters in Christ who share in the heavenly calling. We are set apart for service to God.
- VI. Would strangers say of you, “that person is set apart for God’s service.”
- VII. Consider, pay close attention, fix your thoughts ... on Jesus
- VIII. Jesus is our Apostle and High Priest
- IX. What you think about the most determines who you are. Fix your thoughts on Jesus! Write down one thing you can do to move your thoughts toward Jesus this week.