

## SERMON

Hebrews 12:1-3

Fix Your Eyes on Jesus

Nunawading and Waverley, 11-4-21

Dear friends in Christ,

Here is the old school photograph. You look for yourself and want to know how much you have changed. As you search and find where you are in the class group, you don't see anyone or anything else in the photo. Your eyes are fixed on your image. The word for today is telling us to fix our eyes on Jesus in the way you look at your old school photograph. When you were finding yourself in the photograph, all the other persons and surroundings disappeared for a moment. That's how we are to fix our eyes on Jesus so that our friends, our work, our troubles disappear and we see only Jesus.

We keep our eyes on Jesus because we want to be with that great cloud of witnesses, meaning the saints who kept their faith, who endured and won that crown of eternal life. They could include your believing grandparents. One day your parents may be a part of that cloud of witnesses, their example of faith in Christ being an encouragement to you. Don't forget your Christian friends and your old pastor. Do you not want to be with them in the glory of Christ, of the Father and the Spirit! How terrible it would be if you were not there! For me and hopefully for us all, that would be unthinkable. So, fix your eyes on Jesus.

We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus because he went to the cross for us. Someone I know asked about a necklace with a cross on it at the jeweller's shop. She was shown several but wasn't satisfied. She asked if there was one with a crucifix. "What is that", the young lady asked. "It is a cross with the Lord Jesus on it." "Oh", said the attendant, "you mean the one with the little man on it." That little man is, in fact, our Lord. God put aside all of his power, his rule, his immortality, his beauty and holiness and endured the shame of the cross. All the ugliness of humanity was on him, all our wars, our disease, the victimisation of innocent people, all our selfishness and indifference to God and to others were heaped on his sinless, perfect life so that you and I can know him now as our friend and Saviour and have a place next to him at the right hand of the throne of

God. We fix our eyes on Jesus because he redeemed us for himself and we belong to him now and forever.

Does not the life of our Lord Jesus tell us that God has his eyes on you? He picks out each one of us from the seven billion people of this planet, that big class photo, ignoring all other distractions until he finds you. This is what the parable of the lost sheep tells us. Jesus mentioned a shepherd looking after 100 sheep but a foolish one wandered off and became lost. He left the 99 behind to find the one that was lost and when he found it, he came back to the village with the sheep on his shoulders, rejoicing that the lost sheep had been found. Our eyes wander but we keep bringing them back because Jesus' eyes are continuously focussed on each of us.

Keeping your eyes on Jesus means having faith in him. You give him your heart; you give him your love, your life and everything you are and surrender them to him, placing your entire self into his hands. This can take time for young people as you move from a child-like understanding of the Lord who looks after you each day to a deep trust in him, understanding him as a person. For faith is, in the end, a relationship with God, a living friendship, a real knowing of the Lord and all that he has done for you. Such a faith has to rest on the simple truth that he died for you, he vanquished death for you, he demolished the grave and ransacked hell for you. So, keep your eyes on Jesus until this deeper faith comes.

And that brings me to the end. Run with perseverance. If life ended at 15 years of age you would know to keep your eyes on Jesus. However, life may end for many of us at 95 or beyond, like Prince Phillip. Those extra 80 years or so bring many hardships and many excitements that can throw you off course. In a cycling race, the rider keeps her wheel just behind the rear wheel of the leader, cycling in the slipstream, finding it easier if she remains just behind him. Keep your eyes on Jesus in exactly that way, remaining in his slipstream of grace, eyes fixed on him, so that you can make it to 25, then to 45, to 65 (that is me tomorrow) and to 95 and the finally to the open door of the heavenly kingdom