



Walking with Jesus – The Road of Discipleship

LOOKING TO THE MASTER AND GUIDE

Hebrews 12:1-3

Sermon – Greg Holmes - July 25th 2021

Introduction

Matthew 14:25-33 Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ... they were terrified. Jesus immediately said to them, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

...Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

When Peter looks away, when he looks to his circumstances – windy – choppy – ‘walking on water’ - he falters, he sinks.

Peter takes his eyes off Jesus and it all goes pear shaped – he begins to sink.

When his attention comes back to Jesus - he is rescued, saved, encouraged.

It is ‘Looking to Jesus’ that is our theme this morning/evening.

And I want to do that by firstly looking carefully at a passage in Hebrews and then to look at a range of scriptures that fill out what looking to Jesus means, then finally come back to how and why we do it.

You will remember that we are at the beginning of our series on ‘Walking with Jesus: The Road of Discipleship’. Last week Rod Harding spoke to us about joining the road. This week we

continue with the second of the introductory parts – Looking to the Master and Guide.

Body

The letter to the Hebrews (author unknown) is addressed to believers living in the Roman Empire the best part of 2000 years ago but, if you are Christian, you are walking the same path of discipleship that they were.

They were facing increased persecution and struggles in their Christian lives and the letter was written to encourage them in their walk and to keep them from falling off the path...from leaving the road of discipleship.

We turn to Hebrews 12:1-3... Chapter 11 has spoken of the faith heroes of the Old Testament.

Hebrews 11:39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, ⁴⁰ since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

v1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses...

We are surrounded but this great crowd of hero spectators/witnesses - heroes of the faith as examples of those who have 'overcome'.

...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

We are not to look back or to look to the crowd but we are to concentrate on what we are doing. We need to get rid of everything that might impede or slow us down. These may be seemingly good things but if we put them before Jesus then we need to be careful. And, of course, we need to be rid of those

specific sins in our lives that hold us back.

And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us...

...for we are involved in an endurance race. Here the metaphor is, for this writer, a running race, a marathon. Not the walk that we have taken for our theme in this set of studies but some of the principles here are most important whether you are running or walking. For this race has a specific goal and, much as it might disappoint our competitive spirit, a specified leader whom we watch and follow.

And who is that?

2 *...fixing our eyes on Jesus,*

We fix our eyes on Jesus. And this is the point of this stage of our discipleship series. Who is it we are following? Who is our leader and guide? It is JESUS -

...the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

...who is both the beginning and the end of our road. Jesus has walked this road before us. And he shows us how to walk it perfectly ... through to the end.

*For the joy set before him he endured the cross,
scorning its shame...*

Jesus has done this through the scorn, pain, desolation and forsakenness of the Cross...for you and me.

...and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

But now – resurrected and ascended – he RULES from the very throne room of God. Jesus is LORD.

3 *Consider him...*

So we are not just to give him a bit of glance up there at the

head of the race but we are to consider him - think through, mull over, take into account, chew over, weigh up, reflect on ... JESUS! Contemplate him. This is not just a single thought, a momentary glance, an occasional pondering but an enduring, constant state of mind. Jesus as the forefront of our thinking.

...who endured such opposition from sinners...

Again we are reminded that it was not an easy road for Jesus. He suffered opposition – even unto death...from sinful people.

...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Why do we do this? Why consider, think through, mull over, take into account, chew over, weigh up, reflect on ... JESUS! So that we can run (walk) the course. The specific challenges are

growing weary:

Finding the physical effort all too much.

Weariness brings the desire to sit down and give up. This far is far enough.

And losing heart:

This is more internal. The despair of spirit that redirects our eyes to some other way of more easily 'attaining the goal.'

NO, says the writer – look to, consider Jesus.

So who is this Jesus?

Let's do a little trawl through the Bible. Many of these words will be familiar. For many of us the first way we approach a Bible passage is to see what information it gives us. But, just for this morning I want you to look for the general impression, the feeling, the awe these passages generate without getting into the nitty gritty.

So...

Psalm 23

- 1 *The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*
2 *He makes me lie down in green pastures,*
 he leads me beside quiet waters,
3 *he refreshes my soul.*
 He guides me along the right paths
 for his name's sake.
4 *Even though I walk through the darkest valley,*
 I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
5 *You prepare a table before me*
 in the presence of my enemies.
 You anoint my head with oil;
 my cup overflows.
6 *Surely your goodness and love will follow me*
 all the days of my life,
 and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Isaiah 40

- 10 *See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,*
 and he rules with a mighty arm.
 See, his reward is with him,
 and his recompense accompanies him.

And the wonderful contrast:

- 11 *He tends his flock like a shepherd:*
 He gathers the lambs in his arms
 and carries them close to his heart;
 he gently leads those that have young.

John 1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Colossians 1

15 The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Revelation 1

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

*And back to **Hebrews 1***

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Conclusion

Going back to the walking on the water bit we noted that Peter needed to keep his eye on Jesus, not the surrounding circumstances – Jesus was there just in front of him, indeed in arm's reach, standing on the water...and he got distracted.

BUT, for us, Jesus is not literally, physically before us. Certainly we are assured that he is with us 'even unto the end of the age'. But how, in 21st century Kiama, do we look to Jesus?

We look to him clothed in his Word; that is we seek to 'see' – understand him better - through his words, actions and story, remembering all the time that he is the prime focus of all the Scriptures.

Remember Luke 24 and Jesus' discussion with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

²⁵ He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Did not the

Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

So, we go back to Hebrews 12:1-3... The imperatives are before us:

We must *divest* ourselves of all hindrances and sins. ...

We must *run* with patient perseverance the race that is marked out individually for each of us. We must put one foot in front of the other, refusing to quit.

We must *focus* on Jesus as ‘the pioneer and perfecter of our faith’.

We must *consider* him and how he lived amidst contradiction and follow his example.

This is how Eugene Peterson paraphrases **Hebrews 12:**

1 *Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins.*

2 *Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God.*

3 *When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!*