**Fixing Our Hearts on Jesus**

January 5, 2025

Each year our leadership chooses an annual theme to encourage our church family.

* Last year our theme was “**Building on our Heritage**.”
  + Since it was our 60th anniversary, we wanted one eye on our past. What did the Lord do over our history? We used the word “Heritage” to emphasize that point.
  + We also wanted one eye looking forward, hence the word “building,” to show that by the Lord’s grace and favor we would continue to serve him faithfully.
  + Ephesians was our keynote book study.

I spent 20 minutes or so explaining the status of our ministry and our goals should the Lord grant his favor. We might ask ourselves, how are we going to do our part?

* What theme, if adopted, thought about, and lived out, would put us in the best position for Jesus to be glorified and those goals reached?

We decided on the theme “**Fixing Our Hearts on Jesus**.”

* Caring spiritually for others requires a heart fixed on Jesus. Caring for people in crisis or when times are good requires wisdom and grace from Jesus.
* Construction projects and associated capital campaigns are not easy to complete especially doing so with a good testimony and with joy in our hearts.
* When staff changes and budget adjustments ministry wide need to occur, then we need wisdom from above to make those choices.
* Senior pastor transitions can be tricky. Sometimes they go great and other times they do not.
  + Our leaders realize that we could have this theme every year. It is timeless. Yet, there are also specific reasons why this theme is important this year.
* Hebrews will be our keynote book study.
  + As we study “Jesus is better” it is our hope that each heart represented at Faith Church will be more fixed on Jesus than ever before.

Before we get to Hebrews which will start at Faith East next Sunday, I would like to introduce that theme using a different passage.

Please turn in your Bibles to Galatians 2:20.

* Paul writes to the church because he is concerned some do not have saving faith and a false gospel (one based on works) is being discussed, to combat legalism, and to emphasize right living according to the Spirit.
  + Our passage addresses the first point—what is saving faith—and the final point—how that salvation should result in right living.

Please follow along as I read. This is the Word of the Lord. Read Galatians 2:20-21.

I would like us to **consider 4 reasons that explain why our hearts should be fixed on Jesus**.

**Reason #1. Christ granted us victory over the power and penalty of sin (2:20a)**

**Galatians 2:20a I have been crucified with Christ;**

That language is not nearly as shocking today as it would have been to a first century audience because our exposure is limited. We use the cross to symbolize something, but few if any have seen first-hand the real horrors of it.

* Crucifixion was a horrible event to experience or see. Crucifixion was an hours long process with unspeakable shame. Struggling to breathe, exposed to the elements, and longing for a death that will not come.
  + Here the Bible says believers in Jesus are crucified with Christ. Let’s think about what the Lord is telling us.

1. **We were crucified means we died to ourselves**

It should remind us of the horrors that our savior experienced so that we might be set free.

* Crucifixion was the place criminals died. It was the place that Jesus died.

Paul uses the term metaphorically to describe our condition.

* We willingly choose to die to ourselves by admitting that we do not have righteousness of our own. We can never be good enough for God. Denying that we earn our way to heaven.
* When we humble ourselves and acknowledge the saving work of Jesus for our soul we are crucified with him.

Jesus told his disciples that anyone who wants to follow him must deny themselves, pick up his cross and follow Jesus.

* It was a call to set our dreams and goals aside and choose to put ourselves at risk just as Jesus did because we are proclaiming the same message. The polarizing message of the gospel.

Notice that the passage does not say that we were crucified with other criminals. It says, we were crucified with Christ

1. **With Christ means that believers are in union with Jesus**

We were metaphorically crucified with Christ. Thankfully Romans provides a fuller explanation. It says,

**Romans 6:5-7 “For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him,* in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.**

Paul explains conversion. When each of us realized that we were a sinner before a holy God totally incapable to rescuing ourselves and we place our faith and trust in Jesus we were united with Christ and made alive with him.

* At the same time, we were set free from the bondage of sin.

To be crucified with Christ is to be negatively set free from the power and penalty of sin and positively to be united with Christ.

* We could not do that for ourselves. We could not set ourselves free.
* We can choose whether to take the penalty of sin. It rests on those who do not obey the gospel whether they want it or not.
* We could never make ourselves in union with the savior of the world.

If you have saving faith, then being released from the horrible taskmaster called sin is motivation for fixing your heart on Jesus.

* If not, then the promise of being free from the power and penalty of sin is reason enough to repent of your sin and trust in the D/B/R and return of Jesus for your salvation.

**Reason #2. Christ makes our heart his home (2:20b)**

**Galatians 2:20b and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me;**

This may sound strange. What do you mean that Christ lives in me? The Bible teaches that after trusting Christ as my Lord and savior I am in union with Christ and he makes my heart his home.

Elsewhere we find in **Ephesians 3:14-17 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.**

Because Christ lives in me, I now enjoy his victory of sin and death. His victory is now my victory.

* We have this concept in many of our loyalties.
  + When Purdue’s basketball team made the national championship game people said, “we are playing for the national title.” Our identity is often associated with victories of our team loyalty.

There is something more here. It is not just that his victories are my victories. It is that my heart is ever increasingly home for him. The Lord could have used different imagery for this.

* He used living arrangements to describe our relationship with him.

We have lived in the same home for over 19 years. That home has far more Rob & Stephanie today than it did when we moved in. The furniture is ours and our taste, the walls are our colors, the pictures involve our family, the swingset in the backyard was hand built. The longer we have lived there, the more of our stamp it has.

* That is part of the prayer in Ephesians. When we were united with Christ, he moved in. As he grows and matures us, our heart is ever increasingly aligned with his and thus becomes an ever increasingly comfortable place to be.

If that is true, then doesn’t it stand to reason that the least we could do is fix our hearts on him? Wouldn’t we want his transforming grace? Wouldn’t we want his wisdom and care? Wouldn’t we want our goals and desires to be more aligned with his?

Why fix our hearts on Jesus? Because he freed us from the power and penalty of sin and because he has made our hearts his home. Reason #3…

**Reason #3. Our lives belong to him.**

**Galatians 2:20c and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.**

This observation explains how believers in Jesus are to behave. Once we are a genuine follower of Jesus we must live for him. Why?

1. **He loved me**

Jesus put his affections on me even when I was not and am not very lovable. It is easy to love those who are kind to us. It is more difficult to love those who make life difficult. The Lord loved us while we were still sinners.

1. **Gave Himself for me**

His humble coming (which we think about during Christmas) and then his eventual death was the ultimate expression of his love. He paid the price that he did not owe to settle a debt that we could never pay.

* He did so through his own death.

That is why our lives belong to him. That means our loves and affections also belong to him and so does everything else.

One way we show love at Christmas is to give gifts. Each gift represents thought, financial cost, and time. But I think most of us, while liking gifts, would say that gifts are not the sum total of the relationship.

I think it is accurate to say that while my wife might want me to buy her gifts for Christmas she cares more about

* Whether I treasure her as my wife
* Whether I care about her concerns, fears, or worries
* Whether I encourage her spiritually
* Whether I speak kindly to her
* Whether I invest my evenings in things she cares about
* Whether I encourage and sacrifice to allow her to grow or participate in things she enjoys
* Whether I do something about her admonitions or correction
* Whether I make it easy to be married to

The gifts are cool, but a gift would never replace all of that. A bouquet of flowers does not fix a month of being unkind. If it would not satisfy in earthly marriage, then what would make us think Jesus is satisfied with that too?

* When I look at the 9 answers our leaders agreed would represent faithfulness in 2025, it is daunting.
  + We need the Lord to do special things and we need the 2,000 people who call Faith Church their home to do something more than offer a gift to Jesus on occasion.

We cannot look at one service opportunity like a Christmas present to Jesus and then think we are good with Jesus.

* Our lives belong to him. Our hearts fixed on Jesus admits that we belong to him.
  + We desperately need that to fulfill what it means to be a church. I mentioned that our pastors are reading a book by Paul Tripp on leadership in the church. Here is an excerpt that Pastor Aucoin sent me earlier this week.

**Church life was not designed to be comfortable. What is the church? It’s a chosen gathering of unfinished people, still grappling with the selfishness of sin and the seduction of temptation, living in a fallen world, where there is deception and dysfunction all around. There is nothing comfortable or easy in this plan. The church is intended to be messy and chaotic, because the mess is intended to yank us out of our self-sufficiency and self-obsession to become people who really do love God and our neighbors. God puts broken people next to broken people (including leaders), not so they would be comfortable with one another but so they would function as agents of transformation in the lives of one another. Tripp, Paul David. Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church. Crossway: 136-37. Kindle Edition.**

To be agents of transformation in each other’s lives, we will need our hearts fixed on Jesus. Making our lives about Jesus practically flows from a heart that is fixed on him.

* It will impact how we receive and provide care for one another
* It will impact how we invest into the new search process
* It will impact how we conduct our normal weekly ministries and our faithful participation in them.
* It impacts whether you will have time in the Word this year.
* It impacts how you treat those in your life closest to you.
* It will impact how we humbly seek to grow personally and corporately in the ways the Lord wants.

Frankly, it impacts everything. Why is the theme fixing our hearts on Jesus? (1) Christ removed the power and penalty of sin from us; (2) Christ makes our heart his home; (3) Our lives belong to him and reason #4.

**Reason #4. We need to magnify God’s grace by emphasizing Christ’s worthwhile death**

**Galatians 2:21 “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”**

Our church’s mission comes from Scripture: win the lost and teach them to be more faithful disciples. It is not a unique mission. Biblical churches all have that mission. It means, among other things, that the Bible gives an exclusive place to Jesus. Everyone believes, trusts, and gives allegiance to something.

* Some people believe that science has all the answers. We are nothing more than a bunch of chemical and electrical impulses.
* Some believe in Hinduism, others Mormonism, others Deism, and still others create their own religion.
* Some believe that the answer is enjoy life and then die.
* Some, believe and trust that biblical Christianity is true and thus trust the God of the Bible.

Our mission involves reaching the 70-80% of the Lafayette population that did not wake up this morning an attend a Bible believing church and tell them that there is only one way to heaven.

* This is how we ensure that Christ’s death is not minimized and God’s grace is not nullified.

**Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”**

That is about as exclusive as it gets. If you do not have a saving relationship with Jesus, then we encourage you to recognize your sin and your need for a savior.

Nullifying the grace of God and suggesting that Christ died needlessly is one of the reasons that rejecting Christ bears such a stiff penalty.

**2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 says the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, 10 when He comes to be glorified in His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed.**

The penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord. Those who suffer this fate are those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

* The gospel message is not just a message to be believed, it is a command to be obeyed.

I appeal to those of you who do not have a saving relationship with Jesus to repent before the day is done. The Bible says “choose for yourselves today.” In Hebrews it says, “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” And in 2 Cor 6:2 is says, “Now is the day of salvation.” I encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity you have today.

Church family, I believe that we have many reasons to be excited for 2025. Our plan and goals are clear. We have a great mission to fulfill. Let’s begin this year with the kind of excitement that Jesus deserves. Our theme, “fixing our hearts on Jesus” will help us ensure that as we face whatever the Lord allows in our life while looking intently at what the Lord wants to accomplish and how he wants to receive glory.

Pray