

February 27, 2022
Transfiguration Sunday
Hebrews 3:1-6, Luke 9:28-36

Alec Cunningham, a son of this congregation, took the bar exam last week. I trust he got this fill in the blank question correct: “A man who is his own lawyer has a _____ for a client.” The answer is “fool” A man who is his own lawyer has a fool for a client.

Lawyer or not, I think we can all agree with that. It’s foolish to try to do yourself a job for which you are totally unqualified, especially when it comes to something as dire as facing imprisonment or death by a court of law. Unfortunately, I think a lot of Christians forget this same axiom when it comes to their Christian faith and salvation.

I’m not talking about wrong-thinking folks who adhere to works righteousness and obedience to the law as a means to salvation. I hope we’re all Lutheran enough avoid that. But I think it’s real easy for right-thinking Christians to fall into a kind of malaise where they’re going through the motions of faith, but kind of getting dull about the whole thing. You tithe, say your prayers, go to worship week after week after week. You struggle with your sins, repent, are assured of forgiveness in Word and Sacrament on Sunday and then you go out and struggle with your sins some more. The externals in your life like work and school grind along also, and added burdens like pandemics and hurricane recovery take their toll.

After a while you look around your life as a Christian and while you are to a greater or lesser extent walking the walk, it’s just seems nothing to write home about. There isn’t a lot of awe, excitement and enthusiasm and try as we might, we just can’t seem to work up the passion for the faith we think we should be manifesting.

You’re not alone. This seems to have been a problem with the recipients of this letter we call Hebrews. The author gives some good advice: “*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a*

heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him.”

Consider Jesus. I really think we neglect to do this as we should. Why do I say this? Because if we are considering Jesus, focusing on who He is, where He is, what He is doing, I don't think the practice and passion of our faith would get dull.

We go about things foolishly, thinking that we somehow need to inspire ourselves, fan ourselves into flame, get our mind and heart right and generate that godly passion for the Lord. How many of you have considered your faith, let out a heavy sigh and asked yourself, “What do I gotta do to get my Christian faith up to snuff?”

This is you depending on you to increase your faith. That's a lot like you trying to be your own lawyer. You don't have what it takes to do this job. It wasn't you that established saving faith within you. If you're looking to you to get your faith in gear you're going to end up exasperated and disappointed because in your sin you've never been good at the faith game. In fact, you stink at it.

So what to do? Consider Jesus. I think one big reason we celebrate transfiguration Sunday every year is because we need the reminder of who our Savior ultimately is—the glorious Son of God, victorious over our enemies of sin, death and the devil, ruling over all things until that day of judgment when all of it will be brought to completion. This episode on the mountain is the only time in His earthly ministry that Jesus lets that divine glory peak through. This is good and proper because surely it is His cross and empty tomb that shine brightest in His earthly ministry of redemption.

But Christ has ascended to glory and now reigns at the Father's right hand in glory. We must consider this Christ, constantly recognizing that He is not only deserving of all glory, but that He is constantly reigning as Savior King in our lives, my life, your life.

I have trouble doing this. Considering Jesus in glory is not my default. So often I kneel down to pray and after a while I catch where my mind is at...it's on me; the quality of my prayers; if I'm getting everybody on my list, even if I'm sincere enough in my prayers. I'm just kind of grinding out the prayers. Maybe it's the Holy Spirit, but I'll stop, feeling that my prayers are somehow empty, and then I will...consider Jesus...that He is there listening to my prayers, considering my prayers, caring about my prayers, and then those prayers become more of a conversation. Then I'm awed by a mighty yet loving God longing to bring me into His presence. What I allowed to become dull becomes, dare I say, divine because that's where the focus moved.

Here in the Divine Service it's the same thing. I know how it is in the pew; been there, done that. Sometimes we struggle here to get our minds off of ourselves. We question, "Am I really repentant enough of my sins? Is my praise genuine? Is my faith strong enough? Am I doing this Christian thing right?" These aren't necessarily bad ponderings, but if that is where we're dwelling we're left uncertain and doubtful.

Consider Christ! He is here in power...and what is He doing? Forgiving sins! Gifting you with Salvation! Usuring you of life everlasting! This is not dull stuff. He is reason for rejoicing. Seek to recognize what Jesus is up to in the liturgy, the sacraments, the lives of the sinners-turned-saints around you! The King of Glory is here doing glorious stuff!

The author of Hebrews call Jesus "*the apostle and high priest of our confession.*" Consider what this entails. Jesus is an apostle, here and in all of your life proclaiming His Gospel good news and calling you to salvation. That's Jesus doing that through the working of the Holy Spirit. That prompting to avoid a temptation, that sorrow after you failed to avoid temptation, that joyful gratitude you feel after being blessed in some way, that's Jesus at work through the Word of God that has found a place in your heart. And of course in church, sermon, hymns, liturgy, the mutual

conversation and support of us brothers and sisters—that's Jesus at work through His church. It's Him, not you! Consider Jesus.

And Jesus is also our high priest. The high priest is the one who intercedes on the people's behalf before God! So when those questions come; "Am I really repentant enough of my sins? Is my praise genuine? Is my faith strong enough? Am I doing this Christian thing right?" The answer is probably "No. You stink at it." But consider Jesus! You are not your own advocate before the Father. You have a high priest—one who makes full atonement for your shortcomings! When you turn from yourself and focus on all that your high priest is doing for you each and every day—standing in as your righteousness before the Father—it is pretty hard not to be in awe of His love, grace and mercy.

Peter, James and John were flabbergasted and awestruck by Jesus glorified in divine splendor. And yet a greater glory was to come—the glory of the cross by which Jesus has defeated every enemy that would keep us from God divine presence. This glory is revealed to us every time we pause and consider Jesus.

So if you walk away holding onto anything from this sermon today, let it be those two words, "consider Jesus". When you get down in the dumps about your spiritual state and think you faith is getting dull, tear your heart, mind and soul away from yourself and consider Jesus. Looking at yourself you're going to see failure and disappointment. Looking at Christ it's all victory, grace and compassion.

So consider Jesus and be awestruck by what He is doing right now, right here, to you.

Amen.