

"Consider Jesus!"

Hebrews 3:1-6

February 10, 2013

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

“Consider this....” We talk in those kinds of terms quite often and hear people talk that way to us when we are considering alternative choices in arriving at a decision. When parents are trying to help a son or daughter decide whether to attend this college or that college, they might say, “Consider this...” When a friend or a campaign worker is trying to influence you to vote for their candidate rather than the other candidate, they might challenge you to “Consider this....” A television commercial comparing two products will ask you to “Consider this...” After asking you to “Consider this” in all of these situations, these people will immediately follow their invitation with a list of points that show how one option is better than another.

The writer of Hebrews is addressing Jewish people who were considering things that would affect their eternal salvation. They had what they were used to: Moses and the way of the Law. They had what was new to them: Jesus and the way of the Gospel. The first option had been misapplied and misused by the people to urge a salvation by obedience to the Law. The second option had been proclaimed as salvation by faith apart from the Law. The writer of Hebrews is asking the people who have accepted Moses to consider Jesus.

We face the same challenge in our lives these days. We, too, are tempted to seek salvation in the Law, something we can and must do ourselves. We, too, have the message of the Gospel which offers full and free salvation through what Jesus Christ has done for us. Our text encourages us, if you are thinking about following the way of Moses, consider Jesus.

Consider Jesus as someone who is faithful. The book of Hebrews was written to Jews (Hebrews) who had become believers in Christ. Because of that, they had been rejected by their families, ousted from their synagogues, and driven out of their own nation as traitors.

It would have been easy to feel abandoned. Their own people had abandoned them and persecuted them. As a result, they might wonder if God Himself had been unfaithful to them and abandoned them. And, when you feel abandoned by someone, you are tempted to become unfaithful to the one you think has abandoned you. That's the temptation these early Jewish Christians faced: to give up on Christ as Savior and go back to trying to be saved by keeping the Law of Moses.

Don't we face that same feeling and the same temptation today? Many of us have been believers in Jesus all of our lives so we can't appreciate the radical change that Jewish Christians had to undergo when they became believers. However, we can still relate to the experience of Jewish Christians when we try to be faithful to Christ and the Word of God. Many today are content to settle for the "civil religion" of America which says all religions believe in the same God so let's all just try to be nice and do good. When we insist on professing belief in the one true God and the specific teachings of the Word of God, friends – even Christian friends – can mock us and even reject us for being "too religious".

We feel disappointment. Being faithful isn't all that it's cracked up to be. It often isn't good for the statistical reports at church. So, we begin to wonder if Jesus has abandoned us or if this "saved by grace alone" thing is really true or not. We think that there must be something more we have to do to ensure God's love and our salvation. We have to be more faithful in our obedience to Him in order to make it work.

But, before going back to Moses and the Law, consider Jesus. Yes, Moses was faithful. He was faithful in all God's house – what He gave him to do – leading the people, speaking His Word, and giving the Law to the people. It would be easy to try and emulate him.

But Moses was not perfect. He was born a sinner and often committed sins. He abandoned God and His Law at times. In fact, because of his disobedience to the direct command of God, Moses was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Our Old Testament reading for today is the

account of God showing Moses the Promised Land from Mount Nebo. Because of his unfaithfulness, Moses was not allowed to enter, but, instead died there.

Moses, as faithful as he was most of the time, is unable to save us from our unfaithfulness. Consider Jesus. He was faithful to God's call to Him not some of the time or even most of the time but all of the time. He was completely faithful to God in His obedience for us. He was completely faithful in His rescue of us. He was faithful unto death, even death on the cross. He did not abandon us – not even to save His own life. Instead, as the apostle (“sent one”) of God, He was the high priest who offered up the perfect victim and complete sacrifice for sin – Himself on the cross.

Now, we are called to glory, but what kind of glory? Moses offered a kind of glory. He brought Israel out of slavery, gathered them as a great people, delivered God's unilateral covenant to them from Sinai that set them apart from all other nations. There was glory in being the people of God and the Hebrew people took pride in this Law which set them apart.

However, that pride (which was not in and of itself wrong) became twisted. Instead of boasting in the Lord and His grace which had made them who they were, the Hebrew people began to boast in themselves and what they had done. Instead of seeing themselves as people of God by His grace, they began to think that they were set apart from all other people because they were better than them. Because of their obedience to God, they felt that God owed them special glory. That was glorying in Moses

Do we know that delusion too? Do you feel that, because you profess Christ, you are better in God's eyes than those who are not? That's glorying in your obedience. Do you feel that, because you are a faithful worship attendee, a good giver, and a hard worker in church, you are more lovable in God's eyes than so-called “regular” Christians? That's glorying in Moses – in the Law.

Consider Jesus! He gives a greater glory than Moses. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus showed Peter, James, and John His divine glory. It was truly amazing. Our Gospel reading says that “the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white.”

As glorious as that glory was, there was a greater glory to come. That's why Moses and Elijah were there. They appeared in glory to speak of Jesus' departure (his "exodus", the Greek says) which He would accomplish in Jerusalem. He would depart from the glory of this mountain to a different glory on a different mountain. Jesus' glory was not to be found in brightness and surrounded by Moses and Elijah, but in darkness and abandoned by all, even His Father. Jesus' glory was not in His Transfiguration, but in His death.

The glory of keeping the Law (actually, in *not* keeping the Law) cannot compare with the glory Jesus' cross gives us. By Jesus departing to the cross, the forgiveness of sins comes to us. By Jesus being separated from His Heavenly Father, we are united with our Heavenly Father. By Jesus dying, we live. And by Jesus' rising from the dead, we will never die. That is why we listen to Him (Jesus) alone, instead of Moses. In the Law of Moses, there is only condemnation and death. In the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there is only justification and life.

What about our final destination? Our text talks about the house of God. Moses can't get us into God's house in heaven. It's not his house. He is only a servant. Moses offers no way to heaven at all. Under the Law of Moses, we're on our own to earn our way through perfect obedience in thought, word, and deed; by not doing anything that is forbidden and by doing every that is commanded. No one, not even Moses, can do that. By his own merits, Moses couldn't even make it into the Promised Land on earth, much less the eternal Promised Land.

But consider Jesus! We have complete confidence and the sure hope of entering into God's House in heaven because it's His house. He is the Son. He pays the way for us to come into God's House. He preserves us on the way to God's House throughout our earthly life. And He welcomes us into His House when our life on earth is over. In fact, we *are* His house. We are His family. And we get to live in the family home forever.

There are many things that our world would tell us to consider in our search for meaning and hope. But there is One in our lives who will always be faithful to us. On this day, we see Him

revealing His glory as He travels to true glory on the cross. And He is the One, the only One, who, by His glory on the cross and in the empty tomb, enables us to share the home that we long for in heaven. So, consider Jesus! Amen.