**Fix Your Eyes on Jesus**

Based on [Luke 9:51-62](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk9.51-62)

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A man says to Jesus, "**I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home**." Jesus said to him, "**No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God**." It’s a simple image, it takes one’s full attention to run an old fashioned plow. It’s not like running a tractor today with an air conditioned cab and power steering. Plowing takes your full attention; so does the kingdom of God.

On the one hand, this is good news. No one can snatch you from the father's hand, so Satan cannot rob faith from anyone. He cannot crank your head away from the plow. He cannot force, but he can tempt. He cannot claim your attention; and so he is become master of distraction.

But can you agree that the devil's greatest success in the past fifty or so years has been to undermine the attention span of our culture? On account of television, the internet, and information and entertainment made only a click away, is it any wonder that the last century has canonized a new condition called attention deficit disorder. I can't look up anything online without a half-dozen popups flashing in the corner of the screen. Distractions, grab your attention, lead you away from what you were searching for until you've forgotten what you were looking up in the first place.

The Lethbridge Herald, and other newspapers call my house often to offer us a free subscription. Print newspapers are struggling to survive, because people don't have the attention span to read a newspaper anymore. If I want to know something I google it. Can you believe that people used to have to use a card catalogue at the library to find a book? Can you believe that people used to need to physically get up and go to the library to find information. Now google it.

And television...commercials are designed to arouse your appetites in 15-second soundbytes so that, I've been told, **I shouldn't preach over 10 minutes because people's attention spans aren't that long anymore**.

I'm not saying they are wrong, ten minutes might be stretching it for many. I'm not saying the internet and tv are evil; they can be put to good use. What I'm saying is look at the latest way the devil has found to undermine the Gospel. Churches often have nurseries now because you can't expect a child to sit still for an hour. It wasn't always that way, but it is now. We are a culture of overstimulation, so that we can't sustain a thought that can't be taught in a soundbyte or a commercial. The world has made paying attention a chore; so that the church has become impatient with doctrine, **and loath the idea that Christ might have something to teach that cannot be packaged by the world that has made us such excellent consumers of what it produces.** Boredom is the new epidemic, because we are so easily bored by things that involve sustained concentration.

All this to say, following Jesus takes your full attention. Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Where your attention is, there your eyes will be, and in a world of constant distraction we are easily led astray from the fount and source of life. Eve was tempted by the fruit of death because it was a "delight to the eyes", and the tempter got her looking back to what God had forbidden. Jesus says, "**The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light**" (Matthew 6:22). Jesus is not talking about macular degeneration or cataracts; he's talking about turning your eyes toward distraction.

When you’re climbing a ladder, or walking scaffolding, wisdom tells you not to look down, because you'll be scared and your resolve to reach the top will be weakened. You will be distracted. Perhaps you'll even give up, turn around and climb down. In our lives temptation and distractions abound. So Hebrews 12:2 says, "**fix your eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of your faith**."

Once when Jesus' disciples were in a boat at night, they saw him coming to them walking atop the water. Jesus commanded Peter to come to him on the water, and he did. And he was doing marvelously as he kept his eyes on Jesus. **"But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me." Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**" (Matthew 14:28-32). While looking at Jesus, Peter's faith sustained him; when he looked at the wind he sank. He thought the wind deserved his attention more than Jesus did. Where your treasure is, there your eyes will be also.

Your eyes and your heart, they are either fixed on Jesus and his Father’s kingdom, or they are unfit for it. Consider Lot's wife. **God sent angels to rescue Lot and his family from Sodom and Gomorrah; and his wife looked back.** She looked back at her former city and the life she had there. Reluctant to leave, she fell behind, disobeying the clear instructions of her husband and of the angels, she was engulfed by the wrath and devastation God justly poured out there...and she became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). Where her treasure was, there her heart was also…in a place destined for destruction.

But God has prepared for our hearts his mercy and grace. He has sent his Son to cover our sins and be our savior. **Jesus Christ is the one who came down from heaven and had no place to rest his head. Jesus left his father’s many mansions to proclaim the coming Kingdom. Jesus took up the plow of obedience and set his face to go to Jerusalem, where he would suffer and die for the sin of the whole world.** Do not think that you are saved by your expert plowmanship, otherwise you nullify the grace of God and Christ died for no purpose. But precisely because you are a sinner, Christ came to plow the way to eternal life through the forgiveness of your sin.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in order to rightly divide Jesus’ words here it is crucial to realize what Jesus is saying. Jesus is preaching against the greatest sin, the first sin, the sin that leads to all other sins is that of idolatry...that is turning their attention away from God, to something else. Martin Luther once said, “**Confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol."** Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. If your heart is turned towards something other than the true God, you are already distracted. Whatever you have in your life that isn't in your heart under the Lordship of Christ, is an idol and a distraction. Jesus is not telling his disciples to overcome their idols, he’s telling them to bury their idols, that their attention may not be lured away from trust in God alone.

An example from scripture: Jacob, when he took Rachel his wife from her father's house, was taking her from her father's god's, her father's idols. So she stole them, put them in her camel's saddle, and took them with her (Genesis 31:34). Rather than leave them behind, she kept them around. It makes sense in a worldly way; if her husband's God would fail to bless them, at least she would have others to fall back on. Later on Jacob told his household to "**put away the foreign gods that are among you**" (Genesis 35:2). Just as true love does not share lovers, true worship does not share gods.

When you were baptized, you renounced the devil, and all his works and all his ways. When you were baptized you renounced the world, and gained citizenship in heaven. When you were baptized you died to sin and were made alive in Christ. But your renouncing of these things is not a one-time event. **The devil departs, but only to wait for a more opportune time. The world has no claim over you, and yet it’s cares continue to creep into your life. Your sinful self was drowned in baptism, but he keeps popping his head back up when you're not paying attention.** This is why the whole of the Christian life is one of repentance, that is daily renouncing all snares of false comfort and idols and returning to the Lord your God.

Jesus gives you a promise to invest in, an inheritance of treasures in heaven--*won* by his obedience, *purchased* by his blood, *given* to you in baptism. Is there a need to diversify that investment? When Jesus calls you to follow him, what need have you for other sources of comfort? Only if you don't believe he will be able to deliver. Only if you believe that Christ's stock might plummet do you need to have a few other gods in your pocket to soften the blow.

If you don't think Christ can handle your salvation, you had best open up several other bank accounts in case he tanks. **But if you're worried he will fail, it's because your eyes are on the raging winds and not on the one who walks on water. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfector of your faith and you will lack no Good thing.** For the true God has promised his grace and every blessing to you; he created you, and when you were lost in sin, redeemed you by his own blood, and nothing can snatch you from his hands.

One more point to make here on the Gospel lesson. Jesus calls you to follow him. This means to bury your idols and distractions; but it also means to remember who is your leader.

In my seven years as a pastor, if have perceived in the Church of God much anxiety, and I think it has to do with our contemporary concept of church leadership. **If you are a church leader, that means it’s up to you to find ways to grow the church, keep people happy, emotionally stable, and comfortable on their way to the kingdom.** No wonder so few people take “leadership” positions in the church anymore. As if the fate of the church is based your keen direction and ability to set goals and achieve them, who wants that kind of stress.

The only leader in the church is Christ, and all of us, Pastors and People are called to follow. We are called away from distraction; Not stray to the left or the right following other Gods, not looking back from the plow, but to follow Christ whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

Yes there are leaders in the church, pastors and others, but even such leaders are followers of Christ and lead others by following his doctrine. If Christ had not given you his Word, then you have no one to follow, you need to lead the way to salvation. If Christ had given you an unclear word that you can interpret a million ways to Sunday, then Christ is no leader. **In that event, it would be keep an array of idols in your saddle for the perilous journey ahead.** **But get rid of them, because faith does not seek to save itself. Faith knows salvation in the hands of Jesus who is your Lord and your God.** He leads, we follow. He saves, we are saved and nothing can distract him from shepherding his sheep to the green pastures of eternal life.