**Let us fix our eyes on Jesus**  May 1, 16

Hebrews 12:1-2

When driving a car, you have to keep your eyes… fixed on the road.

When having a meaningful conversation with someone, you have to fix your attention on the person you’re talking with.

The passage we’re going to study today, says it is the same with our faith.

And here too, it is easy to be distracted; to focus on the stuff happening around us, and forget about the unseen One who is with us.

Read the passage – **Hebrews 12:1-3**.

The analogy in these verses describes our life of faith like running a race.

There are several things every runner does – (1) they remove (throw off) everything and anything that would hinder them; and (2) they focus on where they are running to.

It’s the same with our life of faith.

There are things we too are to “throw off.”

Things that “hinder;” that slow us down; wear us out; sap our energy and resolve.

1 Corinthians 10:23: *Everything is permissible – but not everything is beneficial.*

*Everything is permissible – but not everything is constructive.*

Hindrances are not intrinsically wrong, but they do keep us from following Jesus with all of our heart, soul and strength.

“Sin that entangles.”

Hindrances slow us down; sin trips us up.

If you’ve ever tripped, sometimes you catch your balance before you fall; and sometimes you go down.

Sin that entangles is the same - it can take us down and hurt us and others in the process.

Like a runner, the follower of Jesus also lives with a focus on where they are running to. As verse 2 says, we “fix our eyes on Jesus.”

How important is this?

There was a farmer who was teaching his son to plow with a mule.

He said, "To make straight furrows, son, just pick out an object beyond the field and keep your eyes fixed on it."

The boy nodded his understanding, and the farmer left.

When he came back an hour later, the farmer was shocked to see a field of crooked furrows.

He asked, "What happened, son? I thought I told you to keep your eye on an object beyond the field."

"I did, Dad,"" the boy replied, pointing to the "standard" he had chosen--a cow in the adjoining pasture!

You get the point, right?

The writer of Hebrews in the next chapter says, ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and tomorrow.’ 13:8

This is why he is to be the constant in our life.

Jesus is the same person today …that we read of in the gospels.

What he did and said then, is what he does and says now.

This is why we look to him…always.

He is the author of our faith.

He’s already run the race; crossed the finish line.

We fix our eyes on him because he is our champion.

He goes before us, showing us how to live by faith in God alone.

He is also the ‘perfecter’ of our faith?

He is active to bring to completion what God began in us when we placed our faith in Jesus.

What did Jesus do that made him the author and perfecter of our faith?

He went to the cross.

How did he do it?

What does the passage say?

Because of ‘the joy set before him.’

What filled Jesus with resolve and commitment was the focus on what would be accomplished by his sacrifice and death.

But what specifically did Jesus see?

I think it was the faces of the ones he would rescue.

Do you know why I think that?

Because in one of his parables Jesus said that all heaven celebrates when a lost one is found; when a ruined one is rescued; when a sinner comes home.

This was the joy that gave Jesus the strength to press on and finish what he came to do.

This is why we fix our eyes on Jesus.

So we too don’t give up as verse 3 says.

Focusing on Jesus won’t take away the challenge of living a life of faith.

But it will keep before you the joy of who you are running after and why.

Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith because he went to the cross.

But I want to remind you that his focus as he moved towards the cross was always on his Father.

Consider these two examples.

Mark 6:41-44.

John 11:38-44.

Did you catch what Jesus did in both of these passages?

He looked up.

Why did Jesus look up?

Because he was orienting himself to what is most true in the world – his Father.

In both situations, the need before him was great.

But Jesus didn’t focus on what he could physically see; the meager resources he had to work with - to meet the needs of 12000+ people or the grief of his dear friends.

He turned his gaze from all the evidence that would suggest there was not enough and he fixed his eyes upon his Father and the resources of heaven.

He did what he tells us to do.

This is why fixing our eyes on Jesus is so important.

If we don’t, we will only see the chaos around us; only see the circumstances threatening to crush us; only see the need and our lack, and be left feeling so overwhelmed, that we’ll lose heart; that we won’t look up to heaven and speak with our Father.

We fix our eyes on Jesus our champion.

But we also fix our eyes on who our Father is.

Psalm 19:1

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

Do you know how big the sun is?

More than a million earths could fit inside the sun.

Our Father made the sun.

Do you know the kind of power emitted by the sun?

The amount of energy released in a single solar flare is the equivalent of millions of 100-[megaton](http://hesperia.gsfc.nasa.gov/sftheory/glossary.htm#MEGATON) hydrogen bombs exploding at the same time!

The power of our Father is infinitely greater!

Our Father also made the stars.

In the Milky Way alone it is estimated there are between 100-400 billion stars.

A 2013 study indicated that there are 225 billion galaxies in the observable universe. Can you do the math? 200 billion x 225 billion.

The wisdom of our Father is far above us.

Jeremiah 27:4-5: *This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel says:*

*With my great power and outstretched arm I made the earth and its people and the animals that are on it...*

Do you know how much water is in the ocean?

According to the [U.S. Geological Survey](http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/watercycleoceans.html), there are over 332.5 million cubic miles of water on the planet.

Do you know how much land there is?

There are 57 million square miles of land or 36.5 billion acres.
North America 8,500,000 Sq. miles
South America 6,814,000 Sq. miles
Europe 3,872,000 Sq. miles
Asia 16,990,000 Sq. miles
Africa 11,500,000 Sq. miles
Australia 2,974,581 Sq. miles

Islands 6,340,000 Sq. miles

When it comes to species of animals on the earth, here’s what we know about vertebrates, which are approximately 3% of all species.
**Reptiles:** 7,984 species
**Amphibians:** 5,400 species
**Birds:** 9,000-10,000 species
**Mammals:** 4,475-5,000 species
**Ray-Finned Fishes:** 23,500 species

Our Father works on a scale of abundance that is staggering.

This is who we fix our eyes on.

This is who we look to when we pray.

For some of you, I know this part of the race you are running… is challenging.

I know your eyes are fixed on Jesus, but the going has been really hard of late.

You feel weary.

Some days I’m sure you wonder how you are going to keep going.

Can I remind you of something else about Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Look at Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:17.

The One who sustains us, also promised, “I will not leave you as orphans…” John 14:18.

You may feel alone, but you aren’t.

You may feel forgotten, but you aren’t.

Let’s quietly speak with our Father.

Remember who he is – thank him; reach out to him.

The writer of Hebrews says in 10:24 that we are to “spur one another on.”

If you are feeling in over your head, would you allow other “runners” to spur you on - by praying for you?

If you need prayer to endure, would you willing to put up your hand or to stand?

And others of you who are around or near to this person, will you go to them and pray for them? And as you do, would you look to heaven, like Jesus did, and ask on behalf of this person that the Father would give them “a second wind.”

Fresh strength.

Fresh hope.

Fresh resolve to press on.

Pray for their focus on Jesus to be maintained and not lost.

Tim would you quietly play - **God of Angel Armies**.

Let’s sing this song together as a declaration of faith.

For some of you there are things you need to throw off this morning.

For some, it is a hindrance that’s slowed you down or held you back.

For others, it is a sin that has tripped you up.

Some of you may have been sitting on the sidelines.

Tell God about it.

Ask for his help.

Confess if needed.

Quietly speak with your God and Savior.

The writer of Hebrews says in 10:24 that we are to “spur one another on.”

Would you allow others to do that for you by praying for you?

If you need prayer to get back in the race; to run again, would you be willing to put up your hand or to stand?

And others of you who are around or near to this person, will you go to them and pray for them? Look to heaven, as Jesus did, and ask that into their hearts would be poured the love of God. Romans 5:5

Sing with me this song as a prayer - **Restore My Soul.**

The Table reminds us “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1.

We eat the bread and we drink the juice in remembrance that the body and blood of Jesus was enough…

Tim to play musically **Overwhelmed** as the bread and the cup is passed.

Prayer of Thanks

Benevolent Offering as we sing Overhelmed.

**Blessing:**

In his last conversation with his followers before he died, Jesus repeatedly spoke of his joy being in his followers lives.

John 15:11: *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

John 17:13: *Father, I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.*

We can look at these verses from our perspective - God is our Father.

But we also need to see these verses from God’s perspective - we are his children.

Do you know what that means to God?

Look at the parable of the prodigal father.

Look at what the father said to the son who stayed home.

Luke 15:31 - *...everything I have is yours.*

Look at what Galatians 4:5 says - *we have the full rights of son and daughters.*

Is this in our mind and on our heart as we come to prayer?

Everything of the father’s is ours.

This is why we are to ask him about our needs.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*

*Forgive us our sins.*

*Protect us from the evil one.*

But the next couple of times that we study about prayer I want to add another dimension.

Try to think of it like this.

We’ve been brought into the family.

And now that we are in the family, we are a part of the family business.

We are partners with God in his mission.

Are we silent partners?

Are we partners in name only, but for the most part uninformed?

Consider this remarkable statement made by Jesus in John 15:15:

*Everything that I have learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

When he left the earth, Jesus deliberately chose that his followers would be his presence in the world - we are the conduits through which his power works.

Consider the story of Ananias and Saul - Acts 9:10-19.

- Ananias was to place his hands on Saul

- Ananias was to speak healing over Saul

And as he did, Saul was healed and filled with the Spirit.

Why did Ananias have to put his hands on Saul?

So that the power of God could flow through him to Saul.

Why do Jesus’ follower have to get up close and personal with the people of this world? Because presence is how God is revealed and his power released.

Did the God who made the stars, the earth and everything in it, need to use Ananias to give Saul back his sight? No. But he chose to do so.

Does he need to use you and me here in Sooke?

No. But he chooses to do so.

Every follower of Jesus finds themselves on the front lines of a spiritual battle that is being waged around the world for the destiny of men and women.

This mission and its accomplishment is what fuels our prayer.

And our boldness in prayer comes from Jesus’ assurance: ask for whatever you need and my Father will give it to you.

Did Jesus ever lack?

Did the Father ever let him down? NO!

Neither will we lack what is needed in order to go to the ends of the earth.

Before we pray together read the example given in Acts 4:29-31.

\As we’ve done the last number of weeks, we want to break into prayer huddles.

Let’s focus our prayers on this: to whom is the Spirit leading you to go to and speak the good news of Jesus?

In order to do that, Jesus invites you to ask of him for whatever you need in order to do this – courage, boldness, words, faith, trust.

Pray expectantly and with faith.

Jesus promises that the Father will hear and answer.

So his joy fills our lives.

That sometimes we’ll be carrying with us a hindrance that causes us to lose our focus on Jesus.

That sometimes sin will trip us up and we’ll

That sometimes others sin will

Do you remember when Peter walked on water?

Matthew 14:22-32.

While Peter fixed his eyes on Jesus… he walked on the water.

It was only when he stopped looking at Jesus, he sank.

And it was only because he refocused on Jesus that he and Jesus walked back to the boat.

Who do we pray to?

14:18 – I will not leave you as orphans

**Sunday, May 1, 2016**

Welcome/ Call to Worship: Job 26:7-14

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty**

**God of Wonders**

**Holy is the Lord (God Almighty)**

Prayer (play intro of Overwhelmed while praying)/Offering

**Overwhelmed**

In unison: The Lord’s Prayer

Kids Zone Dismissal

Coffee/Question

Teaching:

**Whom Shall I Fear (God of Angel Armies)**

Prayer Huddles

**Overwhelmed**

Passing of Bread and Cup

(Tim can you just play the keyboard while the bread and cup is passed - choose whatever appropriate song you’d like)

Prayer of Thanks

Benevolent Offering

**Outrageous Grace**

Communications