

Text: Heb. 3:1-6

Title: "What we see when we take a closer look at Jesus"

Time: August 3, 2014 pm

Place: NBBC

Introduction: I learned this past week that binoculars are an important tool for hunting bears in Alaska. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has a video on their website called, "Take a Closer Look." The reason for the video is conservation of the bear population. The Department is concerned that hunters will deplete the bear population if they shoot the wrong kind of bear, females in particular.

When a hunter finds a bear, he is supposed to take a closer look at some of its features to determine whether he has found a male and whether he is old enough to be the kind of bear a hunter should shoot. The video explains that the hunter can distinguish a male from a female by a closer look at the bear's color, size of ears, neck width and length, head and shoulders, and fluffiness of fur.

I mention that because the one command we have in our passage this evening is the command to take a closer look (v. 1, "*consider* the Apostle and High Priest of our profession"). That word *consider* means *to take a closer look*.

Moses is also important in the passage. When Stephen recounted how Moses saw the burning bush in the wilderness, he mentions that after seeing the bush initially, Moses then approached it to get a closer look (Acts 7:31). He uses this word when he tells us that Moses took a closer look at the bush.

The point of the passage is simply that you and I need to take a closer look at Jesus if we are to avoid the danger of

quitting on God. Adolph Saphir: "Him we are to consider in faith: for wherein is all our safety: looking unto Jesus, we have peace and joy; for this is the joy of our life, that all perfection is in Christ. And in prayer; for can we see Him in His holiness without the petition rising in our hearts, 'O that I might be conformed unto Him!' [?] We are to look upon Him as a painter looks upon a model, with the full intention and desire of imitating Him. We are to keep constantly in sight of Him, as our only infallible Guide upon earth. All this is included in that one word, that one express, 'consider.' Gaze upon, meditate upon, 'the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.'"

So I want to title our study of the passage this evening, "What we see when we take a closer look at Jesus."

But before we get into that, I think we do well to remind ourselves why it is that the author tells these people to take a closer look at Jesus. It is not that he wants to conserve something that they might damage, like hunters in Alaska. Nor is it that he wants to satisfy a curiosity, as Moses wanted to in approaching the strange bush.

What is at stake is something far more serious for us. We need to take a closer look at Jesus because doing so is the key to holding fast to our hope firm until the end (v. 6). The recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews were Jewish Christians who were tempted to go back to their former Judaism given how difficult life as Christians had become. What the author writes in this Epistle he writes to encourage fellow believers to not quit on Christ, to hold fast.

So what do we see about Christ, when we take a closer look at Him, which helps us hold fast to our hope and not quit on Him? Notice 4 things with me:

I. We see our brotherhood (v. 1, “holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling”; “our profession”).

Application: We saw the last time we were in Hebrews together from chapter two the truth that believers are a brotherhood because Jesus Christ is their brother (2:11-12, 17-18). To be the brother of Christ is to be sanctified by the sanctifier (v. 11). To be the brother of Christ is to be done with shame (v. 11). To be the brother of Christ is to be the fulfillment of prophecy (vv. 12-13). To be the brother of Christ is to be freed from slavery (vv. 14-18).

When we take a closer look at Jesus, we realize that He is our elder brother, and that in union with Him, we are a brotherhood. We learn four more things about this brotherhood here in chapter three:

1. We are holy brothers. It is the nature of our brotherhood that we should be holy, separated from sin and the world.
2. We are heavenly brothers. “This world is not my home; I’m just a passing through. My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven’s open shore, and I can’t feel at home in this world anymore” (“Victory In Jesus”).
3. We are called brothers. This is a gracious calling, not a designation that we earned through our works, but a designation that was freely given to us by Christ who earned it for us (2:14-15).
4. We are professing brothers. We have a common confession. Adolf Saphir: “Let us not be secret disciples; let us not come to Jesus merely by night, ashamed to bear testimony to the gospel. Let us not despise the outward and visible

church, although, alas! There is much error and sin connected therewith. Our confession of Christ in the outward church, in the congregation of professed disciples, in the ordinances of Christ's institution, let us not undervalue it! Remember with gratitude that you have publicly professed Christ; that into the Church of Christ you have been received by baptism, and acknowledged at the Lord's Supper as a brother and partaker of the heavenly calling. Let the remembrance of this be to us continually helpful, and stimulate us to adorn the doctrine of the gospel by a Christ-like life and walk." when we take a closer look at Christ, we see His brotherhood and what that means for our lives.

II. We see His titles (v. 1, "Apostle and High Priest of our confession").

Application: That Jesus is the Apostle of our profession and the High Priest of our profession will occupy the pages of this book until the end of chapter 10. As the Apostle of our profession, Jesus is better than Moses, who was sent to Egypt to bring Israel to Canaan, and the mission that Jesus was sent on leads us into our rest (3:2-4:13). As the High Priest of our profession, Jesus is better than Aaron, the first High Priest under the Levitical system, and Jesus provides the sacrifice that ratifies the New Covenant, which is far superior to the Old Covenant (4:14-10:39). As the Apostle of our profession, Jesus represents God before the people. As the High Priest of our profession, Jesus represents His people before God. As Apostle and High Priest, He is Mediator.

Because this passage begins the section that deals with the first of these titles, *apostle*, I want us to think especially about the sense in which Jesus is the Apostle of our profession. We will see four truths in this regard.

1. As the Apostle He obeyed the one who sent Him. *Apostle* means *sent one*. Jesus was sent on a mission, and He obediently and completely accomplished that mission. (John 17:3-4, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.")

2. As the Apostle He was sent with a message. (Luke 4:18-19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.")

3. As the Apostle His sent message must be received. (Matt. 10:40, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me." John 3:17, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.")

4. As the Apostle He sends us out to continue His apostolic ministry. (John 20:21, "Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, so send I you.") As we take a closer look at the truth that Jesus is our Apostle, we come to understand that we are apostles of His. We must obey the one who sent us; we must proclaim the message with which we were sent; and our message must be both proclaimed and received, or men shall perish.

III. We see the inadequacy of our Moses (vv. 2-4).

Illustration: Saphir on the Jew's estimation of Moses: "To speak of Moses to the Jews was always a very difficult and delicate matter. It is hardly possible for Gentiles to under-

stand or realize the veneration and affection with which the Jews regard Moses, the servant of God. All their religious life, all their thoughts about God, all their practices and observances, all their hopes of the future, everything connected with God, is with them also connected with Moses. Moses was the great apostle unto them, the man sent unto them of God, the mediator of the old covenant; and we cannot wonder at this profound, reverential affection which they feel for Moses. You read in the [G]ospels and in the book of the Acts with what joy and pride they said, 'We are the disciples of Moses.' It was their glory and boast; and we cannot wonder at this when we think of Moses, of his marvelous history, of his grand character, of the unique position assigned to him in the history of God's people, and the wonderful work given him to perform."

Application: Yet in spite of their veneration for this great man, Moses, these Hebrew Christians were on the verge of quitting on God. There is a glory and a joy and an encouragement in knowing a Moses, isn't there? Who is your Moses? My Moses was Pastor Ashbrook. He is home with the Lord now, so I just have the memory of him, but he certainly fits that bill in my life. It was easier to be faithful when he was in my life being faithful too. Who is your Moses? Maybe your husband is your Moses. Maybe a former pastor is your Moses. Maybe it is your dad. Maybe a former church member who was a special encouragement to you but is no longer here.

Our author wants his readers to understand that what they need is not a closer look at Moses, but a closer look at Jesus. When it comes to giving us the encouragement and the power to not quit the Christian life, in the end, Moses is flawed, frail, and not up to the glory and the honor required for such a task as this.

Moses is worthy of some glory and honor as a house might be, but Jesus is worth of all the glory and honor as the builder of the house. When we see a beautiful home we do not walk up to it and congratulate it. We congratulate the architect and builder and furnisher. Jesus is the builder of Moses, and Moses is the house. The word *builder* here “expresses more than the mere construction of the house. It includes the supply of all necessary furniture and equipment” (Westcott, p. 77).

Moses was what he was for God because Jesus, Moses’ God, made him that and sustained him in that. Looking to a Moses for sustenance in the Christian life will not be enough. We must look to the one who sustained Moses — we can take a closer look at Christ and know Him alone to be all sufficient.

IV. We see the requirement of faithfulness (vv. 2, 5-6).

Illustration: Saphir: “Faithfulness is what God marks, loves, and honours; a perfect, sincere, and constant desire to obey the will of God in all that is entrusted to our care.”

Application: Christ was faithful as a Son, Moses as a servant. Christ was faithful over His house as a sovereign, Moses was faithful within his house as a subject. Moses’ house was the nation of Israel. Christ’s house is His church, you and me.

What does it mean to be faithful? It means to live steadfastly as a witness for things only hoped for right now. Moses did so (v. 5b). Now we must do so (v. 6b). Our author says, we are today Christ’s house if tomorrow we are faithful. Alternatively, if tomorrow we prove to be unfaithful, we are not today Christ’s house. We need not build a large fol-

lowing to be Christ's house. We need not win a popularity contest and have a good time to be Christ's house. We need to hold fast to our hope, our confidence, our boast of a glorious future in spite of the difficult present. We must be faithful.

Conclusion: Take a closer look at Jesus, and you will not quit on Him.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*