

The Unchanging Jesus is always faithful

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, brothers and sisters in Christ. It is indeed a great privilege for me to be able to gather physically with all of you here, God's people, this morning.

You know, during this, what we call as unprecedented time, this is very uncertain due to the COVID-19 pandemic we are currently going through.

Indeed, to be able to gather physically like what we are doing this morning is a luxury. And therefore, I thank God that we have this opportunity to be together here this morning.

Now, let me begin by briefly introducing myself. My name is Wilston, Wilston Trinh. I am originally from Kuching.

I grew up in Kuching. In the year 2013, I went to seminary to prepare myself for pastoral ministry. I graduated in 2016.

[1 : 10] And I am currently based in Saratog, a very small town in the heart of Sarawak's 2nd Division. I think many of you know where Saratog is.

So I serve as one of the pastors there in one of the churches there. So that's briefly about me. And I thank Brian as well, who is a personal friend of mine, who invited me to be here to preach God's word to God's people this morning.

Indeed, it is a great privilege to be able to be of encouragement to many of you, not only here together physically, but as I was told, this is a hybrid service.

So there are people watching online as well. Now, as I was told, as we all know as well, that today we begin a new sermon series looking at the unchangeable Jesus.

The unchangeable Jesus. So in order for us to do that, let me send your attention to our scripture reading this morning, our text, which is taken from Hebrews chapter 3, verses 1 to 6.

[2 : 34] So it would be helpful if you could have your Bibles open in front of you. And there's a sermon outline here as well in the handout. So that will be helpful if you want to follow along this message as well.

Hebrews chapter 3, verses 1 to 6. We're going to look at what God has to say to us in that particular passage this morning. Now, let me pray before we begin.

Let's pray. Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, You who speak to your people, first through the prophets of all, and now you speak to us fully and authoritatively through your Son, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the scriptures.

Therefore, as we look to your word this morning, help us by your Spirit to understand your word, to obey it, and by doing so, we'll not only be informed in our minds, but also be transformed in our lives.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen. Our Christian life is a journey, isn't it?

[4 : 01] Christian life is a journey. Now, for those of you who are used to long-distance journeys, be it by airplane, or driving your own car, or by train, or by whatever means of transportation there is, I'm sure you'll agree with me.

You'll know how daunting long-distance journeys can be. I know this because I experienced this firsthand.

As someone who is currently based in Saratog, as I said, it's a very small town in the hearts of Sarawak's 2nd Division, and I think many of you know where Saratog is, the only way for me to get there from Kuching is by six hours of driving.

Six hours of driving. That's the only way to get there. I wish there was airport, but there isn't any.

And the journey is very daunting if you're not used to it.

And especially so, with the current road condition, now that the Port Pan Borneo Highway construction is currently on its way, it is made especially more daunting than it already is.

[5 : 35] So daunting is the journey that I often feel like just giving up during my journey, even before I reach halfway of my journey.

Sometimes even before the quarter of my journey, I just feel like giving up and return back to where I was from without even finishing my journey. Now this is my fourth year living in Saratog now. Even after the four years of going back and forth during holidays, it still feels very daunting. Now our Christian journey can feel like that as well, isn't it? It is daunting.

It is intimidating. Sometimes it feels it is not worth the journey, especially when you consider all the things that you have to miss in life as compared to your friends and family who are not on the same journey with you.

[6 : 46] So daunting Christian journey can be that it is no wonder so many of those who once professed to be Christians but now they just left the faith altogether.

Sometimes it is due to the pressures of life. Sometimes it is due to their own personal ambition and greed. Sometimes it is due to their unequally yoked partners.

But whatever the reason is, they they simply don't finish well in their Christian journey. Now I am sure many of you here know those who are like that even among your own friends and family.

And given this reality of Christian journey, it is no wonder the Bible talks so much about faithfulness and the importance of finishing well.

and that is especially so in the book of Hebrews, the book that we are looking at today in which our passage is a part of. This is actually a letter written to predominantly Jewish Christians at that point of time that were under pressure of abandoning their faith in Christ due to persecution and difficulties due to persecution and difficulties because of their faith in Christ.

[8 : 34] Many of them were tempted to revert back to Judaism, their own religion, because that provided them stability and comfort.

And that is why this letter was written to them to spur them, to encourage them, to exhort them and even to rebuke them to remain faithful to Christ.

And in our passage today, we see how the writer of Hebrews does exactly that.

Firstly, by exhortation. Firstly, by exhortation. take a look at verse 1 of our passage this morning.

It says, Therefore, holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

[10 : 00] Now, the first thing you notice here in this verse is the word therefore. You know, one seminary professor of mine always say this.

He says, every time you encounter the word therefore in your Bible, you need to ask yourself, what is that word therefore is therefore?

If you get what I mean. Well, it is to show to us that the verse here that we're looking at, verse 1, is actually a conclusion or a consequence of something that has been argued or something that has been said previously.

And for that we need to go back slightly back in chapter 2 of the same book, particularly in verse 5 on words, you can see the writer of Hebrews actually argues how Jesus had to be made fully human in order that he might face death in our place for our redemption.

And that is his mission. mission. And he is faithful in that mission. That's why we read in verse 17 of chapter 2, it says, for this reason, he, referring to Jesus, had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

[12 : 01] So, in essence here, it is argued that Jesus was faithful in discharging his duty as a high priest, the one who offers sacrifice to God on behalf of his own people.

And the consequence of that fact is in verse 1 of chapter 3, the verse we're looking now. Because Jesus is faithful in his duty, therefore, fix your thoughts on him.

Because Jesus is faithful in his duty, therefore, fix your thoughts on him. You're not fixing our thoughts on something, especially here, this is not the kind of fleeting thought, something that crossed your mind every morning when you go to work, when you are caught in a traffic jam, but something that slipped your mind, or something that you totally forget, at the end of the day.

No. The ESV translation translates it as this, consider Jesus. Consider Jesus.

That means to give a careful thought, weighing every implication of it, and to respond accordingly to it.

[13 : 40] Consider Jesus. life and death situation. You don't consider life and death situation very lightly, don't you?

And indeed, considering Jesus, or not considering Jesus, has life or death as its consequence. God is not the audience of this letter is addressed here. They are called holy brothers and sisters. Holy brothers and sisters. Now, holy here simply means being set apart from something else, from everything else. So, in this case, they are being set apart from the rest of the world, the rest of the world, in order to belong to heaven.

That's why it is described here as heavenly calling, in verse 1. You see, the logic here is this. They are asked to fix their thoughts on Jesus because they are already holy.

[15 : 03] It's not the other way around, you know. It is not as if like you're fixing your thought on Jesus, therefore it makes you holy. No. But because you are already holy, therefore fix your thoughts on Jesus.

Now, I wonder if you this morning, or perhaps even those of you who are watching online, I wonder if you look at yourself, is holy?

You may not think you are holy, you may not even feel like you are holy, but the Bible is clear. If you are a believer of Jesus today, you are holy.

You've been set apart from the rest of the world, you no longer belong to the world, but you belong to heaven. That's your eternal destiny.

glory. And this is made possible because of Jesus' two offices as mentioned here at the end of verse one.

[16 : 23] Jesus here is called Apostle and High Priest. Apostle and High Priest. Now, it is interesting to see, in the whole of New Testament, these two titles of Jesus, Apostle and High Priest, are only found here in the books of Hebrews.

You can't find it anywhere else in the New Testament. Now, Apostle simply means someone who is sent or a messenger. That is simply what Apostle means here.

So, Jesus here is the one who is sent by God to represent the invisible God. and High Priest is the one who offers sacrifice to God on behalf of his own people.

So, Jesus' job here is to represent God to us by being his apostle and to represent us to God by being a High Priest.

And that's what makes us holy. Jesus came from heaven to reveal God to us and by his sacrifice and his blood shed on the cross we are made holy and blameless in God's sight.

[17 : 52] And because now we are holy and belong to heaven we are to fix our thought on Jesus.

But what are the aspects of Jesus that we need to fix our thoughts on? What are the things about Jesus that we need to consider? Well, certainly there are a lot of things that we need to consider about Jesus.

We need to consider who he is. He is our savior and our king. We need to consider what he has done. He died on our behalf in our place to purchase redemption for us.

And we need to consider how we respond to him. And we also need to consider his example.

We need to consider his example. And that is what we see here, particularly in our text this morning. And that brings me to my next point.

[19 : 01] The reason why we need to consider Jesus. Here the author of Hebrews gives us the reason for fixing our thoughts on Jesus.

And the particular reason given here is because Jesus is faithful. Now to put it in another way, we can simply put it like consider the faithfulness of Jesus.

Consider the faithfulness of Jesus. You know, in the book of Hebrews, one technique or literary device that is often employed again and again in the book of Hebrews is by way of comparison.

By way of comparison. If you read the whole book of Hebrews, you will know that in this book, Jesus is always compared to either the Old Testament characters or the Old Testament systems, like the temple and all these sacrificial systems.

Now this is to make a point to say that as compared to all this Old Testament stuff and these Old Testament characters, Jesus is better or Jesus is greater.

[20 : 35] That is what you see again and again in the book of Hebrews. And that is true in this particular section we are looking at from verse 2 to the early part of verse 6, where Jesus here is compared to one Old Testament character, Moses.

You see, Moses is a good comparison here because as someone who came out from Judaism, their old religion and embraced Christianity now, I certainly would want to hear the argument why my new religion is better than the old one.

Right? And we know the recipients of this letter were predominantly Jewish Christians who came out of Judaism to embrace Christianity.

And therefore, Moses here is very relevant to them. And they certainly know their Old Testament. They certainly know how faithful Moses was in the Old Testament as God's mouthpiece, as God's representative.

As alluded here in verse 2, and also quoted directly from Numbers 12 verse 7, here in verse 5.

[21 : 59] But notice one thing. Here, the author of Hebrews, he does not denigrate Moses or the Old Testament.

The comparison here is not between the bad Moses and the good Jesus, no, but rather between the great Moses, between great Moses and the greater Jesus.

That's the comparison here. That's what we see in verse 2. He says, he was faithful to the one who appointed him just as Moses was faithful in all of God's house.

God's house. Now, we know from the Old Testament, Moses was the only one who met God face to face. It was to him that the Ten Commandments was given in Mount Sinai.

You all know the story from the Old Testament. He was the one whom God chose to lead his people, the Israelites, out of Egypt from the land of slavery to the promised land, Israel.

[23 : 08] and he did what he was tasked to do faithfully, even in the midst of opposition from his own people. And not only that, he was also faithful in bearing witness to the coming Messiah, something that they are anticipating, as we see here at the end of verse 5.

And that's why God himself, gave him the honor by saying how faithful he is among God's people. If you look at Numbers chapter 12 verse 7 in the Old Testament, perhaps after you go back you can read that particular chapter.

But yet, yet it is said here in verse 3 that Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Moses.

Jesus is worthy of greater honor than Moses. And the analogy used here is a house and its builder. You know, in the ancient time, perhaps not so much today, but in the ancient time, the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

And God himself is the builder, as verse 4 makes clear. You know, three days ago, I went to Starbucks at Jalansong, which is not far from here, I think you all know where it is, to get my coffee fixed.

[24 : 48] When I was waiting for my turn to order, I saw a lady talking to another lady who is the worker there at Starbucks.

And I could hear very clearly what they were talking about. Apparently, the lady wanted to buy a certain amount of Christmas limited edition Starbucks Thermos.

You know what a Thermos is? Right? So it's a Christmas limited edition Starbucks Thermos. Not one, but she wanted to buy 46 of it.

The only problem was, as I heard the conversation, the Thermos that the lady wanted is yet to be released to public for sale.

So, selling all the Thermos that the lady earlier asked, earlier than the official release date of that limited edition Thermos, it's actually unfair to all the other customers who are willing to wait, isn't it?

[26 : 05] So they were talking and negotiating between the two of them and we all could hear very clearly what they were talking about. So after negotiating for quite some time, the lady, the worker of Starbucks told the other lady, she was saying something like this, look, I can't make the decision to sell the Thermos to you because I am just the shift manager.

manager. But what I can do to you is this, is to give you the phone number, the contact number of the store manager. Call him and talk to him and probably he will be able to make the decision for you.

So Moses is like that shift manager, the lady who works in Starbucks. she has some power and authority but she's just one of the workers there.

But Jesus is like the store manager. He oversees all the operation at the store, he makes all the important decisions that has to be made, and perhaps you could take it further by saying that he owns the whole store, even the workers there.

That's why in verse 5 it says here, Moses was faithful as a servant in all of God's house, that is among God's people.

[27 : 51] He's just one of the workers there. But in verse 6 it says here, but Christ is faithful as the son over God's house.

That is, he is the head and he owns the family. Of course, the one who owns it has greater authority, isn't it?

And all of this is to show to us how Jesus is the example of faithfulness and to spur us to do the same because he is our example.

The writer of Hebrews wants us to be faithful like Jesus. But this does not come without a warning, which is my third point.

faith, if it were to be a biblical faith, is a persevering faith.

[29 : 02] It's a faith that perseveres until the end. And you see, God in his own wisdom certainly has his ways of encouraging us to persevere in our faith.

And one of the ways is by warning us through his word in scripture. And that is what we see here at the end of verse 6.

And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory. our faith, if it's a true faith, is evident in the way we hold firmly to our confidence and our hope. That is true faith.

It's a persevering faith. And what are we to hold on to? Two things, confidence and hope.

[30 : 14] Confidence here refers to the gospel confidence. hope. The confidence that we have in Christ, that he died and rose again for our redemption, and by believing in him, our sins are forgiven, and we have the promise of eternal life.

That's our gospel confidence. And hope here refers to the future resurrection hope that we have also in Christ, where we will live together with God in eternity, where there is no more sin, pain, and suffering.

The hope of new heavens and new earth. And we need to hold on to both of these things, lest we find ourselves not to be part of God's people.

And this warning is vital here, you see, especially for those who are being tempted to leave the Christian faith for a more comfortable, persecution-free life, like the one that these Jewish Christians were experiencing at that point of time.

And the book of Hebrews is full of this kind of warning. And I wonder if there's any of you here this morning who need to hear this warning.

[31 : 57] If you are tempted to leave the faith, the Christian faith, the faith that you have in Christ, for whatever reason, listen to this warning today, and fix your thoughts on Christ and his faithfulness.

You don't want to find yourself not being part of God's people, God's family, not being part of God's house.

God's house. So how does this apply to us? Two things. Firstly, because Jesus is faithful, therefore we can trust him.

Because Jesus is faithful, therefore we can trust him. We have seen from scripture the faithfulness of Jesus. He was faithful to his mission and bringing salvation to us by his death and his resurrection.

And his faithfulness shows his trustworthiness. His faithfulness shows his trustworthiness. And because he is faithful, therefore we can trust him.

[33 : 24] We can trust him when he promised that anyone who believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. We can trust him when he says that he will keep us to the end and no one will snatch us out of his hand.

We can certainly trust Jesus when he says he will be with us till the end of the age. And we can trust that he will come back to judge the whole world.

And for those who have put their trust in Jesus, there will be with him in glory. And for those who don't, now is the time to repent and believe the gospel.

Secondly, because Jesus is faithful, we are to be faithful to him as well. because Jesus is faithful, we are to be faithful to him as well.

As I have said, biblical faith is a faithful, persevering faith. That's the very point of our passage today. To show us the faithfulness of Jesus in order for us to imitate him and his faithfulness.

[34 : 52] He is our example. You know, there's some of us, especially in the Protestant or what we call as Reformed tradition, we believe that salvation is all of God's work from the beginning until the end.

That is biblically correct. I believe that as well. Yet, God's sovereignty in salvation does not negate our responsibility of being faithful to Jesus.

You see, it is not a contradiction, but it works together. It's the two sides of the same coin. We are faithful because God is faithful to us.

that is what Paul says in Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 to 13. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

That's our responsibility. But, again, it does not end there. It continues, for it is God who works in you.

[36 : 12] That is God's sovereignty to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. So, both work together.

God's sovereignty as well as our responsibility. Jesus' faithfulness in keeping us does not mean we are to be carefree or careless in regard to our salvation.

But, the opposite is true. Because Jesus is faithful, therefore, we are to be faithful. I'm not sure if there's any of you here who are struggling in life and it tempts you to abandon your Christian faith. it may be because of the disease you're suffering all this while and it seems like God has not been answering you for healing. It may be because of your family problems.

It may be because you have lost your job recently due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Whatever it is, consider Jesus and his faithfulness.

[37 : 39] Consider Jesus and his faithfulness. Consider Jesus and his faithfulness to you. Consider Jesus who is your savior and king who died on your behalf to purchase redemption for you.

Persevere in your faith, my friends. Fix your thoughts on Jesus. Because the unchangeable Jesus is always faithful, therefore we are to be faithful to him.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you who showed your faithfulness to us through your son Jesus Christ, who is also faithful in his mission.

Grant to us by your spirit the same faithfulness and perseverance in our faith that we may find ourselves faithful to the end of our Christian journey where we share our heavenly calling with you. Amen.