

**CONSIDER JESUS**  
**Sermon for the Transfiguration, 2019**  
**Hebrews 3:1-6**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the Second Reading read before, Hebrews 3:1-6: <sup>1</sup> **Therefore, fellow-Christians, who are holy and share the heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession!** <sup>2</sup> **He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all God's household.** <sup>3</sup> **For He has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house.** <sup>4</sup> **For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.** <sup>5</sup> **Moses was faithful in all God's household as a servant, in order to testify to what would be said in the future,** <sup>6</sup> **but Christ is faithful as a Son over God's household. We are also His house if we hold on to our confidence and to the hope about which we boast.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We live in a world full of options where we can make decisions about all sorts of things. Take for example the process for electing governments. It's only a few short months until a federal election will be held. As we get closer, political parties begin to ramp up their campaign by running advertisements on the radio and television, as well as in the printed and electronic media. In order to win our vote, they will compare their policies to that of other parties, asking us to "Consider this..." Another example might be when you are in the market for a new car. When it comes down to a decision between two models that you like, the salesman might tell you to "Consider this..." when comparing the pros and cons of each model. So it is that often, almost every day, we find ourselves considering things before making a final decision.

In our text today, the writer to the Hebrew Christians was making a point of comparison between two things and asking his hearers to "consider this." What were they to consider? The Jewish converts to Christianity were being tempted to revert to Judaism or to Judaize the gospel,<sup>1</sup> so they were to consider things that would affect their *eternal salvation*. They were comparing the gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus, which they had come to know, with a message of law and works-righteousness, a misunderstanding of the Law given at Mount Sinai to Moses. The writer of Hebrews urged his hearers to consider *Jesus* as the only way of salvation, because the Law of Moses can never save.

Since the Hebrews were well acquainted with the Old Testament Scriptures, the writer began his Letter by mentioning the early prophets, before launching immediately into the setting forth of the superiority of Jesus Christ. He said, *God has long ago spoken at many times and in many ways to our fathers by the prophets,* <sup>2</sup> *but He has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,* (1:1-2).

The people could hardly disagree with this point. God had indeed spoken in the past to their forefathers. At many times and in the various forms of law, history, poetry, and prophecy, God had spoken to them through His prophets from Moses down to Malachi. But the ministry of the prophets had been partial and their message incomplete. More was to come, not to cancel what had been divinely recorded but to complete it.

So it happened, just as the fathers had been told. Moses had told them, "*The LORD your God shall raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You shall listen to Him!*" (Deuteronomy 18:15). And it had happened! "*In these last days,*" that New Testament period of time in which we live, and after which comes only eternity, God has spoken in the person of His Son.

Note the stress on inspiration. Through the prophets and now through His Son, God was indeed speaking. They spoke His words. The prophets spoke *for* God; the Son spoke *as* God. Now having spoken through His Son, God has nothing more to say to man. His Son, the Redeemer to whom the Old Testament pointed, is the ultimate Word and the perfect Revelation of God. How foolish it would be for anyone to turn his back on such a revelation and to compare

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gal. 2:14

the gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus with a message of law and works-righteousness! The Law of Moses can never save. Jesus is the only way of salvation.

Every religion that does not give all glory to God alone for the salvation He freely offers through His Son, is a religion of works. This is true of all non-Christian churches, as well as some Christian churches. If salvation is not contributed wholly to the complete work of Christ, then it is a salvation based on works, a seeking of salvation in the Law, represented by Moses.

There is no doubt that Moses was a great man who was faithful in all God gave him to do. Even the New Testament refers to Moses' greatness, mentioning him some 80 times, more often than any other Old Testament figure. Moses had offered a kind of glory. He was chosen by God to bring Israel out of slavery, to gather them as a great people, and to deliver God's covenant that set them apart from all other nations. It was through Moses whom the LORD had given the Ten Commandments. There was glory in being people of the old covenant, however, the temptation for the Hebrew people would be to take pride in this because to them, it set them apart from everyone else. They believed that God's blessing and favour rested upon them. Sadly, however, the pride of being a follower of Moses and the Law had become the proud delusion that they could keep the Law, that they were better than all other people because of their obedience, and ultimately that God owed them their special glory.

But great as Moses was, Jesus was far greater. Jesus was faithful unto death. The Hebrews were told to **consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession!** <sup>2</sup> **He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all God's household.** The Father's will was that His Son should reveal the fullness of His grace. When the Apostle Peter spoke in Solomon's Colonnade he said, "*Repent therefore, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away, so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,* <sup>20</sup> *and that He may send the Christ, whom He has previously appointed for you, namely, Jesus!*" "Times of refreshing" are times when sins are wiped out, and there is peace with God. This does not come with the law, but only the gospel. God sends **Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest** when the gospel is preached and when people, through the Holy Spirit, believe in Him. The times of refreshing is the day of salvation, the day when a sinner is brought to faith in the Saviour.

That is why we must consider Jesus! He gives a greater glory. The writer says, <sup>3</sup> **For He has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house.** <sup>4</sup> **For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.**

Both Moses and Jesus were faithful in carrying out their assigned tasks. In Numbers 12:7 God Himself said of Moses, "*He is faithful in My whole family.*" Moses poured out his life in service to the house of Israel, God's chosen Old Testament people. He even offered to have his name blotted out of God's book in exchange for them.<sup>2</sup> Nor can anyone doubt Jesus' faithfulness to the One who had commissioned Him as **Apostle and High Priest**. On that Maundy Thursday evening, Jesus could say to His Father, "*I have glorified You on the earth by finishing the work that You have given Me to do,*" (John 17:4).

However, Jesus' superiority to Moses was not a matter of faithfulness. The point of comparison was not faithfulness but *position*. No one would give to any house, no matter how extravagantly it is built and furnished, more honour than that given to the builder. To rank both builder and building on the same level is foolish. Now look at Moses and Jesus. Though important as their leader, Moses was only *part* of the house of Israel. Jesus as God was the builder of that house, just as He is the builder of everything. As a creature Moses occupied a high position in Israel and was worthy of honour. As the Creator of all, including Moses and Israel, Jesus was worthy of *the highest honour*.

This is shown clearly for us today on the Mount of Transfiguration, where He showed the disciples His glory. Luke reports that <sup>28</sup> *about eight days after He said this, Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up the mountain to pray.* <sup>29</sup> *While He was praying, the appearance of His face changed and His clothing became dazzling white,* (Luke 9:28-29).

But the greater glory was yet to come when Jesus humbled Himself on the cross. Again, Luke reports that on the Mount of Transfiguration, <sup>30</sup> *Suddenly two men were talking with Him. They were Moses and Elijah.* <sup>31</sup> *They appeared in glory and were talking about His departure, which He was about to make come true at Jerusalem,* (Luke 9:30-31). The conversation among these three on the mountain concerned the very subject Jesus had presented so recently to His

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<sup>2</sup> Exodus 32:32

disciples: His departure. The Greek word here is *exodus*.<sup>3</sup> Moses had been the leader of the exodus that had brought Israel out of the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land. Jesus is the Leader of the new exodus from the slavery of sin into the promised land of heaven. His own departure would take place in Jerusalem, an exodus by way of the cross to heavenly glory. By so lowering Himself, Jesus showed His true greatness: love beyond all telling.

The glory of keeping (failing to keep!) the Law ourselves can't compare with the glory Jesus' cross gives us. When Jesus was transfigured, a voice came out of the cloud and said, "*This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!*" (Luke 9:35). This is why we listen to Christ alone - not Moses - for glory.

Finally, then, we consider Jesus to enter God's house.

Our text concludes: <sup>5</sup> **Moses was faithful in all God's household as a servant, in order to testify to what would be said in the future,** <sup>6</sup> **but Christ is faithful as a Son over God's household. We are also His house if we hold on to our confidence and to the hope about which we boast.**

Moses can't get us into God's house in heaven. It's not his house; he's 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, and that's hopeless. Moses couldn't even enter the Promised Land himself on his own merits.<sup>4</sup>

Not so with Jesus. We have **confidence** and the sure **hope** of heaven in Him, the Son. It is *His house*. He's the Son. "Christ" is greater, the author declares, using this title for the first time so far in the book. "Christ" marks His high office and the honour due Him, for He was not a servant in the house but "**Son over God's household**." He owns the house, building it and ruling over it. And this "house" is not off in the distant future, as was the case in Moses' time, but the author speaks of it as *a present reality*.

Furthermore, we are His house, His family, by faith - that is, by the **confidence**, the **hope**, that He has done all the Law of Moses demanded of us and has taken the punishment for our failures on the cross. That is why we get to live in the family home, the one described by the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians as "*God's household..., built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus Himself is the Cornerstone.*"<sup>21</sup> *In Him the whole building is fitted together and grows to be a holy temple in the Lord,*" (Ephesians 2:20-21).

There are many things that our world would tell us to consider. But there is One in our lives who will always be faithful. On this day of His transfiguration, we see Jesus revealing His glory. He is the One, the only One, who enables us to share the home we long for in heaven. Therefore, consider Jesus! Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR TRANSFIGURATION

Almighty God, Your ears are always open to the prayers of Your people. Hear now the cries of Your children, as we bring before You our needs of body and soul.

Above all else, we praise You for the precious gift of Your Son. Today in particular we bless You for the message of His transfiguration. Through this mighty sign give to us and all people a clearer vision and a higher knowledge of Christ's person and mission. Give us eyes of faith that see the glory of His deity, and the glory that came through His cross, and lead us to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Grant that, as we continue to see the glory of His person in Your Word and Sacrament, we may know and believe in Him as the Light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, and the visible likeness of Your very being. May we continually hear the voice of Jesus Your prophet still today, that our faith may constantly be renewed. Grant that, as Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory, each of us may die in faith, share in the power of Christ's resurrection, and be eventually transformed into ever greater glory.

Let Your Spirit, who inspired the prophets and apostles, live in our poor bodies. Transform our weak, sinful lives so that they shine with goodness, purity, and righteousness. Transform our minds, eyes, judgment, and our whole persons, so that they may reflect the mind of Christ. Take away our sickness, pains, wounds, and hurts. Take away our disappointments, defeats, and despair. Take away our sorrows and grieving. Take away our pride, anger, hatred and fear. Take away our selfishness and envy, our laziness and unconcern for others. Take away all our weaknesses, and

<sup>3</sup> ἔξοδος

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 34:4

turn them by the touch of Jesus into impulses, motives, thoughts, words, and deeds that shine with godliness and new life.

Grant Your blessing to Your church. Especially bless all who belong to the fellowship of this congregation. Be present with all our members and graciously supply what they need. Grant that we, and all who bear the name of Christ, may daily offer to You acceptable spiritual sacrifices of repentance, thanksgiving, and obedience.

Look mercifully on our state and our nation. Deliver us from those who love evil and whose aim is unrighteousness. Grant that the whole world may know Your will, and all nations may know Your salvation.

Have mercy on those among us who are sick, lonely, or depressed. Teach them to look to You for healing, comfort, and stronger hope for the glory to come.

Loving Father, as we trust that You are near to us when we call to You, hear our prayer, and grant all our petitions for Christ's sake. Amen.

#### THE TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

<sup>1</sup> Then Moses went up from the waterless plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him all the land, from Gilead to Dan, <sup>2</sup> all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, <sup>3</sup> the Negev and the broad area, which is the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palm-trees, as far as Zoar. <sup>4</sup> Then the LORD told him: "This is the land that I have solemnly promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with an oath, saying: 'I shall give it to your offspring.' I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you will not cross over there."

<sup>5</sup> Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab as the LORD had said. <sup>6</sup> He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-Peor, and to this day no one knows where his grave is. <sup>7</sup> Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyesight had not become dim, and his vigour had not diminished. <sup>8</sup> The Israelites mourned for Moses on the waterless plains of Moab for thirty days. Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua, the son of Nun, was filled with a spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel listened to him, and they did as the LORD had commanded Moses. <sup>10</sup> A prophet like Moses has not arisen since then in Israel. The LORD knew him face to face. <sup>11</sup> He was unequalled for all the miraculous signs and wonders that the LORD had sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, to all his officials, and to his whole land. <sup>12</sup> Moses was also unequalled for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that he performed while all Israel witnessed them.

Hebrews 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, fellow-Christians, who are holy and share the heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and

High Priest of our confession! <sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all God's household. <sup>3</sup> For He has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. <sup>5</sup> Moses was faithful in all God's household as a servant, in order to testify to what would be said in the future, <sup>6</sup> but Christ is faithful as a Son over God's household. We are also His house if we hold on to our confidence and to the hope about which we boast.

Luke 9:28-36

<sup>28</sup> About eight days after He said this, Jesus took Peter, John, and James with Him and went up the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> While He was praying, the appearance of His face changed and His clothing became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly two men were talking with Him. They were Moses and Elijah. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were talking about His departure, which He was about to make come true at Jerusalem.

<sup>32</sup> Peter and the men with him had been overcome by sleep. When they woke up, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. <sup>33</sup> When these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters, one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah!"

He did not realise what he was saying. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them. They were frightened as they went into the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then a voice came out of the cloud: "This is My Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to Him!"

<sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, there was Jesus all alone. The disciples kept quiet about this, and in those days they did not tell anything of what they had seen.