

Sermon - August 10th, 2024 - Twelfth Week of Pentecost  
Pastor Staehr

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

LOOK ON THE SON AND BELIEVE

This week, the kids at VBS have studied 3 stories from the Gospel of John. On Monday, we looked at the wedding of Cana in John 2. On Tuesday we looked at the Resurrection of Lazarus in John 11, and on Wednesday, we looked at the passage from John 20 when Jesus was resurrected from the tomb and Peter and John ran to the tomb. Today, as a congregation, I thought we would join the kids in looking at another passage from John chapter 6 after Jesus fed the 5000. Yet, before we speak about this, I need to acknowledge that this is my first sermon as a pastor here, and I want to express to you that I am overjoyed to share with you all the firsts of my ministry. This being my first service as a pastor. This is also my first service to distribute the sacrament to you all. Tomorrow I will also hold my first and second Baptisms here at the baptismal font. Now, I also am sharing with you this first sermon where I now set a goal and share a promise with you all. This goal and promise is that I preach only the truth that is found in the Scriptures. Occasionally that truth can be hard. Yet, it tastes sweet as honey to those who follow the truth, to those who call on the name of the Lord, and to those who look to Jesus in times of trouble. Looking at the Son is an important action that a believer does. It expresses faith instead of fear, it expresses hope in the place of despair, and it shows confidence instead of fear.

If you look at the front of your bulletin, then you will see John 6:40. This verse says, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and I will raise Him up on the last day" The will of the Father is often a mystery, but today we hear the words of Jesus revealing that mystery for us. This mysterious will of God is that whoever looks on the Son and believes should have eternal life. Yet, this verse is not speaking of plain old looking like when you might look both ways before crossing the street. Instead, this kind of looking is when you observe or examine something happening detail for detail. It's when you experience something worth remembering. It's when you intentionally look around and notice details so that you could give a great story; maybe that story would be a fishing story about the one that got away, maybe it would be about what it was like for you growing up. One story that I have been saving up for you all for this my first sermon is the story about my call here to Trinity in Manilla. It was April 24th when I received my call to

be your pastor. The previous day on April 23rd was the day that the vicars were being placed. I was on campus that day and it had just been raining for part of the afternoon, but, when it came time for the vicars to line up outside the chapel to walk in, there was a double rainbow! And I thought, "Wow! The Lord has really smiled upon their vicarage placement ceremony with this

blessed sign of God to Noah after the flood... And a double rainbow at that! I didn't think it could get much better than that. However, the next evening was our call ceremony and it was just as cloudy and bleak as the day before, but the clouds stayed all day and never broke into a double rainbow- Instead? as our group of men receiving their calls into the ministry lined up outside the chapel some of us looked up and saw not the double rainbow that the vicars received reminding me of the promise of God to Noah, but we saw turkey vultures circling overhead as if something had died. I figured that God must have a sense of humor, or that He was sending us out as sheep among wolves, or as the men of God who would engage sin, death, and the devil and provide for His children the way to laugh in the face of evil and be confident of your eternal life.

Now when we engage the Gospel of John, John encourages you to notice something and to look deeply at something very specific. The Gospel of John is written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in His name. So, when he sets up His Gospel in a visual manner, we should pay attention and observe what the Son, the Christ, is doing.

If you've been looking for some answers in your life, if you've been looking for meaning, if you've come feeling empty or alone, or even if you've come here angry at God, then let me tell you that Jesus sees you. He knows you inside and out, He knows your family history, He knows your heart's desire. In John 1:38, Jesus notices the disciples of John the Baptist who were following Him, and He asks them, "What do you seek?" Your eyes are immediately being drawn by every word and action of Jesus and what He came to do. The Gospel of John in particular is trying to direct your eyes to a specific moment. This is a moment where all who look on the Son in that particular time and place may believe. Likewise, all who see this moment and do not believe have a warning such that they bring sorrow to the Lord of Glory. For, in John 6:36 Christ our Lord says, "But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe." When we see Jesus, we see Him as He is revealed to us by the will of the Father. This means that in the feeding of the 5000 which happens right before our Gospel reading, we must say that Jesus revealed Himself according to the will of His Father, but much more the moment that our eyes are drawn to in John's Gospel is the crucifixion when Jesus died on the cross and a spear pierced His side and immediately blood and water rushed out. Water which is used in Baptism. Blood which is the covenant given to us in, with, and under the wine. Likewise, His body on the cross given up willing unto death in your place. So that everyone who looks on the Son and believes has a promise. The promise of the open tomb is yours when you look on the Son and believe. The Promise that Christ our Lord makes is this, "Myself will raise him up on the last day." So receive in your body today the bread of life given for you, and receive in your mouth the cup of blessing.

I could not have asked for a better passage to begin my ministry here at Trinity because this one puts me right there with Paul who said in his first letter to the Corinthians, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) That is the Gospel message that I will share with you each and every week, and the ways that the Gospel

changes the life of the Christian is how I will teach and urge each of you in this faith to live in the world, but not of it. Look on the Son and believe. Look at the promises He gives to you. Let His word fill your lives each and every day so that you are set from anxieties and fears. Let His Word dwell in you richly so that you may teach and encourage each other in wisdom. Christ is the wisdom of God. Let your hearts be glad in Him and sing the hymns of the church "Rock of Ages, cleft for me. . . Let the water and the blood from Thy riven side which flowed, Be of sin the double cure: Cleanse me from its guilt and power." (LSB 761 stz.1) Let thankfulness fill your hearts and let love abound. The love that is found by looking on the Son who died for you and will call you from death into His marvelous light. Amen.

Now may the peace which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.