

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us get rid of every burden and the sin that so easily ensnares us, and let us run with patient endurance the race that is laid out for us. ²Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who is the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal. In view of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God's throne. ³Carefully consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinful people, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:1-3 Palm Sunday 2024

**Keep your eyes on
this kind of Jesus, this kind of King**

Jesus is our King who cares
Jesus is our King who shares.

December may have been so long ago that we forgot. I would be impressed if you remembered that the first Sunday of Advent was today's Palm Sunday reading from the Gospel. Even if you forgot – it is my calling to remind, to encourage, to review, to build-up, to reclaim forgetful hearts and souls that need Jesus more and more.

Palm Sunday is also considered Passion Sunday. But don't confuse Jesus' passion with any of ours. The inspired writer to the Hebrews is busy saying that we need to make an effort of faith, but not something we can do by ourselves. Only by grace through faith do we, in a forgiven way, try to be compassionate about Jesus' Passion Sunday. For this year 2024 I will gently instruct and transition the members of the church I serve into an understanding of Jesus' Passion on Palm Sunday. 2025 I plan to read the entire passion account according to the Gospel assigned for next year. (year C)

Hebrews chapter 12 serves as a wonderful transition to keep our eyes of faith on Jesus who is the strongest King of all when to the outside unbelieving world he looks completely weak and helpless. But Jesus is strong and helpful as our Savior.

Palm Sunday is Passion Sunday. Passion Sunday because the heart and soul of what Jesus came to do begins today. Some people don't like to come to church on Good Friday because they don't want to be reminded of the suffering Jesus endured. They feel bad for him. Feeling bad for Jesus is not what this entire week is all about. One sentence proves that from Hebrews 12:2b “**In view of the joy set before him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of God's throne.**” Jesus already won before he began. Jesus was strong all the way through. Jesus is in control and could have pushed the 'escape' button at any time along the way but he didn't. He didn't for the joy set before him to do all of that so that he would take you, by his own strength, into eternal life in heaven. Passion Sunday has a touch of Easter joy knowing the end of this week is still coming. Passion Sunday can be thought of as a type of foreshadowing of Easter.

Jesus' true strength is shown in his willingness to suffer and take what would break us to pieces.

It wasn't the cruel people at the cross that caused this to happen it was all of humanity that caused it. We are the ones to blame, not just them. Real strength is Jesus whom we watch ride into Jerusalem without anyone making him do that. There is the cross, there is pain and suffering, there is agony – but beyond all of that Jesus sees joy!

Real strength is Jesus who comes from a kingdom 'not of this world' to bring us to that kind of life beyond this one. Real strength is Jesus who is a kind of King who is perfect in every way which we are not. Real strength is Jesus who surrounds us with such a great cloud of witnesses to his perfect life, his innocent suffering and his victorious resurrection. Real strength is Jesus who speaks truth eternal when he says, “**everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**”

Real strength is Jesus who could look through all of the horrible of holy week and ‘**in view of the joy set before him**’... ‘**endure the cross and scorn its shame.**’ The joy set before Jesus is to bring eternal purpose and meaning to our lives. Jesus is worth keeping our eyes fixed on him because he fixed his eyes on saving us.

This past week my family went to the Field museum in Chicago for the first time. I was surprised by all of the **'world religions'** that were recorded in those halls, I shouldn't have been. So much of human history is recorded in a search for meaning and purpose when the pages of the Bible are ignored. So much of human history uses imagination to explore the possibilities away from a God of strength eternal and replace him with human strength and invention.

I don't know if I've ever walked that fast through a museum before.

What kind of a King is Jesus on whom we should keep our eyes fixed?

Jesus is our king of suffering even on Passion Sunday because he voluntarily came to save the world from sin. Not a drop of God's anger escaped his control as Jesus is our King of suffering. Jesus was strong enough to take it all. Jesus was enduring enough to look at the cross with joy. **Jesus disregarded the cross because he regarded us in love.**

Ancient Judah's King Solomon was a different kind of strong. He built a temple made with human hands to the glory of God. Jesus is strongest because the temple he brought was his own body. Solomon's temple was torn because of sin. The temple of Jesus' body was torn because of sin. Remember that Jesus said, **'tear down this temple.'** This prophecy points to strength in the middle of being torn down – remember he chose to be there and let them do that. He knew the joy set before him. His eyes were wide open to what he had to do in order to save us. Essentially Jesus' eyes were fixed on us. Nothing distracted his attention away from keeping his eyes on the cross.

We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus because he is a King of strength. Jesus' joy is the completion of saving us at the cross.

How can we **'get rid of every burden'** and **'sin that so easily ensnares us?'** How can we **"run with patient endurance the race this laid out for us?"** How can we **"keep our eyes fixed on Jesus?"** We are not strong enough to do such things – only Jesus is strong enough to be **"the author of our faith and the one who brings it to its goal."** He is strong because we are weak. He is brave because we are scared. He endured because we give up.

Jesus is a strong enough Savior for us. He forgives when we didn't get rid of burdens, he forgives when we were so wrapped up in sin. Jesus forgives when we can't lift a finger to be patient and enduring. Jesus is strong because he is the author of our faith.

How is Jesus the author – he was perfect for us, in our place. Jesus is the author because he endured hostility against himself for the sake of perfectly serving our heavenly Father in our place. Jesus endured the cross for us, because we could not.

How can we get rid of sin? Only Jesus did by his death.

How can we be un-ensnared? Only Jesus did by his perfect life.

How do we keep our eyes fixed? Only Jesus did by viewing joy through the cross.

How can we carefully consider him? Only Jesus carefully forgives for us to consider him thankfully.

Only Jesus forgives from the joy set before him. He endured the cross so we won't. He survived every burden and sin that made us victims. He ran with patient endurance; the race laid out for him. By his own strength – Jesus won. By his own strength Jesus survived past death. By his own strength Jesus took his seat in heaven. By his own strength these words bring us hope and grace. Only by Jesus' strength do we survive this life of weakness and pain. Only by Jesus' strength are we surrounded by such a great cloud of forgiven witnesses.

What kind of a King is Jesus on whom we keep our eyes fixed? (John 11:25) “**I am the Resurrection and the life**” is a King of the Resurrection as also he is a King of life eternal. Jesus is in control. Jesus is in charge. Jesus is seated in heaven on high but not so far away – he is personally close to your soul through these words of truth and grace. When you read and listen to your Bible you hear the voice of your loving, forgiving King. When you trust with eyes fixed on Jesus, you are made spiritually strong to endure and survive and be confident that Jesus will take you to stand before his throne in grace.

Jesus is unlike any other kind of King, any other kind of leader. Unlike you and me, he looks to the cross with joy. Unlike you and me he does not get snared and tangled up in sin. Unlike you and me he carefully considers us in the middle of receiving hostility from sinful people – you and me – we do not stop his strength. We do not interrupt his grace. We do not interfere with his gift of faith. We, who are forgiven by the strength of Jesus our King of Passion, have every eternal reason to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

God gives us eyes of faith to be the source of lips that can say, “blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord,” who really is the Lord in name, Lord in Word, Lord in action, Lord in grace. Believers keep their eyes fixed on Jesus who loves to forgive. Believers keep their eyes on Jesus who lives to rule our hearts by grace. Believers keep their eyes fixed on Jesus who is unlike any other kind of King. Jesus is God who by his own strength has taken his seat at the right hand of God’s throne.

While we live we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus the author of our faith. While we live we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who in view of the joy to set us free from sin, endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Don’t be ashamed of Jesus, don’t be distracted away from Jesus, don’t have your eyes fixed on this little life and the little things that are here – have your eyes fixed on his Higher Throne – Jesus is the King of Heaven who brings strength to all who are weak, who brings joy to all who are sad.

Jesus is our King who cares

Jesus is our King who shares.

Jesus is the best kind of King.

Jesus is strong.

Jesus is your best king of King that you can depend on forever.