



Hebrews 3:1-6
 Hebrews: Seeing Jesus Clearly
 “Greater Than Moses”

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Today we continue our series in Hebrews that we began a couple weeks ago. Today's passage is a turning point in the letter and the argument it makes about the supremacy of Jesus. The first couple chapters establish that Jesus is supreme in his nature—even greater than the angels—but he became lower than the angels in becoming human, for the purpose of redeeming us and restoring us to what God intended from the beginning.

Now in chapter 3 we're going to see how Jesus is superior to Moses, the greatest of Israel's leaders. We are in Hebrews 3:1-6 this morning, though I want to begin by reading just the first verse (**Hebrews 3:1**). This is God's Word to you and me today...

So, coming out of chapter 2—and we looked at the last few verses of that chapter last week—we read, “Therefore...” In other words, in light what's just been written—that Jesus is greater than the angels, that he came not to redeem them but to redeem us, which is why he became one of us and not an angel—**“Therefore...brothers and sisters, who share in this heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus...”**

Let's pause there for a moment. The instruction here is simple, really: “Fix your thoughts on Jesus.” The Greek is “katanoeo”. Sometimes it's translated as “consider” or “think about.” “Fix your thoughts” captures it best, however, because *katanoeo* does not refer to casual thinking or quick processing before coming to a conclusion. ***Katanoeo* refers to giving serious consideration, giving sustained, focused, mental attention.** That kind of attention could be given to many things, but here the invitation is to give it to Jesus. Fix your thoughts on Jesus—his life, his death, and his resurrection.

This week as I was reading this passage on Monday and laying some groundwork for the sermon, I was struck by this word and idea of giving serious consideration to Jesus. It reminded me of a video I saw a year or two

ago, and fortunately, I was able to track it down. It's by a comedian named Jeff Allen who is now a Christian, but he was an atheist for many years. Watch this as Jeff reflects on a relationship and a conversation that got him reconsidering his atheism...If you're reading this online, you can watch the video at YouTube here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bIFFv3UCU0>

So, in the language of this verse, he gave Jesus no serious thought for a long time. No attention. No contemplation. No fixation. Just a conclusion based on assumptions. Once he began engaging his mind and seriously considering Jesus, he came to a place of faith.

We want to keep our minds—our thoughts—fixed on Jesus. Obviously, life requires thinking about other things — what to cook for dinner, what to wear, listening attentively in conversations, the work we do, and so forth. But the general mindset of the Christian is to keep Jesus first. When we do this, then Jesus' life and teachings shape our identity, our values, our attitude, and our behavior – how we live.

We then read in the second half of the verse that **Jesus is “the apostle and high priest whom we confess” (Hebrews 3:1b)**. “High priest” is a title we'll encounter later in the letter and our sermon series (next week, even), and it appears in other New Testament writings describing Jesus, so it may be more familiar to many of us. So, I'm going to set that word aside for now.

But: This is the only place in the whole New Testament, let alone the book of Hebrews, where Jesus is called “the apostle.” But it fits, because the Greek word *apostolos* simply means “sent one.” *Apostolos* is usually intended to mean the 12 disciples. For instance, in Luke 6:13 we read, “He chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles.” However, it is also used to describe other early Christians such as Paul, Barnabas, Junia, and a few others. They were sent out *by* Jesus to proclaim the good news *of* Jesus. They were the sent ones. Because of that, *apostle* is often associated with “church leadership” or “church official title”.

But here in Hebrews it's a Christological word. **In other words, it's saying something about the nature of Jesus and his mission, rather than assigning him a position or title.** Jesus is the original sent one, and sent for a purpose: from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, from the grave to the sky, ("Lord I lift your name on high!") as the 1989 worship song *Lord I Lift Your Name On High* puts it. That's what he is sent for. Let's continue with verse 2 and read the rest of the passage (**Hebrews 3:2-6**).

So, after being compared to the angels and declared greater than them, Jesus is now being compared to Moses. Like, "let's just start at the top of the Jewish leaders list." **Moses is arguably the greatest leader in Jewish history.** Others might be considered: Abraham, King David, King Solomon, Joshua, Isaiah or Jeremiah. They would all have a case for the "Mount Rushmore of the Jewish faith." But most would say that Moses is at the top of the mountain.

But what's cool about Hebrews is that whether you put Moses at the top or not, it kind of doesn't matter. Several of the other figures, either by name or by title, get the "Jesus is better than..." treatment later in the letter.

Imagine the greatest people who ever lived in their respected fields: Mozart or Beethoven; Da Vinci, Van Gogh, Michelangelo; Einstein, Newton; Jordan; Messi or Ronaldo – I know that's a very contentious one for soccer fans. People go completely bonkers over that "greatest ever" question with athletes. Moses is to the Jewish faith what they are to their fields of expertise and excellence.

But imagine someone comes along in one of those areas and people begin to say, "This new person is greater." Like is LeBron James greater than Michael Jordan? The answer is "no" but apparently some people will argue just about anything.

So, let's say Moses is the greatest. Why? What made Moses the greatest? Let's briefly recap his leadership roles. **First, Moses was their great**

deliverer and liberator. Called by God at the burning bush that wasn't actually on fire and commissioned to confront Pharaoh when Israel was enslaved in Egypt, he led perhaps as many as 2 million people out of 400 years of slavery. That event—the Exodus—is the defining moment in Israel's national history. Through Moses, God parted the Red Sea, which may be the greatest miracle in Scripture other than the Resurrection of Jesus.

Second, Moses was the lawgiver and covenant mediator. On Mt. Sinai, in about 1400 B.C., he received the 10 Commandments from God – through angels as we talked about last week. He recorded the Mosaic Covenant that bound the nation to God and provided the framework for life and relationships in Israel from that time forward. The civil, religious, and moral laws recorded in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are all associated with his leadership.

Third, he's considered a significant prophet of the Old Testament. We might not immediately think of him as a prophet, but Deuteronomy 34:10 says, “no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.”

Fourth, the first five books of the Old Testament are traditionally attributed to Moses. There may be some parts of them that were written by others, and Moses compiled them and incorporated them into what he wrote. But he's traditionally credited as the author of the first 5 books of the Bible. This makes him easily the most prolific author of Scripture when measured by chapters, verses, or words—and he is the most quoted Old Testament writer in the New Testament.

Fifth, he shaped Israel's worship. He received the detailed blueprints for the Tabernacle, Israel's first formal place of worship; He oversaw its construction; he instituted the sacrificial system and the Levitical priesthood; He consecrated Aaron and the priests for their ministry.

The list goes on: military leader, civil administrator, judge, desert shepherd as they wandered in the desert for 40 years which means his resume also

includes being a part-time tour guide. Moses wore a lot of hats. He didn't do all on his own, of course. He had a lot of support and leaders alongside him. But I don't think anyone in Scripture, or in all of history, held that many roles at such a high level and over such a large body of people. Moses really was the greatest leader in Jewish history.

So, when these verses say Moses was faithful in all God's house, that he was the builder of God's house, that he was a faithful servant in God's house: it's almost an understatement of what God accomplished through him. God worked through Moses in remarkable ways to accomplish his purposes, establish his people, and give them the Covenant that shaped their national and spiritual life.

And yet Hebrews tells us that Jesus is greater than Moses! There's a new name at the top of the list, and his name is Jesus. Verse 5 tells us Moses was faithful *in* God's house, where verse 6 tells us that Jesus is faithful *over* God's house. We might not pay much attention to prepositions, but the shift here from "in" to "over" is significant. Jesus is not just greater in a quantitative sense. He's greater in a qualitative sense. By virtue of being the Son, Jesus has a quality that no one can ever match – including Moses. This means Jesus has an authority over us and a relationship to God that cannot be matched and supersedes anyone and everyone else.

And we who put our confidence and trust in him are the house that he rules over. **Now, notice the "if" of verse 6: "We are his house if indeed we hold firmly..."** That "if" is not meant to suggest that we become God's house based on our ability to hold on to him. No. Rather, it means holding on is the evidence that we belong to him, that we are the house of God.

The "if" is serious, but God's grace and provision beneath it is more serious still. God establishes his house. God establishes his people. And: **We demonstrate that we belong to him as we hold firmly to the confidence and hope in which we glory.** That confidence and hope are themselves gifts of God.

So, fix your thoughts on Jesus. That's where we started. If you're a disciple of Jesus' already, then this is not a new idea or new teaching. But we frequently need a reminder because a lot of us have spiritual ADHD and we get distracted easily. Stay centered on Jesus. Read his word. Pray without ceasing as Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians. Live each moment, enter each conversation, treat other people as Jesus would, as best you can. That starts by keeping our minds fixed on him.

And if you're *not* yet a follower of Jesus, then don't short-circuit the process and come to a conclusion about Jesus without giving him some serious consideration. Read the gospels. Come to church. Meet with a Christian and talk about Jesus.

He is worth giving our attention to and fixing our thoughts on him, because Jesus is the greatest. He's done for us what no one and nothing ever could do. He stands above us. Over us. He's not naturally one of us. He created us. Yet he *became* one of us in order to lead us, to *show* us the way back to our Creator, in fact to *be* the way back to our Creator, and to bring us into relationship with God now and for all eternity.

So, let's live like it. Let's fix our thoughts on Jesus and live on mission for Jesus as his house, as his people, with confidence and hope—not because of how great we are, but because of how great Jesus is. Let's pray...Amen.