

## Fixed on Jesus Together Pt. 2

January 17, 2021

Next week—we will attend a pageant of God’s love for his unfaithful people as we begin a sermon series in the book of Hosea. An pastor from the last century named James Montgomery Boice called the book of Hosea—the second greatest story ever told. We will begin to hear that story next week. This story is a story that is gritty. The centerpiece of this story is a woman who is a member of the world’s oldest profession.

I mention this so that you with children can decide whether or not you want them in this room when we study the book together. You make the decision that is best for your family, but I am eager to stare in awe at a God who loves the unlovely.

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I have never gotten seasick. Mostly because I have not been on the water much, I grew up and lived most of my life in the desert. I have found that the waves of sand do not cause seasickness. But the heaving, rolling, pitching waves of the open sea does cause seasickness.

And many can testify to the misery of seasickness. One sailor/author said, “The worst thing about being seasick is knowing you are *not* going to die.”

There are medicinal ways to address it but the best thing is to keep your eyes on the horizon and away from the rolling, lurching waves.

Old sea dogs have offered simple advice for years—look away from the rocking, rollicking ship and look to a fixed point on the horizon.

A scientific explanation,

“Motion sickness is caused in part by conflicting sensory signals to your brain – your eyes are telling it everything is still (such as the inside of your cabin), while your inner ear balance mechanism (the vestibular system) says you’re moving. Looking at the horizon can help give your brain a point of reference, allowing it to sense the motion of the ship and your body’s movement with it.”

So, a fixed point of reference on the horizon can fend off seasickness—similarly a fixed point of reference in our journey through 2021 can fend off something much worse than seasickness—ineffectiveness.

Today, our goal is to make Jesus our continual reference point on the horizon of all our lives. Our goal here today is to take our eyes off the wobbly, shaky, unsteady ship that is 2021, and make Jesus our fixed point on the horizon. This means we are going to need to look away from the

- Fear you may feel at a fractured nation
- Confusion you may experience at what might happen next
- Dread of our economic future

And make Jesus our fixed point on the horizon.

Last week we started a tradition. Since we don't just want to be a church that talks about being fixed on Jesus, but we really do want to be fixed on Jesus—each year we are going to consider how to stay fixed on Jesus. Last we talked about the destructiveness of an obstructed view of Jesus and the dreadful consequences if any of us have an obstructed view of Jesus in 2021. We thought last week of a couple of weights and sins that we should consider laying aside.

- The Possibility that we might forget the scandal of grace.
- The possibility that we might be more afraid of suffering than sin.

Today, we will seek to make Jesus our fixed point on the horizon and we are going to explore two truths to help us. Our world (and we) need Jesus and a church with Jesus as her fixed point.

PROP: Our world (and we) need Jesus and a church with Jesus as her fixed point.

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

Our points this morning will be two questions.

Why should Jesus be your fixed point?

How should Jesus be your fixed point?

### *1. Why should Jesus be your fixed point?*

Vs 2 tells us—

<sup>2</sup>looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith

He is the founder and perfecter of *the* faith and he is also the founder and perfecter of your faith.

What is the difference?

*The* faith is substance of what we believe as Christians. The faith is the truth about the life-giving, death defying message of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus the Nazarene. Jesus himself is the founder of our faith.

In other words, without him, we would have nothing to believe. Another way to render this word—founder is pioneer.

See the picture?

He is the one who—on his own—cut a path through death by offering a way to follow. Without Jesus there was no way to get to God. He is the founder. He trusted his father without reservation—even when it meant destruction for himself.

He shunned the unspeakable shame of the cross and endured it.  
And with his resurrection he has founded the faith so that anyone  
can follow him.

He is also the perfecter.

He is the perfecter of our faith.

Why do we need a perfecter?

Because our faith is lacking. Oh, this is good news.

All we need is genuine, authentic faith in Jesus Christ and he will do  
the rest. Do you see when Jesus is your perfecter the point for us is  
NOT:

- How much faith we have
- How strong our faith is

But that Jesus perfects our meager faith.

“Christ was perfected through suffering and obtained perfection for  
all who believe in and obey him.” P.T. O’Brien

So—

Why must Jesus be our fixed point in 2021?

- He is the founder of our faith—he has given us something to believe in.
- He is the perfecter of our faith—he has given us hope despite our meager faith.

That is why Jesus must be our fixed point in 2021.

## ***2. How should Jesus be our fixed point in 2021?***

I'm going to give two suggestions. These are obviously not exhaustive or comprehensive, but two things that we should remember—

- *Your Church is important than any other association you belong to.*

Your church is more important than:

Your association at work

Your association at school

Your political associations

Your family associations

I say this because it is so easy to associate with people who think like we do politically OR have a similar kind of life experience as we do. Easy, and not wrong. But it is insufficient. If Jesus is to be your fixed point in 2021 we all need to remember that we cannot follow

Jesus alone. If Center Church is your church, that is here. If your church is another and you are visiting, it is there.

The very words of our passage tells us that we need each other and that we cannot have Jesus as our fixed point if we do not also have his church as our passion. Look—watch for the we/us language.

“Therefore, since *we* are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let *us* also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let *us* run with endurance the race that is set before *us*,<sup>2</sup> looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:1-2

You cannot make Jesus your fixed point alone. You need other people in your church.

A biblical church will constantly challenge, cajole, and cheer you toward Jesus and no one else.

Think about the opportunity we have in 2021.

We have an opportunity to reset our lives. I understand that it is a strange time to be talking about these things with COVID still raging. We are all hopeful that it abates. When it does—how do you want to return to life?

In 2020, all of our schedules were cleared by force. Soon, we may have a chance to for our priorities to be reflected in our schedules. How will that look for you? May I make a suggestion or two?

- *Build your life into others at your church*

Make time for friends old and new.

Join a small group.

Serve.

Attend prayer meetings.

Prioritize Sunday morning.

Ask for help.

Call friends when you are struggling.

Call struggling friends.

Express gratefulness.

How are we to ensure Jesus is our fixed point in 2021?

PROP: Our world (and we) need Jesus and a church with Jesus as her fixed point.

- Your Church is important than any other association you belong to.
- *Trust spiritual solutions more than political solutions.*

Hear me. This does not mean that political solutions in our nation are of NO value—rather it means that political solutions in our country are not of ultimate value. Political solutions are ALWAYS



paltry and temporary stop-gap when compared to the grandeur of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To make Jesus our fixed point means we need to decide that Washington DC is NOT our fixed point on the horizon. This is why we at Center Church preach Christ and him crucified and NOT government and it exalted.

It is obvious that our nation is fractured—Washington is not going to fix that fracture. The media is not going to bridge that divide. The answer does not lie on either the right or the left. Folks, we have the words of life—the Bible tells us what we can have a sturdy and lasting hope despite who occupies the oval office or has a majority in congress.

Our purposes do not match up with any political platform. And if we preach against one platform ONLY we implicitly endorse the other wholesale. Most of us can believe that spiritual solutions are more important than political solutions—we can nod our heads and say that is right.

But deep down we really believe that the political solutions we agree with are most important.

There are flaws on both the right and the left. Let me give a couple of examples and offend everyone equally.

Right—Conservatism is not the gospel. It can be tempting to believe that conservative political philosophies are the answer to all our national ills.

They are not.

We follow the person of Jesus and not the philosophy of Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, or even Ronald Reagan.

A church that is primarily about the propagation of conservative values will lose the gospel and be about nothing at all.

You might say—what are we to do?

I feel like we are at the end of the world! Peter has some counsel—

[7] The end of all things is at hand;

Panic?

Fight?

Get angry?

therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. [8] Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. [9] Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. [10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: [11] whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one

who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4:7–11

The end of the world as we know it—what are we to do?

Love others

Have people from your church over to dinner

Be kind

Serve others

In other words—Keep Jesus your fixed point by giving yourself to others and not conservative philosophies.

PROP: Our world (and we) need Jesus and a church with Jesus as her fixed point.

The same is true for the left.

Left—Activism is not the only response to the gospel.

There is a growing chorus of churches that are speaking about social justice so much that it would seem that it is the primary mission of the church. Or that every person **MUST** be an activist for social justice.

Not true.

I'm not saying there aren't significant social issues for our nation to face. I'm not saying that working for fairness and equity and justice in our nation is not important. Some of you may be called to undertake this work.

As important as this work is, it does not and cannot replace the message of the Bible and the simple teaching of scripture of Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Rome was far more oppressive in Jesus' day than anything any of us have lived under—and Jesus does not make a call for social reform. Not once.

Does that mean social reform is not important? No.

It means that social reform must not, cannot be the message of the church. When it is—the message becomes something like—Jesus is important but the real thing that matters is what you do to push forward social change in this world.

Not true.

100 years ago evangelicalism faced something that history calls the social gospel. There were voices that said as one author puts it, "Plain biblical preaching, teaching, and discipleship were viewed as inadequate, out of touch, and irrelevant. The new paths of ministry replaced the old and worn paths."

That is exactly what is happening now.

A man named J. Gresham Machen faced something similar. He wrote a book that remains a classic called Christianity and Liberalism. He concluded the book with counsel that is appropriate today.

“But whatever solution there may be, one thing is clear. There must be somewhere groups of redeemed men and women who can gather together humbly in the name of Christ, to give thanks to Him for His unspeakable gift and to worship the Father through Him. Such groups alone can satisfy the needs of the soul. At the present time, there is one longing of the human heart which is often forgotten—it is the deep, pathetic (passionate) longing of the Christian for fellowship with his brethren....Weary with the conflicts of the world, one goes into the Church to seek refreshment for the soul. And what does one find? Alas, too often, one finds only the turmoil of the world. The preacher comes forward, not out of a secret place of meditation and power, not with the authority of God’s Word permeating his message, not with human wisdom pushed far into the background by the glory of the Cross, but with human opinions about the social problems of the hour or easy solutions of the vast problem of sin. Such is the sermon... Thus the warfare of the world has entered even into the house of God, And sad indeed is the heart of the man who has come seeking peace.

Is there no refuge from strife? Is there no place of refreshing where a man can prepare for the battle of life? Is there no place where two or three can gather in Jesus’ name, to forget for the moment all those things that divide nation from nation and race from race, to forget human pride, to forget the passions of war, to forget the

puzzling problems of industrial strife, and to unite in overflowing gratitude at the foot of the Cross? If there be such a place, then that is the house of God and that the gate of heaven. And from under the threshold of that house will go forth a river that will revive the weary world." J. Gresham Machen

Spiritual solutions are FAR more important than political solutions offered by either the RIGHT or the LEFT.

What does our world need?

Jesus.

And a church with Jesus as her fixed point.

What the world needs we do too. Think of the spiritual solutions that the Bible offers up to this weary world?

- Jesus has made a way for
  - Forgiveness of every vile sin.
  - Lasting permanent hope.
  - Purpose in life.
  - Eternal life and not eternal death.
  - Peace amongst people of different races.
  - Healing of past regrets

Unfading, unwavering love from God. Always.

We have great reason for JOY and no reason for DESPAIR.

What might God do in our nation—in our day? We can smile at the future because we are together AND Jesus offers real solutions.

PRAY