

March 31st – Holy Wednesday

Centering Breath Prayer: Help me fix...my eyes on Jesus.

Loving Jesus, who gave himself for my sin, help me prepare for the rest of this week by fixing my eyes on you. Your courage and compassion as you faced your ordeal is an example which I deeply desire to be able to emulate. I come before you today, to drink in the fragrance of your love before we take the plunge into seeming madness. In your awesome name, I pray. Amen.

Scriptures: Hebrews 12:1-3

Key Verse: Hebrews 12:2:

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (NIV).

How often do you and I grow weary and lose heart because of opposition from sinful humankind? We are surrounded every day by the consequences of sin and the hold sin has on each of us. It would be very easy to quit trying to change anything for the good. It would be so easy to give up and say, “Woe is me!” Our scripture passage today follows immediately after a long list of people who faced dire consequences because of their faith. But, Paul does not urge us to give up. Instead, Paul entreats us to *“throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”* (vs. 1b NIV). He goes on to encourage us to “keep on keeping on” in the words from our day. But, Paul does not indicate that we should do this on our own, but to *“fix our eyes on Jesus.”* Becoming like Jesus is our goal, that for which we strive. In the middle of Holy Week, we are surrounded by examples of the sin and death that dominates life. But, Jesus endured it all in order to bring us triumph over sin and death. As indicated earlier in another devotional, Jesus not only endured, he willingly and even joyfully gave up his life for that triumph.

Does that mean that Jesus did not suffer his death in the same agony as any other victim of the savage execution by crucifixion? Does that mean he was not assailed by doubts or fears? Does that mean he did not desire to change the plan, as any human would? All anyone needs is to look at the account of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane to know this is not true! Yet, when it was time to fulfill God’s plan, Jesus calmly and compassionately endured a shameful, agonizing death willingly for you and me. He calmly confronted his arrest, taking the sword out of his follower’s hand, and equally faced his accusers at his highly illegal trials with calm and dignity; he had compassion on another man suffering beside him, and forgave those who were killing him. These are actions of love and triumph over the sin and death which surrounded Jesus. If we are to become like Jesus, we too, need to exhibit compassion in our everyday encounters, no matter how much sin and death is evident within them. This is, of course, much easier said than done! What we can do is daily ask for God’s assistance to transform us into the image of Christ and to daily attempt to follow Jesus to the best of our abilities. We must continually strive to learn more about the way Jesus faced life and to do likewise. This is what, I believe, Paul meant by fixing *“our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”* Many people use the phrase,

“What would Jesus do?” to fix their eyes on Jesus. Others pray for guidance each day. No matter how we go about our quest to become like Jesus, it is imperative that we maintain that quest. Lent is all about what Jesus did for us and how we respond to his actions. Holy Week is the height of Lent and we see the most intense time Jesus lived, how he faced death and why, and will culminate in complete triumph. We, too, can live, face death and have complete triumph in Jesus, not on our own, but through the triumph of Jesus. It won't be easy, but it will be worth it!

Additional Scriptures:

Questions for reflection and/or journaling:

1. What kind of response do I make in the face of earthly opposition to my faith?
2. What are some of the ways I “*fix my eyes of Jesus?*”

Suggestions for action:

Decide how you prefer to “*fix your eyes on Jesus*” to grow in your faith. If there is something unpleasant that you must do, ask the Lord to help you with his presence and wisdom.

Dearest Lord Jesus, as we progress through this Holy Week, help me to see the strength of your resolve to see God's plan to redeem us to completion. Your sacrifice was awesome and hard for me to understand, yet my love for you becomes greater with each telling of your story. I cannot fully comprehend how you could face such a horrendous death for me. Help me to live in a manner that is consistent with your love and compassion for me. Help me to become like you, for I cannot do it on my own. In your name, I pray. Amen.