

Fix your eyes on

Jesus

Hebrews 12:2

“Let Us Fix Our Eyes on Jesus, Like the Saints Before Us”

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Do you ever feel fatigued in life? Early one Sunday morning a husband was lying in bed, telling his wife how fatigued he felt that Sunday. He said, “Sweetheart, I’m so tired, I don’t have energy to go to church this morning.” His wife said, “Honey, you need to go.” The husband said again, “But I’m so tired, it would do me much better to stay in bed. Why do I have to go?” His wife answered, “Sweetie, I’ll give you three good reasons to get out of bed and go to church. One, God wants us to worship Him; it’s His commandment to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Two, you go to worship for your fellow Christians, to provide mutual encouragement and support in the Lord. Three, those people need to hear a sermon from God’s Word, and you need to be there to give it, because you are their pastor!”

Do you ever feel fatigued? We all feel fatigued at times in our lives, but perhaps even more so at this time, as we continue to fight this coronavirus pandemic. Fatigue has set in upon us. That’s what the research is showing. Pandemic Fatigue is spreading and overtaking our nation and our world! Now we’re not only fighting the virus, now we’re not only fighting one another about what to do about the virus, now we’re fighting our fatigue from this pandemic, from these many draining months of having to deal with it.

How do we deal with it? What does God's Word have to say about it? God's Word has plenty of passages and promises for us, when we are weary from life's ongoing difficulties. When we saints feel faint, we need to turn to the One who gives us the energy that we ain't got, our God. In Hebrews 12:1-2, God reminds us to focus our eyes on Jesus:

“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Do you think Jesus ever got fatigued? Think about His three years of ministry, teaching men so slow to learn from Him. Did Jesus ever get fatigued? Again and again, Jesus taught those men that God's way is a way of sacrifice and service, yet again and again those men argued about which one was the greatest among them. Did Jesus ever get fatigued? Again and again, Jesus taught the Pharisees that true holiness comes not from our attempts to keep God's law, which always fall short, but from God through His gift of grace to us. Yet the Pharisees never truly listened to Jesus and they never learned from Jesus. Did Jesus ever get fatigued? Again and again, the crowds came to Jesus, and Jesus taught them and healed them. Then when Jesus tried to get away to a quiet place to recuperate, the crowds would follow Him and press in upon Him, so that Christ couldn't get even a single minute of rest.



Did Jesus ever get fatigued from the crowds constantly coming? Consider this one example from Mark's Gospel: **“Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that He and His disciples were not even able to eat. When His family heard about this, they went to take charge of Him, for they said, ‘He is out of his mind’”** (Mark 3:20-21).

Did Jesus ever get fatigued? Remember when Jesus was carrying His cross, going to Calvary where He would pay the cost for the sins of you and me, and all people in human history? Remember when the weight of that wood beat down upon Jesus, after Jesus was already worn and weary from enduring the torment and torture of the physical beating His enemies had blasted upon Him, and the excruciating physical pain and anguish of that whipping with those many lashes across His bare back? Jesus was indeed worn and weary. He was so fatigued that He could not carry that cross another solitary step. So another man stepped in to help Him, to carry that weight for Jesus. This act of service was so significant that in Scripture his name is recorded for us, Simon of Cyrene.

Did Jesus ever get fatigued? You better believe He did. For Jesus was fully God, but He was also fully human. So do you feel fatigued right now? Rest assured, my friends, Jesus can relate. Jesus allowed Himself to become greatly fatigued so that you might be spiritually and eternally relieved. Jesus endured all His pain and suffering so that you could have the blessing of God's love and forgiveness, now and forevermore. Jesus endured His fatigue and His death, so that you could have life, blessed by the promise Jesus Christ is with you in life. He is with you and understands you when you feel fatigued in life.

And so God encourages you to keep your eyes on Jesus, exhorting you in Hebrews: **“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its**

shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”
(Hebrews 12:1-2).

Just like the saints who have gone before us, we fix our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:3 tells us: **“Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”** How do you keep heart and keep hope when you feel fatigued by the pandemic, or by any other of life’s many perplexing persistent problems? You turn your eyes upon Jesus. You partake of His Word and Sacraments, and the forgiveness and strengthening of faith they provide.

Scripture encourages us to find encouragement by remembering the saints who have gone before us, steadfast in faith in Jesus. Hebrews 12:1 proclaims: **“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”**

Listen, friends in Christ, right now we may be fatigued from the pandemic, but that doesn’t mean we give up, it means we step up, through Christ. Think of the early Christians and how tired they got of fighting the war against the world. Think of how tiring it must have been to be told again and again that they could not preach and teach about Jesus and what He has done for us. And yet through Jesus, those early Christians didn’t give up, they stepped up. They took to heart what



the author of Hebrews said to them: **“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart”** (Hebrews 12:2-3). That author of Hebrews knew that those saints, just like me and you, would get fatigued by life’s persistent problems, and he didn’t want those saints to give in or to give up. He

wanted them to stand strong, through the power of Jesus, which He gives in His Word and Sacraments. God, through Hebrews, offered encouragement to those saints in their day, and continues to give encouragement to we His saints today!

God calls on us always to **“fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross”** (Hebrews 12:2). The Bible reminds us that Jesus came for us at just the right time in God’s plan. As we are reminded in Galatians 4:4-5: **“And when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.”**

At just the right time in God the Father’s plan, Jesus His Son came. At just the right time in God’s plan, Christ gave His life away to win forgiveness for us, for we who are so fatigued by sin and Satan, by our flesh, and by our world. At just the right time in God’s plan, God always acts on our behalf. We can bank on that!

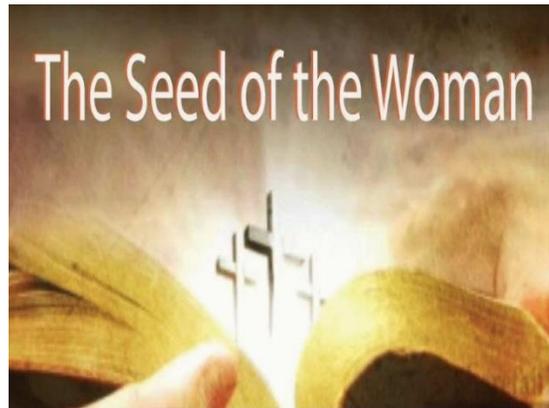
Think about a saint named Noah. Remember Noah? God called upon Noah to take his family and all those animals and enter that ark that Noah built. You think you have it bad being cramped up in tight quarters with only your close family members for an extended period of time? You think your ability to move around in society is restricted? Noah was sealed up tightly inside that ship. Noah had his movement restricted, locked up inside that boat, and he had all those animals and the smells and sounds they produced permeating his quarters. Quite often, people think that Noah was in that boat for 40 days and 40 nights. That’s not quite right. 40 days and 40 nights is simply the length of time that the rains came down to flood the whole earth. Noah entered the ark seven days before the rain started falling. And after the rain stopped falling, Noah had to wait inside the ark until all the water receded from the whole earth. Do you know how long in total Noah and his family were inside that ark before they could come outside the ark? One year

and 17 days. One year and 17 days locked away inside that ark. Now that's an awful long time to wait. And yet Noah knew his life was in God's hands. Noah knew that in God's timing, the waters would recede and he and his family would exit from that ark. God's saints know that in His plan and in His time, God's timing and not ours, God always acts on our behalf.

God's saints know that in the fullness of time, God's timing and not ours, God always acts. Think about a saint named Abraham. Abraham was 75 years old when God made a promise to him, telling him to leave his land of Haran and go to a new location, where God would make him the father of a great nation, which ended up being in Canaan. Do you know how long Abraham had to wait from that call and that initial promise until Abraham actually became a father of the son who had been promised? It was 25 years! Finally at the age of 100, Abraham had his son Isaac, when the promise of being the father of a great nation began to see fulfillment in the fruit of his fatherhood. 25 years from the time of the promise until his promised son was born! Yet Abraham knew as he waited that in God's plan and in God's time, God's timing and not ours, God always acts.

Yes, God's saints know that in the fullness of time, in His plan, God always acts on our behalf. Think about God's saints from Israel, who ended up tasting the evil in Egypt, the bitter bondage of slavery for such a lengthy time of misery. The Scriptures tell us the Israelites were oppressed, they were worked ruthlessly, and their lives were bitter with hard labor. How long did they serve under the pharaohs and their tyranny until God sent Moses to bring victory by rescuing them from their misery? For 430 years the Israelites experienced the fatigue of slavery, almost 200 years more than the evil of slavery lasted in this nation. Yet throughout those 430 years, God's people knew what is always true. God's saints know that in the fullness of time, God's timing and not ours, God always acts.

And one more example of the saints who have gone before us. Saints who have known that in the fullness of time, in God's plan and in God's timing and not ours, God always acts. Back in the very beginning, when people first started sinning, in the Garden of Eden, God made a precious promise. It's called the protoevangelium, which means the first good news or first Gospel. God made that promise in Genesis 3:15, that He would send the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent. That promise was a prediction of God's own Son who would come, the Holy One who would give His life to pay the price for all the sins we commit in our lives. Already from the time of the first sin we had the promise of the firstborn Son who would come, Jesus. How long did God's saints wait for the fulfillment of that promise? How long were they watching and waiting for the arrival of the Messiah? Well certainly so long that some got tired of waiting. But they did wait, and wait, and wait. Not just for months, not just for years, not just for decades, not just for centuries, but for millennia! Estimates suggest around 4000 years from Adam to Jesus. Can you imagine waiting four thousand years for God's relief? Yet even then, through those thousands of years of waiting, God's saints knew that in the fullness of time, God's timing and not ours, God always acts.



So, some could say that in the big scheme of the history of God's saints, we God's saints today have not yet begun to wait. Are you overcome by pandemic fatigue after these few months? Onward, Christian soldier, trusting in Jesus that He is with us, and Christ will lead us through this. Are you overcome by pandemic fatigue, worn and weary of the social distancing and the bickering over how to battle this virus? Onward, Christian soldier, the light of Jesus Christ will pull us through this.

One day there was a young boy at a church service. His church happened to have stained-glass windows with pictures of God's saints from Scripture. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Mary, Peter and Paul, you know them all. As that young boy looked at those saints who had gone before him, he saw sunlight shining in through them. With joy that boy exclaimed to his mother, "Look, mommy, the saints have God's light shining in them!"

When you are one of God's saints, saved by Jesus, you do have His light shining in you. He gave that light to you when He placed His Holy Spirit in you at your baptism. That light of Christ gives you hope. That light of Christ gives you peace. And that light of Christ gives you strength. When you feel like you cannot go on another single hour, because you are worn and weary from pandemic fatigue or from fatigue from anything else in life, remember you have Jesus Christ shining in you, strengthening you, through the forgiveness and power He gives to you in His wondrous Word and His sustaining Sacraments.

So my dear friend who may feel fatigued, as you await pandemic relief, like the saints before us, as today's Epistle in Hebrews calls us, let us keep on **"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."** May the light of Jesus Christ continue to give you perseverance in life through His Word and Sacraments, so that like the saints before you, you may fight the good fight, you may finish the race, you may keep the faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.