

Theme: **God's Will unites our focus on Jesus**

Text: Acts 1:1 – 26

Season: Ascension Sunday / 7th Sunday of Easter / Mother's Day

Date: May 13, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co

Grace and peace to you as you let God's Will be done in your life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Where is your focus in life? When going through life, do you just focus on the immediate tasks in front of you, the short-term impact of what you need to get done? Or do you consider the aftereffect of your actions, the bigger picture, the long-term effect on you and others? Too often, we get bogged down in the immediate tasks in front of us and neglect the bigger picture. It's been this way ever since the beginning. Adam and Eve were focused on the immediate desire of having the wisdom of God, not realizing the affect it would have on their relationship with God and others. They saw that the fruit looked good to eat and would give them knowledge but they lost sight of the long-term relationship with God that it would cost. They lost sight of heaven and how it united them as one with God. [Pause]

A young bride was busy, scurrying around the house. Everything had to be just right. Her in-laws were coming over and she wanted to impress them. So, there she was – vacuuming around the house, dusting the blades of the ceiling fan, cleaning the bathroom. Oh, yes, she better make sure that the bathtub was sparkling clean? In the midst of all this busy-ness, she completely forgot that her in-laws had said that they wanted to take them out to eat, their treat, just to get to know one another better.

Each of us are a part of the Church, the young Bride of Christ and often we get so focused on the tasks that are before us – that we need to be doing and the most effective way to getting them done – that we often lose sight of the big picture, our relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another. Where is your focus in life? Are you so absorbed with the tasks before you that you forget about the big picture? Do you get so absorbed with the things of this world that you forget about the heavenly home Christ has prepared for you?

When that happens, how do you regain the heavenly focus? Once you've lost the heavenly relationship? Once you've lost the big picture of why you are here on this earth, once you've lost your relationship with God and others - how can it be restored?

Luke in book of Acts answers that question by telling us, "**In the first book, O Theophilus,** (which means O Believers in God) **I have dealt with all that Jesus began to**

do and teach, [2] until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. [3] To them He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:1 – 3) [Pause]

The young bride, scurrying around the house, she was so frantic in preparation for her in-laws' visit that things were starting to go wrong; She chipped a dish while putting it away, she lost her “To Do” list, she knocked over a vase while dusting and it spilled water all over the dining room table and onto the floor. As things were starting to fall apart her husband came home from work. He walked over to his beautiful young bride on the floor cleaning the mess and put his arms around her and lifted her up, giving her a hug and a kiss. He said to her, “I’m here. I’ll take care of this” and pointed her toward their bedroom saying, “All this stuff isn’t what’s important. You are. My parents are come over to get to know you, not this house. I’ll take care of this and you take care of you.”

Jesus, our Husband, came for each of us, the Bride of Christ. He came to wrap His arms around each of us and lift us up to heaven with him. He came to give heaven back to us. He did this by rising from the grave after dying on the cross to make the full and final payment for all our sins. He restored heaven to you and me and gave us back an eternal focus, not a self-centered focus. He lifted your eyes to the most important thing in this world, to bring us to an eternal relationship with God, our creator. Jesus raises our focus to heaven and the eternal relationship we have with God and one another.

Unfortunately, we often misunderstand the focus that Jesus brings to us. Even though He comes to lift our eyes to heaven, we still get bogged down in the details of this world. We still become focused on the problems and difficulties of this world that surrounds us, just like the disciples. **“So when the disciples had come together, they asked Jesus, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6) [Pause]**

The young bride was indeed thankful that her husband was there. How he could help her with the many preparations that needed to be done. After all, it was his parents that she was trying to impress! So, it’s appropriate that he should help her with getting ready. Maybe he could finish wiping off the counters and waxing the hard wood floors. Then he could run to the grocery store and get some of the things that were needed. That would take a load off her and make her life easier, she thought to herself.

Often, we too look at Jesus and say, “Yes, Jesus, I know you’ve taken care of heaven for me, but what about right now? I’m struggling with all kinds of issues and problems and difficulties today. Are you going to take away my problems right now? Are you going to help me with the things that are confronting me in this earthly life? We still don’t get it. We ask, “Jesus, will you at this time make my life easier? Will you at this time restore the kingdom on earth for me?”

Jesus responds to us the way He responded to the disciples, **"It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. [8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** (Acts 1:7-8) Jesus is saying to us, “I didn’t come to make your life easier. But I will give you some tasks to do while you are on this earth. They’re important tasks that will help your relationships with one another and with your heavenly Father. They’ll make the time here pass by quickly and they’ll help to keep your eyes fixed on heaven and your relationship with God. [Pause]

The young bride turns to her husband and begins to instruct him on what needed to be done and he responds with, “Yes, I’ll get them done, I’ll help you, but let’s keep our focus on what’s coming up. The point of this visit is to get to know my parents and not this house. The point is to be prepared so we can relax and enjoy the dinner and the time we are going to have with my parents, who are taking us out to eat. So, let’s put on some music on and enjoy each other’s company while I finish up in here and you get ready to go out to eat.” “Oh, that’s right we’re going out to eat,” she remembered. “That’s right,” he said as he leads her out of the kitchen and into the bedroom, so she can get ready.

Jesus didn’t come to restore our earthly kingdom. He didn’t come to give us an automatic easy life. But He does give us a task to do through whatever vocation God gives to us. To be His witnesses to the world of all the heavenly relationships we will have for eternity with our heavenly Father. As we do our vocation to the best of our God-given abilities, we are doing God’s will and that’s keeping us focused on heaven and our relationship with God and one another.

‘And when Jesus had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. [10] And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, [11] and said, "Men

of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:9-11) There they stood, with mouths open, wondering if they had just been abandoned. Would they ever see Him again? Was He coming back? How were they supposed to go on without Him? [Pause]

The young bride steps out of the bathroom and calls for her husband but he was not there and she began to think. “Just as we were starting to get ready to go out to eat, he disappears. I don’t know where he went. I’m here getting ready for a visit with his parents and he goes off to who knows where. I don’t even know when he’ll be back. What if his parents arrive before he gets back? What if I’m not ready when they come? She starts to feel abandoned and gets frantic all over again.

Feeling abandonment is horrible. Where did Jesus go? His disciples wondered. The reason they and we often feel abandoned is because we focus on ourselves in this life instead of the new relationship that we have through Jesus Christ life, death, resurrection and ascension. Yes, Jesus was gone from their sight, but He had promised He would be back. He also promised to send them a helper. He promised they would not be abandoned and He never broke a promise. [Pause]

As the young bride worked herself into a tizzy, with her husband off somewhere, the bride notices a note on the bed. It said, “I’ll be back soon. I went out to take the trash to the dumpster and to move our car so that my parents can park closer to our townhouse. I’ll wait for my parents to arrive and show them where to park before bring them up to the house. I love you, for you’re my beautiful bride.”

Jesus has gone to make everything ready. He says, **“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also.”** (Jn 14: 3) Jesus suffered abandonment on the cross so that each of us will never have to. He promises to remain with us until He returns to take us to be with Him in the perfect relationship of God’s love, peace and joy forever. In your Baptism, in the preaching of His Word and in His Holy Supper, Jesus fulfills that promise. He is with each of us, very personally and He sends the Holy Spirit to work in our lives through His means of Grace, so that we are never alone or abandoned.

Jesus gives us His Word to teach us, to prepare us, to strengthen us by reminding us that by His death on the cross and His Easter resurrection, He has given us a special relationship with God forever. Jesus also leaves us His Holy Spirit to be with each of us, to guard and protect us so that we can keep our eyes fixed on Him. Every time we drop our focus to ourselves and to this earthly life, Jesus raises our focus to heaven and the new relationship we have with God. He lifts our eyes to the big picture, to being us with Him to the perfect love, peace and joy of our heavenly home forever. This is what we need to be focused on and this is what we need to share with others as we prepare to be with Him forever. Amen.