

March 2, 2025

Hebrews 3:1-6

“Jesus: The Builder of Us!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
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Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is the Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our theme is **Jesus: The Builder of Us!** The two ideas are connected. What we see in the record of Jesus at his transfiguration is currently touching us by faith (but not fully sensationally), and will finally change us so that the words of the apostle John will be fulfilled when he writes: "... we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:2-3)."

When the three apostles saw the Lord Jesus and Moses and Elijah they were unable to correctly process what they were seeing. Peter spoke without thinking when he started rambling about a permanent dwelling on earth for the three who were before his eyes. Besides, it is God in his Son Jesus Christ who wishes to build us to be a dwelling place. And when they heard the voice in the cloud they became afraid. This was because of their sin and need for purity. Later, when Peter will write his second epistle, he will refer to this event as an eye-witness testimony of Jesus' majesty so that we, who live today, "... may know the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Moreover, Peter says that in addition to what he saw at the transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16), "... we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts ..."

So, we have the eye-witness testimony of the transfiguration of Jesus and a prophetic word more fully confirmed. Just what exactly is that prophetic word? On the one hand, we can say that Peter is referring to everything in the Old Testament. However, we may also say that the core of what we have in the Old Testament, regarding the work of Jesus, is discovered in the exodus. In fact, by the Holy Spirit, we have been allowed to know the subject matter of the conversation that Moses and Elijah were having with Jesus as they appeared with him in glory at the mountain. It says that they "... spoke of his departure [his exodus], which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem ..." What we are therefore to understand is that the Old Testament exodus of Israel from Egypt is a prophetic picture of what Jesus would do.

This opens up a world of content that is far too great for us to cover in a short sermon. References to the exodus are found in the gospel of Matthew and impossible for us to chart here. But our epistle lesson helps us to focus our attention on one aspect of this fact: Moses. Moses was a prophetic picture of Jesus. We read: "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house."

This is a loaded verse. We share a "heavenly calling." This heavenly calling is to be with God. Here we must consider Jesus who makes that heavenly calling possible. He is the one who was sent and became our high priest and sacrifice that we might confess that he is the only way to being with God. Moreover, Jesus has been faithful to all that the Father has given him to do, just as Moses was faithful in the house of Israel back in Old Testament times. Notice that God's house or dwelling is a people. And this dwelling or house, in the days of Moses, consisted of a people who believed in the coming of the Savior. Our faith is in the Savior who has already come, and has accomplished everything. Thus, we also are

considered a dwelling place of God, and we are much closer to the consummation of that heavenly dwelling than the Old Testament people were. They were only looking forward to the fulfillment. We have the fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth.

We have been cleansed from sin and consecrated for service by Jesus the high priest. Ours is a “heavenly calling” both coming from and ultimately leading to being with God in heaven. He has built us to be a house (his home). **Jesus: The Builder of Us** is a calling we surely do not want to ever jeopardize. So, we are to “consider Jesus” or “envision” him, which calls on us to view him in a specific way. We are to regard him as our benefactor (a gift giver) with the eyes of the heart - in faith. We are to consider Jesus who, as it says in verse two of our lesson, was “faithful” to the Father as Moses was faithful “in all God’s house.” The present tense of the verb literally means that Jesus “is being faithful.” In this way we are to focus our eyes on the presence of Jesus now, who is building us to be a house already whenever we gather around the gospel and the sacraments. Church is important as it is the house of God - we who believe.

Here we are invited to a serious and constant study of Jesus’ person and work. Our lesson says that he became one of us to do two important things. He was sent (an “apostle”) and is a “high priest of our confession.” This means that God sent his Son as the authorized envoy to speak for him and carry out his will. We know God through Jesus and especially as our “High priest,” which refers to the sacrificial nature of his mission. He died on the cross to save us from sin, death, and hell. This is our confession.

It says in verse three that Jesus, the apostle and high priest “has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.” This means that the revelation of Jesus is greater than what Moses did. Both were faithful in carrying out their assigned tasks, but Jesus is the fulfillment of Moses. In Numbers 12:7, God himself said of Moses: “He is faithful in all my house.” Moses poured out his life in service to the house of Israel. In fact, Moses even offered to have his name blotted out of God’s book in exchange for the people. And no one can doubt Jesus’ faithfulness as the one who endured our hell and experienced our being blotted out so that we may be written in the book of life. In John 17:4, on Maundy Thursday evening, Jesus would say to his Father, “I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.” So, what are we to make of this comparison between Jesus and Moses?

The point of comparison was not faithfulness, but position. It says in verses 3-4, that “Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses - as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.)” One does not give to a house a greater honor than the one who built the house. To rank both builder and building on the same level would be silly. So, we are invited to look closely at Moses and Jesus and see the difference. Although Moses is extremely important as a prophet who is a prophetic picture of Jesus, he is only a part of the house of God - a part of the building. **Jesus**, both God and man was the builder of that house - **the builder of us!** Moses occupied a high position in Israel and was worthy of honor. But Jesus, who is the creator of all, including Moses and Israel, is worthy of the highest honor.

It says in verses 5 and 6 that “... Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.” Moses was a “servant”

or a willing attendant. Jesus is the Son of God. This is a very important distinction. Moses attended to and testified to the things of the future. The future is found in Jesus. We read the following in Deuteronomy 18:15, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers and it is to him you shall listen ...” Incidentally, these are words of the transfiguration.

Jesus Christ is faithful over all of God’s house. He is the builder and greater than Moses who is a part of the house, as we are a part of the house. This is revealed in verse 6 when it is written, “... we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” The house of God is no longer in the future. It is here with us by faith but we still look forward to its consummation. To which house does the writer to the Hebrews refer with the words “we are his house?” Paul writes in Eph. 2:19-22,

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

What this means is astounding. All believers of both the Old and New Testaments are part of this glorious house, built by and lovingly ruled by the Son. **Jesus: The Builder of Us!** Therefore, we are to be extremely careful that we do not lose what has been so graciously given. By faith God dwells in us now in a way that may not seem so sensational. But, one day, faith will give way to a dwelling in us so that we will derive every good gift and benefit from who God is in ways we cannot understand - feeling him and knowing him in the most majestic way (transfiguration). Some have lost their place in this glorious house, as the author of the book of Hebrews will later show. At this point he offers encouragement, urging us to “... hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” This confidence has attached to it the idea of courage from the hope to avoid destroying our faith because of the house we are now and forever will be.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott