Jesu Juva

“Fix Your Eyes on Jesus”
Text: 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21; Joel 2:12-19

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

From Transfiguration white to Ash Wednesday black.
From Lord, it is good to be here to Lord, have mercy.
From Glory to God in the highest to Dust you are and to dust you will return.

No more glorias, no more alleluias. Not for a while. Not until we shout them out again when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

But now it is not the triumph of the resurrection that is our focus, although we always have that in mind, for without the resurrection, no Christian Church, no Christian faith, no Christ, no Christians, no forgiveness, no life, no Supper, no hope. So we always have the resurrection in sight.

But this season we focus not so much on the triumph of the resurrection but on the triumph of the cross. The triumph that looked like anything but triumph. That looked like defeat. But was, in fact, the triumph of God’s Word and promises fulfilled. All that we need, Jesus did. As we heard, He became sin for us so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. His life given that you might live.

Satan, of course, doesn’t want you to see that, or know that, or worst of all, believe that. Look anywhere but there. So sometimes he’ll fill your eyes with a million distractions. All kinds of things in your life to take your mind and eyes and hearts off of Christ crucified for you. And especially these days, it seems, he is particularly good at doing just that.

But there’s one thing in particular he wants you to look at. One thing in particular to focus on, and that honestly, we like to focus on. We really like it. ME. Make yourself the center and measure of all things. Of all that you do. Look out for number 1.

We just sang: All mankind fell in Adam’s fall; One common sins infects us all (LSB #562). And that common sin is this: that I am at the center. curvatus in se, is how the theologians put it. Satan has curved us in on ourselves.

But since this Lenten season we are considering vision problem that we have - spiritual
vision problems - we could perhaps call this astigmatism. *Spiritual* astigmatism. For astigmatism is when the curvature of your eye isn’t right, and so you don’t see as you should. Everything is blurry. Being *curvatus in se* - curved in on ourselves - has done that to us. Our curvature is wrong. Instead of looking out we’re looking in and so everything is blurry. Unsure and uncertain.

God’s love for me is blurry. Does He really love me?

My sin is blurry. Is what I’m doing really sinful? It feels right to me. It seems right to me.

God Word becomes blurry. It can’t mean that. That’s not what people today think. Our world is different now.

The future becomes blurry. Will I be saved? How can I know?

And *curvatus in se*, we begin to answer those questions, that blurryness, by looking to ourselves for the answers; what seems right to me. By what I think, what I like, what I get out of it, by *my* rights. Right and wrong, good and bad, true and false is what I think it is. Everything is subjective, *curvatus in se*. Even prayer and fasting and giving, as Jesus talked about, become about ME. That I may be praised by others as good, holy, dedicated, righteous. And if praised by others, then praised by God, too. Loved by Him, approved by Him, saved by Him, because of what I am doing. *curvatus in se*.

So this Lenten season, the call goes out to fix your eyes on Jesus. We just sang that in the Gradual earlier. Stop looking at yourself. Stop *curvatus in se*. Fix your eyes where they belong. On Jesus. Or as the prophet Joel put it: *Return to the Lord your God. curvatus in se* is to make yourself god. Return to the Lord your God. Repent. Fix your eyes on Him.

And as you do, things will not be so blurry anymore. There will always be some blurryness as long as we live in this sinful world and in our sinful flesh. But the Spirit enables us to focus again. To see things more clearly again. With eyes on Jesus. With eyes on Christ crucified.

For there is God’s love for you. Does He really love me? Look at how much He loves you! Each drop of blood, each agonizing breath, with each mocking taunt hurled into His ears, with each nail, each lash, each thorn piercing His head proclaiming to you, shouting to you, His love for you. For this is all for you. Does God love you? Fix your eyes on Jesus. Clearly, that much.

And what about your sin? There’s your sin [on the cross]. It’s not blurry at all. And it isn’t little and it isn’t harmless. There are no “victimless sins” when every sin is on Christ on the cross. What feels right to you feels like that to Him. What about your sin? Fix your eyes on Jesus and see your sin and its consequences clearly.
And what about God’s Word - is God’s Word blurry? Fix your eyes on Jesus. The wages of sin is death. He dies to pay your wages. And He dies because He promised He would. Every Word He speaks - whether we like them or not - is true and fulfilled in Him. Especially these words He spoke from the cross: Father, forgive them. Fix your eyes on Jesus and hear Him. Clearly.

And the future? Fix your eyes on Jesus there, too. Today, you will be with me in Paradise He says. Clear words to that thief, of hope and a future. And that thief departed in peace. And so can you.

That’s why satan doesn’t want you to look there, to the cross - to see that, know that, and worst of all believe that. So look here! Look there! See that shiny thing! Look at that success! Look at that awful person you can’t possibly forgive! Look at that injustice, look at that unfairness. You deserve better! You deserve a better god!

No. Today fix your eyes on Jesus. No more curvatus in se. No more spiritual astygmatism. No more blurryness. No more uncertainty.

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Christ crucified. For you. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Your sins are forgiven. Every. Single. One. Fix your eyes on Jesus. His Body and Blood given for you. Fix your eyes on Jesus. And see clearly again.

See clearly when Ash Wednesday black becomes Easter white. When Lord, have mercy becomes Peace be with you. And when Dust you are and to dust you will return becomes He is risen indeed! That’s your now and your future. When your eyes are fixed on Jesus.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.