

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
June 10, 2018

Looking to Jesus
Hebrews 12:1-3

12:1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,
12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
12:3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

1. Perspective of Faith

There is a Japanese saying, “*Me no tsukedokoro*.” It means you have good perspective or good focus. In any fields, I love to listen to lectures by specialists of their field. When I listen to those lectures, I am impressed by them and think “Ah, the specialist has a good perspective.” When I was teaching at a Bible School, I said to students, “You have a good perspective but your thesis is not logical.” Thus “*Me no tsukedokoro*” means “a view of things” or “perspective.”

There is a story. There were two salesmen of a shoemaker, and they went to a country in order to do the market research. They stayed in the country and send the report. One of two wrote like this. “It is extremely difficult to sell the shoes here because they are living barefoot.” However, the other wrote like this. “I am sure we can sell

the shoes here because no one has shoes yet” Even when you see the same thing, the result becomes different because you have a different perspective. “Seeing” is not only receiving the information of lights through the eyes but also processing the information and deciding the conclusion logically. People who can see the things in different perspective, they tend to be successful. This is the same in faith, you can walk in faith firmly when you can see the invisible thing as 2 Corinthians 4:18 says, “as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith by using a word, “to see.” It says, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” In this verse, the believers assured the things by seeing the things that they have not seen. Noah created the ark when he received the revelation of flood. He did not see any signs of floods. The other people laughed at them and said “You created the ark on the land. How can you take it to the river?” Noah knew that the land and mountains would be sank under the water. He clearly saw it by the eyes of faith. (Hebrew 11:7)

Abraham left his homeland when he was called by God. He did not know where he was heading at that time. And when he did not have child, he received the word, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them..... So shall your offspring be.” (Genesis 15:5) Abraham believed the word and foresaw this fact when he watched the sky with stars.

Moses was raised as a prince of Egypt, and all of the benefits and privileges were promised; however, his eyes saw the rewards from

God rather than the “Treasure of Egypt,” that were the benefits from the world. And he choose to have sufferings with the people of God. (Hebrew 11:23-26) According to Hebrews 11:27, “By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.”

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinth 4:18) The perspective of faith is different from the perspective of the world. We, believers, see the things in the view of eternal things. The things we can't see such as God's love, grace, provision, and reward. Our eyes of faith can see those things and we can walk on the path of life by the the perspective.

2. Jesus, Founder of Faith

A letter to the Hebrews orders Christians to look up to Jesus in Chapter 12 after he listed believers in the Old Testament in Chapter 11. If the believers in the Old Testament looked to the coming Christ in the future, it is natural that the believers in the New Testament also looked to Christ, who has already come.

In Hebrews 12:2, Jesus Christ is called as “the founder and perfecter of our faith”. Japanese colloquial translation calls Jesus as “the guide of faith”, but I think the New Japanese Bible and the New Interconfessional Translation is better to call Jesus as “the founder of faith”. “The founder” refers to the person who started things or who built the foundation. Jesus Christ is exactly the one who set the foundation of our faith, and the foundation of faith itself. In the Hymn of “My hope is built on nothing less”, we sing the lyrics, “On Christ,

the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.” In *Seika*, the lyrics is “Jesus is the Rock and others are sand”. Like this Hymn, there is nothing we can stand other than Jesus. Therefore, we should keep gazing at Jesus.

Those who follow the founder inherit the founder 's will and imitate Him. If Jesus is the founder of faith, Jesus should also be the example of faith. In the second half of the Hebrews 12:2 says, “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” It causes us to think about 1 Peter 2:21–23. It says, “For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” In this way, those who have Jesus as the foundation of faith are called to walk the same way as Jesus walked.

Hebrews 12:3 says, “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.” Look to Him in the previous verse is replaced by the word Consider Him here. The word “consider” is called ἀναλογίζομαι (*analogizomai*), which is used only in the New Testament here, but the word λογίζομαι (*logizomai*) is frequently used. λογίζομαι (*logizomai*) means “to calculate”, “to accept”, “to consider”. Because ἀνα (*ana*) of ἀναλογίζομαι (*analogizomai*) means “one”, it means “to count one by one”, “to carefully consider”, “to think deeply”. The Hymn of “Count your blessings”, there is the lyrics, “Count your

blessings, name them one by one. Count your blessings, see what God hath done”. In this way, the word “consider” teaches us to think about what Christ has done for us carefully and to take what He has done as example into our life — one by one.

It is said that a lot of athletes begins with mimicking those who are superior to themselves when they train themselves. In order to imitate a person to be a model, they repeatedly watch the video to observe and research the model from every angle. It is not only applicable to sports, it also applicable to any other fields. It is said that the word “to learn” was born from the word “to imitate”. We master things by imitating our model. And in order to imitate the model, we need to look at it closely.

It is the same in the world of faith. If we wish to be like Christ, we have to look at Christ closely and observe Him closely. Specifically, we observe Jesus carefully through the Bible carefully and think deeply about Jesus in our prayer. In that way, let's not forget to consider Jesus.

3. Jesus, Perfecter of Faith

Jesus is the “founder of faith.” And, at the same time, He is the “Perfecter of faith”. Jesus said to be a “Perfecter of faith” because Jesus has accomplished all necessity for our salvation. Jesus took all our sins on the Cross and redeemed us from sin. Also, He has given eternal life to who believe Jesus by the Resurrection. Jesus is alive now and is interceding our prayers, will come to the world again to renew this world. At that time, He will complete our salvation. Indeed, Jesus is the “Founder and Perfecter of faith.”

In addition, if Jesus is the “Perfecter of faith,” it means that Jesus works in each of us to grow our faith and bring it to be perfect. Jesus is the example and model of faith. But, it is not easy to imitate the model. For example, sometimes we can’t even see how the person does it, and we cannot do it by myself even the person seems to do it very easily. What should we do in such a case?

The best thing is to have a coaching guidance. Even the model is far away, if you have a coach, your coach will stay on your side. If you want to learn from the model, you must visit to the person and learn, but the coach can come to you and teach you. I have seen a coach teaching a child in a Little League, the coach have the pitcher grips the ball, and moves the pitcher’s fingers one by one, corrects the position of the finger. The coach teaches how to hold the ball. Also, against the batter, he was crouching at the batter’s feet to straighten the legs opening and direction. Having coach is given every possible help.

Jesus is not only stay in the distant (heaven) as a model but also stay with us and coaches us like “taking our hands and holding our legs” to grow our faith. Among the sports world, even you are practice and doing well, you are not making a good result, sometimes coaches give up and quit your coaching. But our coach of faith, Jesus, never gives up nor quits on us no matter how many times we fail. Jesus lead us with patience and never ending number of times. Even though we may give up, the Lord never gives up on us.

At the first worship service of this year, I quoted words of Mr. Tom Laundry, a former head coach of Dallas Cowboy. When he was asked a question: “What is your job as a coach?” he answered, “My job is to

get men to do what they don't want to do.” Professional athletes often want to do more advanced attractive practices than basic training, so that often athletes do not follow the coach's guidance. Mr. Laundry was also a former athlete, so he knew about them well. So, we are similar to them. How few of us are asking for Jesus as coaching? Let's repent our former attitude and ask Jesus and have His coaching willingly and follow it obediently since Jesus is the “founder and Perfecter of faith.”

Let's have Jesus as our coach and look up to Jesus as our model and learn from him. If we do so, we can finish the race of faith goal in to the the glory of heaven.

(Prayer)

God, the Father, we thank that You gave Jesus to us as the model and the coach for our faith. We often are attracted by the worldly things, stumble by seeing others. And discourage by seeing ourselves. Please help and lead us so that our eyes are looking straight only to the Lord. In the name of Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen.