

Sermon for Sunday, 6th June 2021

"Fixing our eyes on what is unseen" – 2 Corinthians 4:13-18 & 5:1

Good morning!

I hope you've been enjoying the lovely sunny weather over the past week, and getting outdoors more! There's something about when the sun is shining that helps us to come alive to the beauty of God's creation - certainly I find myself noticing, becoming more alert to the things you can see.

As part of this morning's AAA service I ask everyone to go and have a look out of their window and make a note of some of the things that they can see and then to think for a moment about anything that they can't see right now but which they are 100% certain are there. e.g. the air - not visible to the eye but it's all around you all the time! Stars in the sky - we can't see them during the day but we know that they're still up there just the same.

This morning we're delving into 2 Corinthians 4 / 5 and thinking about what we fix our eyes on - things we can see or things we can't see.

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." What do those words mean for us as followers of Jesus?

First of all, we need to find out a little bit about what was going on in the lives of the people that he was writing his letter to. Paul hints, doesn't he that he and the Corinthian Christians were going through hard times - he calls them light and momentary troubles. In fact, a little bit earlier in his letter, he tells us that things were really very difficult:

ICB - 2 Cor 4:8-9

" We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up. ⁹We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed".

So, Paul and the Christians in Corinth were having a difficult time, particularly because of people who were against them because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Do you sometimes have difficult times, times of trouble? We all do from time to time, and not just because of our faith in Jesus.

For the Christians who were having a difficult time because of their faith in Jesus, it sounds like perhaps they were feeling quite disheartened, or felt like giving up? And when we're going through a difficult time, it's hard not to focus on all the difficult things that are happening. And we can feel discouraged in our faith because we wonder where God is in all the hard things that are happening.

But in the midst of his troubles, Paul encourages them and us "We do not lose heart!" He's particularly concerned that we don't give up putting our trust in Jesus. He wants us to find comfort, hope and strength by re-focusing our eyes: "So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Another Bible translation puts it this way:

"So we set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see. What we see will last only a short time. But what we cannot see will last forever."

Whether or not we're going through difficult times, this message of Paul is equally important for us all. It's natural isn't it for us to just think about everything that we can see with our eyes and the things we see on TV, on Social Media which tell us that what's important is what we look like, what we're wearing, whether we have the latest gadget to show off, what smart phone, what car we have, what our house looks likethe list goes on.

The reality is that everything we see around us eventually wears out. Nothing we can see lasts forever. Everything that we can see with our eyes will eventually wear out, fade, and die. Because everything we can see is temporary - including our very bodies, which as Paul says, are wasting away.

It's good to enjoy the beautiful things we see but Paul says, Don't *fix* your eyes on things you can see because they don't last. Fix your eyes instead on things that you can't see because these are the things that will last forever. And these are the things that you can truly look forward to receiving if you keep faith in Jesus Christ.

“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. For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.”

The earthly tent Paul speaks of is our physical body, which isn't going to last forever. It's not good news, is it? But what we need to hold on to is what we can't see yet with our eyes: the house that God has got ready for us after this life, that will last forever and ever. A beautiful, glorious home in heaven. A home where we will live with God forever. A house which will never fall down - a heavenly dwelling / body which will never grow old or die.

Fix your eyes of faith on Jesus Christ who we can't see at the moment but who we will see in all his glory after this temporary life; fix your eyes on the amazing, eternal home that God has made ready for everyone who puts their trust in Jesus, and it changes how we see troubles when they come our way. Because we're reminded that there is a glorious future ahead of us where there will never be troubles and pain and difficulty.

Fix your eyes of faith on the promise of this glorious eternal home with God, and it helps us to remember, in the good times too, that life is about so much more than all about the temporary things we *see* in the here and now: it helps us to see life through God's eyes and to live our life with a very different purpose - living for the Lord Jesus and doing his work which lasts forever.

So, let us fix our eyes on not what is seen but on what is unseen.