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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor.

on Thursday Evening. June 27.1974.

Lesson. John 3.

Looking unto Jesus. Hebrews 12.2.

I do not propose to speak a personal word, but it may be fitting that we should just name one essential point as we begin. It is following Southill yesterday and the long journeys, and looking at the service to day, I felt almost in despair, wondering what to do after pouring <sup>out</sup> so much. This blessed word is a complete answer for the preacher and for the people. How amazing the word is, because it is an eternal subject. It is suitable and apposite for every quickened sinner in all ages of the world's history, in all parts of the planet, in all age groups from the lisping babe to the mature saint. It is appropriate for all/circumstances and conditions of the soul, of the body, and relatively, and in Zion. It covers all emergencies, all sorrows, trials, afflictions, joys, deliverances, blessings.

Not only so, it is a word that reveals immediately the blessed inner secret of all vital godliness; namely, every quickened soul has a glorious Object. The Object is transcendent in beauty, glory, blessedness, efficacy, omnipotence and fulness. It is the secret of vital religion, that your soul is in vital union with the glorious Object, and there are constant communications from Him to your soul. These blessed directives, these exhortative Scriptures, these divine instructions are plenary. Take the little congregation here this evening. I would not know of all your inner things, nor do I wish to: the Lord knows. There must be divers circumstances represented in the congregation. You are asking questions such as, "What shall we do? what is the right course?" and so on. This is the complete answer to all. "Looking unto Jesus."

Before I go further I want to say to you, this a safe way, a good way, a blessed way, it is the only way. It is a way that will be crowned with glory and honour, peace and righteousness, beauty and blessedness. So in

your soul you have the profound secret of sonship of God because you are honouring Him by looking to His Son. Every other course is bound to end in confusion: it is bankrupt. If you turn aside from this way you will find yourselves in trouble. Think of your soul, all the diseases of it; think of your mind, your poor body, your family, your circumstances; this is the complete answer. So if you turn aside from this course it will mean darkness, bondage, misery. This is the only course for a Christian, and I say that in the truest sense.

Let us now for a moment seek to look within the veil. This is still the subject, - not in the same way as here, in some respects. You will have no wounds to be healed there; no troubles to be delivered out of there; no sin to be dealt with there; no problems; no impasse, as with the Israelites at the Red Sea; no extremities there; no times of tremendous need; no times of sorrow there. It will be the same subject; "Looking unto Jesus." Looking to the same glorious Person and seeing Him in His glorified state: Christ exalted and you glorified, and bringing all the praise, glory and honour that is due to His Name, and as in the hymn, - this is a concise word, - you will crown Him. You will place all the honour and praise on His worthy brow. So it is the same subject. It is heaven: it would not be apart from our Saviour there. He is our heaven. All He has done, - think of that part already accomplished. He has prepared for us a place in the heavenly mansions. I feel in my soul an inexpressible joy and expectation. Take the wonder, joy and comfort of having <sup>something</sup> prepared for you unexpectedly in the earth by loving hands and hearts: the door opens and everything is prepared. O the beauty, comfort and joy of it! And to think that a place is already prepared for you who love and fear God! and the Lord knows when the blissful hour and moment will come, and He will come again and receive you unto Himself, that where He is there you will be also.

I want to remind you of something in the ministry I have brought before you on several occasions. Possibly ~~some~~ of the times of greatest joy and blessing in this Church and Sanctuary over the years, have been when dear saints of God have been laid to rest. It is an amazing thing. Do you think when the time comes for your body to be laid in the grave in this Sanctuary that it will be one of the happiest days and the Lord's

glorious Presence? I remember in one case, - I will not mention the name- the whole service was to me not as a funeral but a wedding. You think of it! called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; the wedding and the white robes. The subject is the same eternally. "Looking unto Jesus." adoring, worshipping, praising, giving Him all the glory due to His ~~My~~ dear and precious Name. It will be obvious to you then it will be a glorious degree and ~~measure~~ measure. Here we fail. You try to praise Him, and He is so kind to receive and He loves to hear your praise. You feel it is so poor, inadequate, insufficient. "After all He has done and is doing for and in me, and all He did at Calvary and in the Covenant of Grace, it is so poor." Then it will be in a glorious manner and measure that you long for now. These few words of truth introduce the subject.

I feel that another beautiful aspect is this, - and you will see in the chapter those of us <sup>who</sup> have lost very dear ones will feel they are close to them in this. God only knows the long cloud of witnesses that are before me in this pulpit when I go back to the beginning of my ministry. I think of precious characters of grace, and we are so close to them because they are looking unto Jesus, viewing His lovely face with no veil between; face to face, and we are looking unto Jesus now. If we examine this, all the looking unto Jesus now is cumulative; all He does for you, in you; all He works for you, all the blessings He bestows on you issue in eternal praise and adoration. Every glimpse of His precious countenance, every drop of honey, every taste of divine love and the red wine of the Kingdom will issue in an everlasting song of praise. We shall feel we are isolated from the world and all below and adore the Saviour. There will be times when you are so transported by these views that you lose sight of the world. It is wonderful to me to get a confirmation and further revelations of His glory and the shedding forth of the Holy Ghost.

Let us try by the grace of God to work this out with you, and it will be qualified. I am inhibited and considerably restricted by two things. One is, I know Him so little. I can only speak of Him in so far as I know Him and as He grants His Spirit. So the brightest saints of God on earth, can they speak of Him? You will feel at a loss to begin because of His glory and your vessel is of small capacity, yet it is filled sometimes and flows over. There is another reason. I have, I hope I have

a little grace, feelingly. It is only in the measure of grace a soul has: it is not in the brain; it is not words: it is grace. It is according to a gracious capacity that you are able to speak of Him. To demonstrate this, if you have time you may profitably go through the works of the Puritans, especially Dr John Owen. If you do you will have (if you retain it) a profound knowledge mentally of all the doctrines divine. A master in Israel he was in that sense. The Lord bless it to you. The point is, you will need it to be translated into terms of spiritual experience in your own soul. The Lord may well use it to that end. If you have a brain of considerable talent and ability you might ~~be~~ be able to retain a tremendous amount. If you relied on this and had no spiritual and gracious knowledge in your own soul, how solemn it would be! You would be able to use the phraseology (though you might be afraid to) If you have time read it by all means: there must be a gracious, vital, spiritual experience of the truth in your own soul, then you can speak, - can you? Yes: under the Spirit. Not always, not every day: when you are under the special influence of the Spirit you speak with authority and unction, and if so you speak with conviction. Any gracious person, speaking under the Spirit of anything that is comprehended by the Text with authority and unction, speaks with conviction.

So it will be desirable to seek, though we recognise the severe restrictions, to speak as the Lord is pleased to help us in this hour, of this word that is so vital to you and to the preacher. "Looking unto Jesus." How wonderful to consider this; "Looking unto Jesus." The blessed Name of Jesus is used because it is the only way that God is visible to the eye of faith. You cannot see God only in Jesus, God is a Spirit. You may say you can see Him in Creation. You see His work clearly. What a pity it is that we do not study the works of God in Creation more! One thing that often staggers me is, here I am getting on, and I know little <sup>of</sup> the Creation. The point is, God is not visible as to His Being, only in His Son incarnate. There you see God. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." It seems that we should begin here.

You will see how true it is. So this wonderfully emanates from the doctrine. God, or the Son of God incarnate, God in human flesh, is visible

At once this unfolds a whole series of spiritual matters which it will be essential to refer to. Sinners, guilty people stung by the serpent are able to see God in Jesus Christ. What efficacy is spelt out by this? Salvation. I want to begin with the doctrine, God in human flesh, the incarnation of the Son of God, and how He is visible. "Looking unto Jesus."

What shall we take as the next step? It is very clear, alas, that there are multitudes who have no wish to see Him: they despise Him, reject Him and deny Him. When He was here they denied Him; they despised and rejected Him. Every form of ignominy He suffered at the hands of His own creatures. If the rulers of the Jews had a wish to see Him it was to see Him die. Not as we wish by faith to see Him dying for us: they wished Him crucified and gone.

The next step. God has a people, and they are taught by grace, as the hymn says: "To know His matchless worth." (975) They are by the Holy Ghost regenerated in varying degrees by the Spirit's teaching and revealing light, to see something of the majesty and glory of God, - to see, know, and feel. They have their first faith to believe in God, His Being, His holiness, and they are sinners. You think this elementary: it is great to believe you are a sinner, and not just think it. How many believe they are sinners? I so well remember that dear veteran, Mr J.K. Popham on the point of faith to believe you are a sinner. You cannot believe without faith. It is so easy to get a superficial acquaintance with the state of mankind; his corruption, ruin and sin: it is great to know it. As the Spirit deepens His work you see more of your ruin, wretchedness, and undone state, till you come to know you are lost, perishing. What a dreadful place to be in! "Undone, and perishing we lay" (1080) These people, I shall call them dear people; they are dear people; they are precious people, because they are dear to God and to the Lamb. In all their undone and perishing state they know what it is by the Lord's divine method to look unto Jesus, and they only look on Him as He is for the first time revealed to them. I think I may be permitted to mention saintly Mr Delves at Crowborough. He told me after the morning service, when he was in a dreadful state it seemed a straight issue, - God in His holiness and he a guilty sinner, lost. Then he said; "It was all unfolded to me by these words; "When I see the blood, I will pass

over you." This is it.

"Looking unto Jesus." So there is a first time in a poor sinner's life when he sees Jesus. I do not know, I cannot speak for you as to the circumstances obtaining when you first saw Him for yourself. I am not suggesting that in all cases you have an open vision of His face so you can use the words;

"I saw One hanging on a tree,  
In agonies and blood." (1025)

The whole spiritual content, the secret of the economy of God in salvation was discovered to you in God incarnate, Jesus, and the Lord gave you faith to see, and as you looked you lived. You felt your soul measurably delivered from the curse of the law, and a living hope sprang up as the Holy Spirit implanted it. You who have this, it will be your life, the one thing in life. "Looking unto Jesus." So as we read in the Lesson; "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." He was lifted up on the cross so that poor serpent-bitten, stung to death sinners should know what it was and is to look and live. Beautiful, is it not? This must be my theme: it is yours, many of you. It will be till you die and through eternity, - redeeming love. This also raises a vital point in God's economy, - lifted up. "Looking unto Jesus." Here is the main purpose divine of the gift to the Church of God on His ascension of the public ministry of the everlasting gospel of Redemption. The ministry of the Spirit is the lifting up of Jesus before perishing sinners, and there are those who look by faith. They see Him: they forget all on earth and they are conscious of Jesus, and the healing virtue flows into their souls.

"Looking unto Jesus." Something else emerges; the new man of grace with all spiritual faculties. You come to realise you have eyes to see. This is a marvellous thing. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." God has given you eyes to see Christ, His beauty and glory, and your need of Him, to see the glory of heaven from afar. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." I am commending this congregation to God. You go forth to your path of tribulation, all of you. There is only one blessed exhortation for you

Every moment unfolds, every hour, every day. We know little of what is before us. Child of God, in your sorrows, afflictions, times of need, distress, exercise, times of great joy and deliverance, there is one blessed word for you. "Looking unto Jesus." Amen.