



THE CHRISTIAN MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR JUNE HAMBLIN

Fix Our Eyes on Jesus

Psalm 121 (NIV)

A song of ascents. ¹ I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? ² My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. ³ He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; ⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵ The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; ⁶ the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; ⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

Dear family and friends of our departed sister, June:

Every death, every set back, every hurt, every health concern, every bad thing that we experience in life forces us to step back and examine why these things are happening.

Why did June fall on November 17? Was it because she was carrying too many things or not carrying them the right way? Should someone have stopped her from carrying anything? Did she put a foot down wrong on the step? Did her foot get caught on something? Was there something that someone left on the steps that caused her to step wrong? Instead of helping her back up and laying her down, should someone have had immediately called the ambulance? If someone, if I, would have acted quicker, would I have saved her?

While it is good to step back and examine these things and learn from them, it very easily leads us to fixing our eyes on ourselves, that we need to be the one fixing things, saving people, asking all the “What if...?” questions. And our mind loves to entertain those, especially as it starts to assign blame, maybe even blaming yourself for what could have been done differently.

The problem with the “What ifs...?” are that they not reality. We are here today because we have to look at death. It’s in our lives. June is gone. We can replay all the scenarios we want, but they won’t change that we all have this in front of us.

As we stare at death, when our health deteriorates, when life is not going well, when we are filled with grief and sorrow, we start asking other questions. “Why did God allow this now?” “Why is God making me go through this?” “Why does he still keep me here?” “Why doesn’t he just take me too?” “What purpose do I even have? Is it just to suffer more?”

When I got here 9 years ago, I noticed that there were prayer requests slips in the drawer in the pulpit, probably left here by Pastor Lange. June’s name came up multiple times. The printed prayers are still there. And we prayed for her here many more times since then. She had suffered with her health, particularly her fibromyalgia, for so long. It was natural to ask, “Why is God not taking this away? Why does he still allow me to suffer.”

In those times, it’s easy to fix our eyes on doctors, what they are doing, what medication they are prescribing, what treatments they are giving. It’s easy to fix our eyes on the pain, that it’s still there and not going away and feels like it never will. It’s easy to fix our eyes on ourselves to find the solution, to get the answer as to why would a good God allow this to happen to me and stay in my life. That’s a recipe for sinking.

The night after Jesus had miraculously fed more than 5,000 people, he sent his disciples on ahead of him on boat across the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were having a rough go of it because the wind and waves were against them. But shortly before dawn, Jesus comes out to them, walking on water! They’re terrified! They think it’s a ghost! I mean, how else do you explain this? People don’t walk on unfrozen water!

Jesus calls out to them, “Don’t be afraid.” This not only calms Peter, but emboldens him to request, “Lord, if it’s you, tell me to come to you on the water.” (Matthew 14:28) Jesus tells him to come. And you know what, Peter gets out of the boat and walks on water towards Jesus! ... Until he takes his eyes off of Jesus and fixes them instead on the wind and the waves. They scare him. He immediately starts to sink. He cries out, “Lord, save me!” Jesus immediately reaches out his hand and saves Peter from sinking and drowning.

We are not here today to stare at an urn or answer all the “What if...?” questions or figure out God’s master plan as to why he allows this grief and suffering in our lives. No, we are here to do what June did. We are to lift our eyes to the mountains and see where our help comes from. We are here to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and interpret everything going through our minds and going on in our lives in view of the cross.

We have a God who did not see us in our miserable condition and say, “Figure it out yourselves. Elevate yourselves to me.” No, we have a God who did not spare his only Son, but gave him up for us all, to have his blood cleanse us from all our sins. He did not shy away from the awful pain and suffering of the cross, but willingly and purposefully chose it so that we would benefit from his sacrifice, that he would pay our debt of sins that we could never repay to God. We know that God accepted this payment made for us because God the Father raised Jesus from the dead on that very first Easter Sunday.

And it wasn’t just a death on the cross that he gave us; he also gave us a life, a perfect life, one lived in perfect 100% obedience to God for every second of every day for his 33 years on this earth. This was not done for him, for his credit, and not done to simply show us how it is done. This was done for us, for June, for you and me. He substituted his full, complete perfect life for us, lived it in order to credit it to us. That means you and I are perfect right now. That means that June herself was and is perfect because God had fixed her eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of her faith, our faith.

When God brings pain and suffering and grief and sadness in your life, view it all through the light of the cross, through the fact that God has given all his time and energy for you to make you perfect right now. Anything that he brings into your life, he is going to use to do what is best for you. Every day that you wake up, no matter how good or bad you feel, you know that God is giving you that day out of love, a day to lift your eyes up and look for God to help you, to give you what is best.

Maybe back around 2019, I started writing a Bible passage on a little piece of note paper and giving it to June. With each prayer request, each vocalization of her pain, I tried to lift her eyes to Jesus, her help. It was to Jesus that she looked to get her through each day. It was Jesus who did come to her on Friday, November 17. He took her to the heavenly home he had prepared for her. He made good on his promise. She is now living in total perfection with God himself, singing praises, and waiting for us because of what God had done for her. Her eyes are still fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of her faith.

Honestly, this is what we all need. We need others to keep lifting our eyes away from our own belly buttons and instead lifting our eyes to the Lord, our ultimate and fully satisfying help. This is what June did by telling her whole family and her friends about Jesus. She wanted you to have your eyes fixed on Jesus, like she did.

As we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we see that he has taken away all our sins, all our faults, all our shortcomings. He has made us belong with him, covered us with his perfection, made us a part of his family, just like he did for June. He will make everything new for us on the Last Day. June’s body will be raised that day without any fibromyalgia, without any heart problems. Her suffering is done and gone. Jesus will come for us one day and free us from our suffering and our grief. He will personally wipe every tear from our eyes. So, we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. Amen.