

**14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Year B – September 2, 2012 – Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY**  
**Based on Hebrews 11:24-28 written by Pastor Paul Horn**

**How's your vision?**

- I. Do you see your reward?**
- II. Do you see him who is invisible?**

*<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. <sup>26</sup> He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.*

Last week the Republican Party nominated Mitt Romney and his running mate, from Wisconsin, congressman Paul Ryan. No matter what your party bent, for all voters in America, the question that they need answered is, "Where do you see our country in the next 4 years, and how do you plan to get us there?" It's important to have vision, not just in politics but also in the church. Where do you see our congregation in the next four years? How will you get us there? What about for your life... where do you see yourself in the next four years?

This morning the Holy Spirit takes us to the eye doctor to get our vision checked. He will walk us through Moses' first 40 years and then in the second half of the sermon he'll have us look at the middle chapter of Moses' life. Through this story the Holy Spirit asks us this morning, "How is your vision? Are you looking for the reward? Do you see him who is invisible?"

**I. Are you looking for the reward? (vs24-26)**

There was a man named Jacob who had 12 sons. One of his sons, Joseph, was hated by his brothers, because he was dad's favorite son. So they sold him as a slave. The slave traders took him to Egypt where he served under a man by the name of Potiphar. Because of some trumped up charges by his master's wife, Joseph was thrown in prison where he sat for two years. But then through a series of connections the LORD allowed Joseph to stand before pharaoh's throne and interpret some dreams he couldn't quite figure out. The LORD through Joseph informed pharaoh that the next seven years of Egypt's future would bring prosperous crops. The following seven years Egypt would face severe famine. Joseph was promoted to second in command of all of Egypt. During the course of events Jacob had to send Joseph's brothers to Egypt to get food. They stood before Joseph, and, to make a long story short, Joseph forgave his brothers and moved his family to Egypt.

Years later, a new king, who didn't know Joseph or what he had done to save Egypt from total decimation, observed that there were way too many Hebrew people. He thought to himself, "If our enemies attacked, the Israelites would take their side and in turn, attack Egypt." And so he oppressed them with hard labor. The Hebrew men and women were forced to make bricks and build structures for the pharaohs, and over 400 years this happened. At one point the Hebrew people were becoming so strong and so large in number that

the pharaoh became scared. He made a decree that all Hebrew boys who are born must be thrown into the Nile River.

There was a man and his wife, who were descended from Levi, (one of the 12 sons of Jacob), and they had a baby boy. But they saw that he was different, a fine little baby, and they kept him hidden in their home. As you might imagine it was a little difficult to hide the crying and fussing of a 3month old child. The mother made a basket, coated it with tar, and sent him for a cruise down the Nile River. His sister Miriam watched from the reeds. The basket floated past the pharaoh's daughter and servant girls who were bathing in the river. The princess lifted the basket out of the river and Moses' sister splashed up and asked, "Should I get one of the Hebrew mothers to nurse him for you?" The princess answered, "Yes, please!" Miriam got her mother, who was able to nurse her own child again! Once he was weaned Moses was sent to live in the palace, and became known as the son of the princess.

The Bible tells us that Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action (Acts 7:21-22). Moses had everything – the highest quality of education in the world, all the riches of the world (we know Egypt's wealth, King Tut's tomb alone included several thousand pounds of pure gold), he was the son of a princess, he had the prestige, he could have any or as many women as he wanted. The wild parties - he could have at his request booze and drugs, (yes, Egyptians had those things in those days). He could go wherever he wanted, do whatever he wanted to do. Sounds like the life for a 40year old man going through a mid-life crisis! But the Bible tells us... **Moses refused to be known as the son of the pharaoh's daughter.** (vs24-26).

By the standard of the world, Moses was a fool. He had no outward evidence that God would make good on his promise to deliver his people from slavery, they had been there for 400 years, and yet Moses chose to identify himself with those people, the oppressed, the slaves of Egypt. How could Moses ignore all the pleasures and prestige of Egypt, which was right in front of him, and instead to fix his sights on a treasure he couldn't see? Moses had adjusted his eyes to focus on events that wouldn't take place for another 1,500 years, he was focused on his Savior, who would win eternal life for him. He knew if he had lived the wild life in an Egyptian palace, he knew he would lose his focus on heaven. God had trained him early on in his life, in the time spent with his mother before he was weaned and lived in the palace – to close his eyes to the world and to open his eyes to God and see his true eternal reward.

How difficult is that for us to today! To say no to the pleasures and prestige of this world and be ridiculed for it: the young people who choose to maintain their virginity until their wedding night, those who choose to use alcohol in moderation rather than getting plastered every weekend, the Soldier who chooses to remain pure in his/her thoughts while the rest of the barracks is watching porn, the Christian who firmly but lovingly supports the lives of unborn children, who lovingly and firmly stands with God and his definition of marriage, who lovingly and firmly shares the truth about God's only way to salvation, through faith in Jesus alone.

It's so hard to close my eyes to the world, there I can relish in the popularity of my friends and family members and the pleasures of the flesh, at least for a short while. Because when I focus on this world then I

don't risk being ridiculed and called "old fashioned" or "conservative" or... "a Christian." How's your vision? Is it focused on the reward in heaven, or the ones down here that doesn't last?

In the next chapter Hebrews 12, the author says, **"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."** Jesus had the choice to be a great leader of the people of Israel, it's what they wanted him to be, to be their king, to destroy the Roman army, set Israel free again, he could have been the greatest warrior that Israel had ever seen, he could have won their hearts by feeding their hungry stomachs again and again with free bread that he could conjure up with his divine powers.

Instead, he chose to be mistreated by those people, his own people, because he wouldn't be that kind of king. He chose instead to fix his eyes on the cross, he chose the disgrace of a cross, only criminals were crucified, the disgrace of taking upon himself our desires for pleasure and popularity, our sins of regarding worthless rewards as of more value than our true eternal reward, he lay down his kingly crown to take up a crown of thorns. He did all this to win you something of lasting value: the forgiveness of all your sins, which is yours now through faith in Christ. And Jesus chose instead to fix his eyes on the empty tomb – to win for you the reward of life in heaven – your reward that lasts forever and ever – which is yours now through faith in Christ Jesus.

This is what Moses did. **"He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward."** (vs26) Farmers put blinders on horses so that they will not be distracted by what is going on around them and will pull the wagon straight ahead. That's what Moses did. We, too, will close our eyes to the distractions of the world's pleasures and look only to the cross and the empty tomb and what was won there for us, a reward of lasting value. We will close our eyes to the distractions of this world's wisdom and fix our eyes on the truth of God's Word. We will be ridiculed and called "old fashioned" and "conservative." But when we focus our vision on the truth of God's Word we will not lose sight of our true treasure in heaven – where we will gaze into the face of our beautiful Savior, and live in the light and joy of heaven for all eternity.

## II. Do you see him who is invisible? (vs27,28)

How is your vision? Are you looking for the eternal reward? Do you see him who is invisible? Moses did. Moses is now a 40year-old man and he chooses to leave the palace... partly because he murdered an Egyptian slave driver who was beating one of his fellow Hebrew slaves. Pharaoh heard about it, and was very angry. The story in Exodus says that Moses was afraid and fled Egypt. But our lesson says, **"By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger."** (Unlike the movie *The 10Commandments* where Yul Brynner (pharaoh) banishes Charlton Heston (Moses) from Egypt.) It doesn't say why Moses was afraid or of whom he was afraid. Here in Hebrews the author simply tells us that Moses was not afraid of pharaoh when he ran away. But **"By faith... he persevered because he saw him who is invisible."** (vs27) Moses knew that God promised to liberate his people from slavery, and that he, Moses, would have some part in it. Even though he was now leaving Egypt, and would tend sheep in the wilderness for the next 40 years, Moses confidently continued on with his life. Because with the eyes of faith, Moses saw him who is invisible, and trusted him.

Do you know where God is leading you in life? We don't always know, do we? But like Moses, we see him who is invisible, and that helps us persevere in life. We see him sitting with us at the dinner table, we see him walking with us to school and to our work, we see him with us as we suffer in the hospital room, or grieve in the funeral home. We do see his abiding presence, but not with these eyes, but with the eyes of faith. Faith sees that Jesus is with us, because he promised it, no matter where we go or what we do, four years from now or in 40 years.

40 years later, when Moses was an 80-year-old man, and he returned to Egypt. It was then that the LORD decided, "Now is the time to set my people free." Pharaoh would not let God's people go, even after a series of nine plagues that God inflicted upon Egypt. In the tenth and final plague, God said, "The angel of death will pass through this land. The firstborn male in every home, whether man or animal, will die, unless the angel of death sees the blood of a lamb painted on the doorframe of the house, he will pass over that home and spare the life of the firstborn male." In Egypt there was not a house without someone dead. (Exodus 13)

But in Israel...the author to the Hebrews tells us, "**By faith [Moses] kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel.**" (vs28) Moses saw him who is invisible and trusted that he would use blood to deliver his people from death. With the annual celebration of the Passover, God taught his people to have vision. Every year the Israelites would slaughter a lamb. That blood taught them to see him who is invisible, the Messiah, who was waiting to take on human flesh and to become the Lamb of God, who, by his blood, would rescue them from eternal death.

How is your vision? Do you see him who is invisible? Like Moses and the Israelites, you and I cannot see Jesus. We cannot see his bloodied cross, his empty tomb, his resurrected body. We cannot put our fingers in his hands and feet or put our hands in his side like Thomas, because he has ascended into heaven, and has made himself invisible. But we do see him, like Moses we see him through the eyes of faith. By God's grace he has given you the gift of faith, and faith sees things that these eyes cannot see. Faith sees Jesus dying on the cross. Faith sees Jesus rising from his tomb. Faith experiences the joy of the disciples and the women who saw and touched Jesus after his resurrection. Faith sees Christ coming on the clouds with his angels in heavenly glory. Faith sees your bodies transformed and made new again. Faith sees your new home, the New Jerusalem, the new Holy City. Faith sees the faces of loved ones past and present dancing in the streets of heaven, because they, too, by faith saw him who is invisible. Faith sees that these eyes, your eyes, will behold Jesus' lovely face someday.

My friends, how is your vision today? Are you looking for your reward? Do you see him who is invisible? Yes! Yes you do! Amen!