

“It’s All About the Same Jesus” January 28, 2018

**Our Savior’s Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Justin Kumfer**

Everyone has someone they admire. For some it’s a former teacher. For others it might be a professional sports player or actor or actress. Others might admire authors or someone else who has made a difference in their life. For me, the person I most admire, the one who has had the most impact on my life is my grandfather. His name is Ralph Feldkamp and he was a Lutheran school teacher. I bring this up because the past week has been Lutheran schools week!

All this week the children in Open Arms and schools throughout the US heard that “it’s all about Jesus.” Each day we went through different Bible stories about how Jesus is the message, truth, mission, heart, and focus of our school. But Jesus isn’t just the focus of the school, Jesus is the focus of all of Scripture.

All of Scripture directs us to Jesus, but the book of Hebrews does so most clearly and emphatically. Hebrews includes over 20 different titles and descriptions of Jesus. The epistle begins, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God” (HEB. 1:1–3).

Hebrews 12:2 invites us to see Jesus as “the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross.” In fact, in the first 12 chapters of Hebrews we see all sorts of signs that point to “Jesus.” Then, in chapter 13, it is as if we have finally reached our destination, as God’s inspired author summarizes, “Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

Let’s take a look for a bit at what the verse from Hebrews means that Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday. The book of Hebrews takes us to the yesterday of the Old Testament. It emphasizes that the promise or covenant was fulfilled in Jesus. Hebrews chapter 11 notes the faith of Abel, Abraham, Moses and many other heroes was a faith in Jesus, the Messiah. The Jesus of yesterday is the fulfillment of all that God promised.

Yesterday to the Hebrew readers also included the accounts of the miracles of Jesus that they were still hearing about — the teachings still fresh in the decades after Jesus’ life on earth. This is the Jesus that perhaps some of them had even seen whipped, scorned, crucified, dead and buried. This was the Jesus witnesses had affirmed was alive again.

This is the Jesus of our yesterday. This is the Jesus who in our yesterday called us to the waters of Baptism. This is the Jesus who came to us in His Word in our Christian home and Christian classrooms and nourished us in the faith. This is the Jesus who is the foundation of our church and school. This is the Jesus who met in Pastor Mann’s living room 20 years ago. This is the Jesus that began Open Arms. This is the Jesus that is praised in this sanctuary that was built over 10 years ago.

This is the Jesus who came to us in the many and varied yesterdays. That are filled with our disobedience, wanderings and

unfaithful response to His love, only to forgive us for all our yesterdays and take us to today.

Jesus Christ is the same today. The today of the Hebrew readers included a time of temptation to return to the tradition and legalism of Judaism. It included an apathy toward the truths of the Christian faith and the life of a Christian. In response to those inclinations, there is the encouragement not to give up worshipping together and to keep on living in love. There is the encouragement to “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (HEB. 12:1). Anticipating a time of persecution and hardship, the readers are encouraged to anticipate God’s discipline and to endure hardship. Into this today came a Jesus who was Lord of all and Savior for all. Into the Hebrew readers’ todays came a resurrected Lord who had conquered sin, death and the devil, and who would forever be victorious. Every day Jesus was there to say, “Today I am with you.”

That same Jesus comes to us today. Today and every day we wake up as sinners. Today, we are unsure. Today, we face temptation. Today we have an apathy toward the truths of the Christian faith and the life of a Christian. Today we have our family concerns and church and school frustrations. But today Jesus comes to us again in the assurance of our Baptism, in His Word of forgiveness, and at His table, where He gives His Body and Blood.

Today Jesus Christ is the same at our Lutheran church and school as we serve our neighbors through our service opportunities, when our school kids hear about His love in chapel. Jesus is the same today when anyone who comes to this place feels welcomed and accepted in the love of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the same forever. Jesus is forever in the same way for the Hebrew people as He is for us today. Forever is tomorrow

and the next day and the next day. Forever is having Jesus go with us through all the changes of the future.

Whether it's a change in the director of our school, or the addition of a new pastor or staff member. Maybe it's change that comes as a result of our visioning process. Whatever the change is, Jesus is always part of the conversation and change. The change that we desire to make by being one body in Christ, church and school together, living and breathing with the purpose that God has given us: To know Him and make Him known to the world.

Forever certainly has eternal implications. Those implications that began in our history and continue into our future. We are thankful for all those who gathered in our school in the name of Jesus in the yesterday of our church and school's history. We rejoice in every child and family that learns of Jesus in our church and school today. And we go from here to serve the church and school in the future. One where we tell others about Jesus who is the founder and perfecter of our faith. The Jesus who never changes. The Jesus who loves you. In His true and better name, Amen.