**20 Pentecost, Oct. 11, 2015, Job 23:1-17, Ps 22, Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31, Rev Mary S. Trainor**

Someone wise told me many years ago "**don't ever put a bible on the floor**." I had previously put bibles on the floor lots of time, next to my bed or chair when reading, just as I had with other books....and had thought nothing of it. Why would this person say this? Our Hebrews reading today provides his reasoning, "***The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit....it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.***" The bible is not just any book, it is The Word of God, living and active; a holy guide for our lives. Its words comfort and direct us, discipline and console, entertain and disturb. God speaks to us through the words in the Bible. If you pray before reading Bible passages, then read, then reflect, you will find that you will receive a personal message just for you. This is called "revelation." The theological term "revelation" means: "**A disclosure from God to man of that which would otherwise not be known."** God reveals Himself to us through the Bible and through Jesus. The Gospel of John (1:1-3) puts it this way: "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was in the beginning with God. 3All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4in him was life,******\*******and the life was the light of all people. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."*** So, the Word of God, which is living and active, is both Jesus and the Bible.

Our reading from Hebrews goes on to say about Jesus, "***For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need***." Many people who do not claim to be Christian say that religion is irrelevant, that they don't need it, that they have everything they need in themselves to have a fulfilled life. Yet, the fact of the matter is that we don't. We need help in our lives from outside of ourselves. Some people are not Christian because they don't see that God cares about them or their lives, that God does not understand the difficulties of their lives. Christianity is the only world religion that has a God with whom we can have a personal relationship. Yes, our God does understand what it is like to be a human being and go through the trials we face -- because our God was a human being, lived here on earth, went through suffering. Jesus gets it. Jesus understands when we have a bill we can't pay -- He's been there, done that. Jesus understands when we are in pain -- He's been there, done that. Jesus gets it when we are filled with emotion facing a scary situation -- He's been there, done that. Jesus gets it when other people make fun of us, or when we are lonely -- He's been there, done that. Jesus gets it when we are awake in the night -- He's been there, done that. Jesus understands when we have too much work to do -- He's been there, done that. Jesus gets it when we are really sad about something that has happened to someone we care for -- He's been there, done that. Our Christian journey is a journey of a living, active relationship with Jesus. The closer our relationship with Jesus is, the more we are able to live out our lives as Christians, to follow our Baptismal promises. Those promises include us saying (BCP 304,305) "**I believe in Jesus Christ**" and "**I will... proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ**." But, we say these things are possible not on our own but only "**with God's help."** We can't do this through our own efforts, without God's help.

This morning's Gospel passage tells us about a guy who believed in Jesus and was trying to live into his baptismal promises, but without God's help. He went to Jesus and asked what he needed to be doing to be more faithful, to "***inherit eternal life***." There was one specific obstacle between this guy and his faithful living as a Christian. The obstacle was stuff, materialism, his possessions and his personal wealth. He chose to live with all that stuff between him and Jesus: his material possessions prevented him from fully experiencing his relationship with Jesus. They got in the way of him loving God with his whole self, because he loved them so much. We can all have stuff that gets in the way of our relationship with Jesus. Money and material possessions can get in the way, but so can other things like addictions, certain relationships, bad habits, pride, etc. We can think of these things as big boulders or barriers: obstacles that prevent us from being where we need to be in our relationship with Jesus. When we make a choice to live as a Christian, there are things we will have to leave behind, sacrifices we will have to make. Jesus called this guy on his obstacles and invited him to make the choice to get them out of the way so he could fully experience his relationship with God. We see in the Gospel that this guy made the choice to put his stuff before Jesus; he couldn't give them up. But, we can get rid of the obstacles that get in the way of our relationship with Jesus -- if we rely on God's strength, God's power, to help us do this. Back to our Baptismal promises, we say our promises only with these words: "**I will, with God's help.**" So, today examine what obstacles are in your life that get in the way of your relationship with Jesus, with God's Word living and active. Jesus does understand the temptations you face -- and Jesus is here to help you resist them and turn totally towards Him. Turn your eyes on Jesus, and keep them there all the time - let nothing get it in the way.

Hymn #19 in our white supplemental hymnal is: "***Turn your eyes upon Jesus.***" It was written by Helen Lemmel from Seattle, who died in 1961 at the ripe old age of 97. She was born in England, but her family emigrated to America and she lived in Wisconsin. She had a beautiful voice, gave concerts in many churches -- but in the middle of her life she went through tough trials: she became blind, her husband left her, she faced poverty. At the age of 55, she wrote both the music and the words to this hymn. She is quoted as saying: “**I stood still and singing in my soul and spirit was the chorus, with not one conscious moment of putting word to word to make rhyme, or note to note to make melody. The verses were written the same week, after the usual manner of composition, but nonetheless dictated by the Holy Spirit.”** What is most amazing about Helen's writing of this hymn is her blindness -- we too can experience the Light of Christ through the eyes of our hearts.

Let us close this sermon time singing together #19 in your white hymnal, as a reminder to ourselves not to let anything or anyone get in the way of our focus being on Jesus. "**Turn your eyes upon Jesus**, **Look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim In the light of His glory and grace."**