

I. **Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus**

A. **The Hymn Story**

1. Helen H. Lemmel
 - a. Born: November 14, 1863, Wardle, England.
Died: November 1, 1961, at her home in Seattle, Washington.
 - b. Daughter of a Methodist minister, Helen emigrated from England with her family to America when she was 12 years old.
 - (1) They first settled in Mississippi, then relocated to Wisconsin.
 - (2) She moved to Seattle in 1904, and for three years was music critic for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.
 - (3) While interviewing German singer Ernestine Schumann-Hein, Helen was persuaded to go to Europe.
 - (a) A gifted singer, she studied music in Germany for four years.
 - (b) Upon her return to America, she began giving concerts and traveling on the Chautauqua circuit.
 - (c) Eventually, she became a vocal music teacher at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois.
 - (d) After retirement, she moved to Seattle, Washington, where she was a member of the Ballard Baptist Church.
 - (e) Among her works are a hymnal used by evangelist Billy Sunday for over a decade.
 - i) Lemmel and a women's choral group she directed were part of Sunday's group at the peak of his career.
 - c. While Helen Lemmel wrote the words for the gospel song, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus, the idea behind the song came from another writer.
2. Lillias Trotter
 - a. Her success should not be measured numerically, but rather in the fact that Lillias succeeded in learning about prayer and love for Muslims. Her life attests to the exceeding value of knowing and preferring Christ above all else. Her personal devotion to Jesus Christ is exemplary and instructive not only for aspiring missionaries but for all who desire to live wholeheartedly for the glory of God.
 - b. In 1874, Lillias attended a six-day convention that emphasized the importance of the daily application of Scripture in her quest for deeper intimacy with God. She experienced a renewed vitality in

personal and corporate worship. Her call to wholeheartedly follow Christ in obedience came during a call to prayer. She wrote of this in her journal: "To bear His name with all that is wrapped up in it of fragrance and healing and power, to enter into His eternal purpose, is the calling for which it is well worth counting all things as loss."

- c. From then on, rather than invest her extraordinary life in the things of this world, Lilius was compelled by a strong yearning for her Savior and the world he loves. In radical obedience, she left the promising artistic career that Ruskin offered her and the comforts of England for a life of missionary service in Algeria.
- d. Courageous and innovative in her witness to the Algerians, Lilius observed and learned to witness effectively to her neighbors. In 1919, Trotter began writing tracts for Nile Mission Press. She assisted a Swedish missionary in translation and editing the gospels of Luke and John in colloquial Arabic, "into a language that the Arab mother could read to her child." [4] She also wrote stories in parable form that appealed to her audience, and she creatively illustrated them in Eastern style, the results of which gained wide circulation.
- e. The story of Lilius Trotter continues to inspire and mobilize those who long to worship around the throne of Christ with all peoples. She laid down her life and talents and allowed Christ to use her in creative and innovative ways. Her life was one of passionate prayer, dependence on God's overcoming power, and confidence in proclaiming the life-giving Word of God. Her story encourages others to follow in her footsteps and consecrate their life to the "hardest work and the darkest sinners." [5]
- f. This brief article in a small tract published by the Nile Mission Press from a personal journal entry became the inspiration for Helen Lemmel song, *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*
- g. *Focusses by Lilius Trotter*

It was in a little wood in early morning. The sun was climbing behind a steep cliff in the east, and its light was flooding nearer and nearer and then making pools among the trees. Suddenly, from a dark corner of purple brown stems and tawny moss there shone out a great golden star. It was just a dandelion, and half withered - but it was full face to the sun, and had caught into its heart all the glory it could hold, and was shining so radiantly that the dew that lay on it still made a perfect aureole round its head. And it seemed to talk, standing there - to talk about the possibility of making the very best of these lives of ours.

For if the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon our hearts, there is an ocean of grace and love and power lying all around us, an ocean to which all earthly light is but a drop, and it is ready to transfigure us, as the sunshine transfigured the dandelion, and on the same condition - that we stand full face to God.

Gathered up, *focussed* lives, intent on one aim - Christ - these are the lives on which God can concentrate blessedness. It is "all for all" by a law as unvarying as any law that governs the material universe.

We see the principle shadowed in the trend of science; the telephone and the wireless in the realm of sound, the use of radium and the ultra violet rays in the realm of light. All these work by gathering into

focus currents and waves that, dispersed, cannot serve us. In every branch of learning and workmanship the tendency of these days is to specialize - to take up one point and follow it to the uttermost.

And Satan knows well the power of concentration; if a soul is likely to get under the sway of the inspiration, "this one thing I do," he will turn all his energies to bring in side-interests that will shatter the gathering intensity.

And they lie all around, these interests. Never has it been so easy to live in half a dozen good harmless worlds at once - art, music, social science, games, motoring, the following of some profession, and so on. And between them we run the risk of drifting about, the "good" hiding the "best" even more effectually than it could be hidden by downright frivolity with its smothered heart-ache at its own emptiness.

It is easy to find out whether our lives are focussed, and if so, where the focus lies. Where do our thoughts settle when consciousness comes back in the morning? Where do they swing back when the pressure is off during the day? Does this test not give the clue? Then dare to have it out with God - and after all, that is the shortest way. Dare to lay bare your whole life and being before Him, and ask Him to show you whether or not all is focussed on Christ and His glory. Dare to face the fact that unfocussed, good and useful as it may seem, it will prove to have failed of its purpose.

What does this focussing mean? Study the matter and you will see that it means two things - gathering in all that can be gathered, and letting the rest drop. The working of any lens - microscope, telescope, camera - will show you this. The lens of your own eye, in the room where you are sitting, as clearly as any other. Look at the window bars, and the beyond is only a shadow; look through at the distance, and it is the bars that turn into ghosts. You have to choose which you will fix your gaze upon and let the other go.

Are we ready for a cleavage to be wrought through the whole range of our lives, like the division long ago at the taking of Jericho, the division between things that could be passed through the fire of consecration into "the treasury of the Lord," and the things that, unable to "bide the fire" must be destroyed? All aims, all ambitions, all desires, all pursuits - shall we dare to drop them if they cannot be gathered sharply and clearly into the focus of "this one thing I do"?

Will it not make life narrow, this focussing? In a sense, it will - just as the mountain path grows narrower, for it matters more and more, the higher we go, where we set our feet - but there is always, as it narrows, a wider and wider outlook, and purer, clearer air. Narrow as Christ's life was narrow, this is our aim; narrow as regards self-seeking, broad as the love of God to all around. Is there anything to fear in that?

And in the narrowing and focussing, the channel will be prepared for God's power - like the stream hemmed between the rock-beds, that wells up in a spring - like the burning glass that gathers the rays into an intensity that will kindle fire. It is worthwhile to let God see what He can do with these lives of ours, when "to live is Christ."

How do we bring things to a focus in the world of optics? Not by looking at the things to be dropped, but by looking at the one point that is to be brought out.

Turn full your soul's vision to Jesus, and look and look at Him, and a strange dimness will come over all that is apart from Him, and the Divine "attrait" by which God's saints are made, even in this 20th century, will lay hold of you. For "He is worthy" to have all there is to be had in the heart that He has died to win.

*Hath not each heart a passion and a dream,
Each some companionship for ever sweet,
And each in saddest skies some silver gleam,
And each some passing joy, too fair and fleet,
And each a staff and stay, though frail it prove,
And each a face he fain would ever see?*

And what have I? an endless stream of love,

*A rapture, and a glory, and a calm,
A life that is an everlasting Psalm,
All, O Beloved, in Thee.*
- Tersteegen

- h. For the foreseeable future, we're going to accept and act upon the invitation extended by these two godly women, and more so by the Holy Spirit Himself, as we turn our eyes upon Jesus and focus on the portrait of the Savior offered in the gospel of Mark.

B. Mark

1. The shortest of the gospel accounts of Jesus, His life, His teachings, His death and resurrection, and His personal insights into who He was and why He came.
2. Mark is likely the earliest of the gospels, the first written, written to believers in Rome whose faith was being tested in adversity and persecution and for whom the question, "Is Jesus real?" was all too personal.
3. Mark answers the question, "Who is Jesus? and is He truly the Messiah, the Son of God, in Whom faith is well placed?"
 - a. There are dozens of themes we could explore in this short narrative book, but we are going to focus in Jesus, His Person and His purpose.
 - b. Over the next few weeks we are going to look at nine different facets of Christ's person Mark present in the first chapter, each of which provides a window that unveils Christ to the seeking heart.

II. Why should we focus intensely and intently on Jesus?

A. Rhetorical Questions

1. Is what we already know and surmise of Him not adequate?
2. Should we not pay more close attention to knowing and doing what He says than knowing and loving who He is?

B. That depends on whether

1. you are willing to be satisfied as merely another religious Pharisee seeking to placate God by trading obedience for divine favor
2. Or you want to answer the call to true discipleship, which means becoming like Jesus to the point of giving away your life in love and faith in the Father's will.
3. It depends on whether you want to become a living example in the lives of others of the One you follow for His glory and not your own.

C. Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

1. "HE WHO follows Me, walks not in darkness," says the Lord. (John 8:12)
 - a. By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate His life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and free from all blindness of heart.
 - b. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ.
2. "The teaching of Christ is more excellent than all the advice of the saints, and he who has His spirit will find in it a hidden manna. Now, there are

many who hear the Gospel often but care little for it because they have not the spirit of Christ. Yet whoever wishes to understand fully the words of Christ must try to pattern his whole life on that of Christ.”

3. **If we would live wholeheartedly in the grace and mercy and mission of God, then we have no greater pursuit in life than to know Jesus Christ, the Son of God.**

a. **John 17:3 (ESV) *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.***

(1) It is imperative for the life of faith that we know Jesus for who He really is, for in knowing Him we will live and love as He does, in full faithfulness to the will and heart and mind and purpose of God

(2) It is imperative for the eternal life that awaits us, that has already begun through faith in Christ, but will expand in glory and perfection when we leave this world to dwell forever in the presence of His glory.

b. **Hebrews 12:1-5 (ESV) ¹ *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.***

(1) Knowing Jesus is imperative for victory in the Christian life

(2) Knowing Jesus is imperative for endurance in the Christian life

c. **Colossians 1:15-20 (ESV) ¹⁵ *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.***

(1) The greatest reason for taking the time and making the effort to know Jesus is not what He does for us

(2) The greatest reason to know and love Jesus is because of who He is.