

Sermon for the Fifth Vespers of Lent

'I lift my eyes up to the hills.'

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Our eyes have wandered, and what have they seen? Imagining our neighbor they have seen hatred; imagining the world, they have seen Babylon; imagining the Lord, they have seen betrayal.

Yet they have seen these things, not because they have looked away at some other thing; this God, this world, this stranger. Rather, they see these things because they look inward; they look into our souls. What dwells therein? *Wickedness, adultery, theft, false witness, slander.* *'These are what defiles a man.'* For out of the heart come such things.

We connive all such evil because we contemplate our own heart; and the sinfulness therein infects our minds, and feeds the demons which perch upon our shoulders.

Our eyes have indeed wandered. They have wandered to ourselves. To our malice, to our avarice, to our lusts.

We must set them aright. We must tear them from the contemplation of our own darling malevolence, and cast their gaze upon Him who *desires the salvation of all.* We must *fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.* He is the beatific vision, our *light and salvation.* He is the true object of our sight, *Him who giveth sight to the blind.* Therefore, look unto the light, dear Christian, that you too may see, not merely yourself, but see.

Where, then, shall we look, if we are to see the Lord? The Psalmist writes: *'I lift my eyes up to the hills.'*

There is a hill, a ridge; a ridge upon which the Temple of Zion is built; a ridge

where it is written that Abraham bound Isaac. A ridge where it is believed that Adam died, where his skull was buried, facing east in hope of a new life. For this reason, this ridge, this hill, is called Golgatha, that is, the skull, for it is the graveyard of humanity.

A city is built upon this hill, the holy city of Jerusalem. Soon, the Lord of Life, our God Christ, shall enter its gates, and heaven shall dwell in its midst as it has not for generations. He shall be greeted with palm branches, but He shall be promised pain.

He has come to this city that He might be lifted up, that all may see Him, Who alone is a holiness, as a *city on a hill*, a *light before men*. He has come that He may be sacrificed, and all the iniquity of mankind in Him. '*See what kind of love the Father has given us.*'

He is the true vision of heaven, the eternal beatitude, the beginning and end of all things; their origin, and their final cause. He now goes before us to that graveyard of mankind, to the place called The Skull, that He might make right that which He created in the beginning and called *good*. For to redeem our hateful race is the very *joy that was set before Him*; that by His blood, we may become His blood; that in His seeing our misery, we may see His glory, and become as He, *seeing Him as He is*.

Therefore, *despising the shame*, let us *take up our cross* and *fix our eyes of Jesus*. For wonders shall He work; even as He brought ten plagues upon the ungodly to release His people from bondage, now He goes forth to complete His wrath upon Satan and Hell, to deliver His faithful to the ineffable sapphire lands of the Kingdom that shall have no end.

Come quickly, and see Him,

'who is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

*Sermon Texts: 1 John
3:1-2; Hebrews 12:1-2.*