

Read: Hebrews 12:1-3

The Pioneer of Faith

Hebrews 12:1,2

Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the *Little House on the Prairie* books, Laura Ingalls Wilder tells the story of how she grew up in the late 1800s. During her childhood, her family traveled west in a covered wagon. They moved from areas where lots of people lived to areas where they were one of only a few families. They explored new places and helped to build new towns. They were pioneers.

In today's reading, Jesus is described as a pioneer. But he's not a pioneer who went west and explored new parts of the country. No, Jesus is called the *pioneer of faith*. What does that mean? How can someone be a pioneer of faith? It helps if we look at the rest of the sentence. We are called to *fix our eyes on Jesus*, to always keep looking at him. That's how Jesus is the pioneer of faith: he gives us the perfect example of faith to follow.

We're going to see that perfect example of faith this Holy Week. If you went to church this past weekend, you saw the beginning of it with the Palm Sunday procession. Jesus knew exactly what was coming at the end of the week, and yet he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. As the week continues, we'll see Jesus' perfect faith in God the Father's plan—perfect faith even while he was suffering and dying.

How could Jesus have such perfect faith? Because he could see ahead even further than Good Friday. He could see ahead to the very end of the story, to his resurrection from the dead on Easter morning, his ascension into heaven 40 days later, and his seat at the right hand of God. And he could especially see that his perfect faith and perfect actions—his holy life and innocent death—would pay the price for the sin of the whole world.

What an incredible gift for us! Not only are we saved from our sins, we also have a perfect example to follow. During our time on this earth, we don't have to try to figure out what to believe or how to live. Instead, we can follow the example of our pioneer, of the One who showed us what a perfect faith looks like. And in following that example, we can also see ahead to the end of the story and look forward to joining Jesus in heaven someday!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What is Jesus described as in today's reading?
- On Palm Sunday, how did Jesus show perfect faith as our pioneer?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- What does it mean to be a pioneer of faith?
- Name something specific you can do to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Think of another time during his life when Jesus demonstrated perfect faith. Why might it have been hard for him to do so in that situation?
- How does Easter assure us that Jesus did indeed have perfect faith?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for being the pioneer of faith. Let me always keep my eyes fixed on you as I try to follow your perfect example. Amen.