Several weeks ago I looked at Facebook, and apparently a lot of my friends are baseball fans. It was right in the middle of the NCAA tournament, but all my friends were commenting about how they couldn’t wait for baseball season to start.

The beginning of baseball season is full of anticipation for baseball fans. You finally get to see your favorite team on the field again. All the questions and speculation of what will happen, who will start, and who will be the best team this season begin to be answered one game at a time.

Sometimes you have a pretty good idea of how the season will turn out for your team. Sometimes they surprise you. Everybody wants to see their team get to the World Series and come out on top, but only one team can make it.

I have always thought that the church can learn a lot from the faithfulness of Cubs fans. Year after year for 108 years, they hoped to see their team win the World Series. Every year it didn’t happen, you would hear Cubs fans say, “There’s always next year.” They didn’t lose hope, they didn’t ever stop believing that one day their team would make it.

Around this time of the year in 2016, Cubs fans were hoping for a good season. They knew they had a good team and they would probably do well. But I have to wonder how many actually thought that this would happen.

Video of last pitch of World Series.

My guess is that a lot of Cubs fans had too small of a view of their team that year. I know there were still the diehard Cubbies who just knew this year was their year, just like they just knew last year was their year. But I think a lot of Cubs fans had lowered their expectations. They were hoping for a good season but hadn’t set their sights high enough.

I think we’re often guilty of that as Christians as well. We know that God is capable of great things. We know all the stories of what God did in the Bible. But when push comes to shove, do we really believe that God is going to do great things in our lives, in our community, in our country, in our world?

The ironic thing is that people did exactly the same thing to Jesus when he was here on earth. The Son of God was walking among humanity, and they set their sights too low. The had too small a view of Jesus and what he was here to do.

When Jesus entered into the city of Jerusalem at the beginning of what we now call Holy Week, he was there for a purpose. He had a mission in mind. He knew where he would end up and what he had come to earth to do.

Jesus had become one of the most popular rabbis with the people, but he was not very popular with the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders didn’t like Jesus because he challenged them. He confronted them. He showed them where they were wrong and were leading people astray. He showed them they looked good on the outside, but inside they were empty.

Nobody wants to be told those things. The Jewish leaders quickly became enemies of Jesus. They were already trying to find a way to kill him, even while he gained popularity among the people. All of that tension came to a head when Jesus entered into Jerusalem that day.

Jesus and his disciples had made the journey into Jerusalem many times. Most of Jesus’ ministry had happened in Galilee, to the north, and Jerusalem was in the south. When Jesus and his disciples came to a festival of some kind, or to celebrate Passover, they made this trip into Jerusalem, but they had always gone by foot before. Jesus knew there was something special about this trip. He knew that there was something unique going on.

In fact, the Bible makes it clear that Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen to him. Over and over again, Jesus tried to tell his disciples what was going to happen when they went into Jerusalem. They never really seemed to understand exactly what he meant. But Jesus knew full well what would happen to him at the end of the week. He knew the suffering he would go through. He knew the abuse he would face. He knew the pain that he would endure on the cross. He knew that if he went into Jerusalem, he was going to his death.

I’ve read there’s a saying among bush pilots in the Canadian wilderness, ‘If I knew where I were going to die, I would never go near the place.’. I think most people would feel the same way. If they knew that they were going to face their death, they would do whatever they could to avoid it completely. But not Jesus. He knew everything he would face if he chose to continue on to go to Jerusalem.

A little earlier in the book of Luke, we read that Jesus ‘set out resolutely for Jerusalem’, or some versions say that he ‘set his face to go to Jerusalem’. This was not just a random thing that happened to Jesus. He knew that it was coming. He knew what he would have to endure there. Yet he chose it anyway.

Instead of walking into town, Jesus rode in on a donkey. That did two things. Matthew tells us that it fulfilled a prophecy from:

**Zechariah 9:9 ESV — 9** Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

In fulfilling that prophecy, Jesus was also making a statement. Jesus was called a King in that passage from Zechariah, and that’s exactly what people were hoping he would become for them.

The way that a King rode into a city immediately told you a lot about their intentions while they were there. If they rode in on a warhorse it meant they were there for war. But if a King were entering into a city in peace, they would trade out their warhorse for a donkey.

So, Jesus rode in on the foal of a donkey. That meant he was not there to make war. He was not there to go into battle. But that didn’t keep the people from encouraging him to do so anyway.

**Luke 19:36–38 ESV — 36** And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. **37** As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, **38** saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Matthew tells us that they spread branches out before him, that they shouted ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’. Mark tells us they shouted ‘Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David’.

The people who were there that day were not greeting Jesus as a rabbi. They were greeting him as a King. They were greeting him as their coming Savior. They laid down their coats before him, which was a sign of submission to royalty. John tells us they were waving palm branches. That was a symbol of rejoicing during the Feast of Booths, when the Israelites celebrated God’s deliverance out of slavery in Egypt. The word ‘Hosanna’ they were shouting means ‘help’, or ‘save, I pray’.

These people were greeting Jesus as the Messiah who would finally free them from oppression of the Roman Empire. The people were speaking of Jesus as a King. They were praising him as the one who was sent from God to deal with their Roman oppressors once and for all.

These people did not just look to Jesus as a teacher or a rabbi. They were looking at him as their Messiah. They were looking at him as the one who could save them.

These people were looking forward to the day when they would once again be an independent nation. When they would be able to rule themselves, instead of being subject to some foreign power like the Romans. The sad thing is they recognized Jesus was the Messiah. They just had no idea what he was really here to save them from.

When David was king, hundreds of years earlier, God made a promise, a covenant with David that his throne and kingdom would endure forever. God told him he would always have son on the throne of Israel. The people who were there when Jesus entered Jerusalem were expecting Jesus to be the one who would take the throne of his father David. They were expecting him to become their king. To revolt against the Romans. To lead their nation to freedom once again.

In a way, they were right. Jesus was the one who would take the throne of David, just not in the way the people expected. Not as a political King with a physical kingdom, but as the King of a spiritual Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven.

This all happened right at the Passover, which was a time when the Israelites remembered when God had saved them from slavery in Egypt. Imagine how hard it must have been for the Israelites to celebrate their freedom from slavery when they were currently under the rule of another nation once again. They weren’t slaves to the Romans, but they were certainly not free to do as they pleased.

The Passover was often a time of civil unrest, a time when people who claimed to be the Messiah would come and make an entrance into the city and cause a stir. The Romans had a fortress in Jerusalem called the Antonia. If the Jewish people got out of line, the soldiers who were stationed there would come and slaughter all those involved in whatever riot or rebellion was going on.

By the time of Jesus, that had happened on a few different occasions, and hundreds of Jewish people had been killed by the Romans because of riots like that. That’s why the Jewish Leaders were so afraid.

**Luke 19:39–40 ESV — 39** And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” **40** He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

The Jewish leaders had seen this kind of thing happen before. They had seen the people get all riled up about somebody they thought was the Messiah and they remembered the bloodshed that had happened as a result. They were doing whatever they could to quiet the people, they were trying to get them to calm down and stop with all this talk of Jesus saving them. All because they were afraid of what would happen if they awoke the wrath of the Romans.

But even so, the people were longing to be free from oppression. They wanted their freedom. They wanted to be a nation of their own again and they looked to Jesus to be the Savior that they longed for.

The people there that day weren’t they only ones who were expecting those things of Jesus. His own disciples did, too. In Matthew 16, Jesus was telling his disciples all the things he would have to go through in the coming days. He told them the way that he would suffer and die at the hands of the Jewish leaders.

**Matthew 16:22–23 ESV — 22** And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” **23** But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

Peter was expecting the same things that the people in Jerusalem expected of Jesus. Every time Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, Peter was envisioning a kingdom here on earth. Just like the people who were there that day when Jesus was coming into Jerusalem. Peter couldn’t fathom how Jesus could do all the things he hoped he would do if he were going to die in Jerusalem. He was adamant that he would protect Jesus from being killed, that it would never happen.

What Peter didn’t realize, and what the people in Jerusalem that day didn’t realize, is that Jesus had a much larger mission to fulfill. Jesus told Peter that he had in mind the things of men, and not the things of God. He was thinking about what mattered right here and right now, not what mattered for all eternity. He was limiting his focus to what was tangible and immediately available to him. Peter wasn’t looking at the bigger picture.

Jesus described it perfectly when he told Peter what his problem was. He had his eyes set on the things of man, and not on the things of God. Peter had his eyes set on what was right here in front of him, and not on what God was trying to accomplish in the bigger picture.

Peter had blinders on that were keeping him from seeing anything outside of his narrow, focused point of view. Peter’s focus was completely consumed with what was going on with his people, with his nation, with their political freedom. Peter thought he knew what was going on, he thought he knew what was right.

The whole time his focus was in the wrong place. Peter was with Jesus for three years just like the rest of the disciples. But because his focus was wrong, he was looking at everything Jesus said and did through that lens.

When Jesus talked about bringing freedom to people Peter took that as a freedom from the nations that ruled over them, like Rome. When Jesus talked about the Kingdom of Heaven that was coming Peter was thinking of an earthly Kingdom. Peter was taking all those things in the wrong light because his perspective was wrong. Because he had his eyes set in the wrong place.

Ultimately, he was thinking of himself and his people, rather than the true Kingdom of God. What Peter and the people in Jerusalem had in common is that they had too small of a view of Jesus. They had to small of a view of what he was really here to do. They were looking at Jesus as the Savior of their nation.

That might seem like a pretty big picture way to think. But what Jesus was really there to do was to save not just one nation, but all mankind, from their sin. Jesus was there to save all humanity from the thing that held them in slavery more than any foreign power ever could. Jesus was there to save humanity from the thing that threatened their freedom, not just for a lifetime, but for all eternity.

The people who were there that day were looking at Jesus as a political savior. A revolutionary. A leader who could really make a difference and nothing more. But Jesus was much more than that. He was the Son of God. He was the Lamb of God. He was the sacrifice meant for the salvation of all mankind.

We often have the same problem as Peter and the people in Jerusalem that day. We often have too small of a view of Jesus and who he is. We have too small of a view of what he is able to do in our lives. We get focused on the wrong things. We allow our focus to get caught up in all the things of earth rather than the things of God.

I remember sitting in Driver’s Ed class one evening, and the instructor talking about how dangerous it was to focus your attention on oncoming cars, especially at night. Your eyes play tricks on you, especially when the lights of an oncoming care are all you can see. Often times, as you drive, you begin to drift in the direction where you have your attention focused. That’s why it’s so important that you keep your eyes on the road ahead of you. So you know what’s coming, but also so that you don’t accidentally drift to one side or the other.

That’s what happened to Peter. Because his focus was in the wrong place, he started to drift in a direction that Jesus never intended him to go. Peter was headed into dangerous territory because his focus was wrong.

We face the same danger Peter did. When we have our focus in the wrong place and have too small a view of Jesus, we end up doing just what Peter did. Everything that happens in our lives, every relationship that we have, every experience we go through, even what we read in Scripture, is seen through the lens of whatever we have our focus set on.

If we have our focus set on Jesus, if we have our focus set on the eternal things, the things that really matter, then everything that happens in our lives will be seen from that perspective. Everything that happens to us will be colored by our recognition that Jesus is alive. That he sits on his throne sovereign over everything. That he is coming back one day. That everything of this earth is temporary.

When we have that kind of perspective on our lives, we see Jesus for who he really is. We recognize how very big he really is. Then we will have everything else in the right perspective as well. Having the right perspective of Jesus allows us to be a part of God’s mission in the world.

But when that focus is off, when our focus is taken off of Jesus, and it is dragged down to the things of this earth, when we allow ourselves to get preoccupied with what only matters for a short time instead of what matters for eternity, then things are very different. Then everything that happens in our lives is colored by that perspective instead. We end up looking at our lives from the wrong perspective. That’s when we begin to drift in the wrong direction.

All of sudden, instead of the eternal, lasting things of importance being the things that matter to us, suddenly we allow ourselves to get preoccupied and focused on things that don’t matter at all on an eternal level.

Beth and I worked with Junior High students in the past. It’s amazing what is important to them, what drives them. They’re concerned with things like how their hair looks, how their clothes look. The girls want to impress the boys, the boys want to impress the girls. They all want to get each other’s Snapchat, and Instagram, and whatever other social media they’re into.

When we grow up and become adults, none of that really changes. We just become preoccupied with slightly different things. We still worry about what people think about us.

We worry about how our houses or cars look rather than how our hair looks. We care about how much money we have in the bank rather than how many people liked the last picture we posted. We care about whether or not we are keeping up with the Jones’s rather than keeping up with the latest meme. Some of you may have no idea what a meme is, and that’s okay.

The point is, we have different perspectives, we have different things that preoccupy our attention, but we still allow our focus to get dragged down to the things of this earth. We allow our focus and our attention to get pulled away from Jesus. Our focus is pulled away from recognizing how great and how big he is. We begin to only care about what makes us feel satisfied for a short amount of time. What makes us feel accomplished right here and right now.

What we should be focused on instead is what am I accomplishing that is making an eternal difference? What am I doing that is making an impact that is lasting, that won’t fade in a few years? What am I doing for the Kingdom of God, instead of for myself?

One of the most dangerous things that can happen when we have that kind of attitude is exactly what happened that day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem. When we have the wrong perspective of Jesus, when our focus is in the wrong place, we miss out on the opportunity to be used by God to accomplish his mission.

When we take too small of a view of what Jesus and we get focused on ourselves, then we’ve missed the point. Just like Peter missed the point. Just like all those people in Jerusalem missed the point.

What we need to do is to recognize that the sacrifice of Jesus is so huge and so extraordinary, that nothing could ever come close to matching it. We owe Jesus all our thanks, all our praise, all our worship, and all our lives because of what he did on that cross.

Our response should to take that incredible gift of grace that Jesus has given to us, and share it with the world we live in. There are people in our world, in our nation, in our town, even in our families, who desperately need to hear about the grace of Jesus.

Jesus offered us everything he had. He gave his life for us on the cross. He gave his life to save all of humanity. He did that because he loves us so much. Because he wanted us to spend eternity with him.

When we have the right perspective, when we have our focus in the right place, when we see just how big Jesus is and how big his gift of grace is, then we won’t be able to help but share it with everyone we know.