

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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BEING LIKE JESUS

I John 2:1-11

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I have three points to my message this morning:

- The way that he died, we should die (but he died in our place).
- The way he lived, we should live.
- The way he loved, we should love.

To you, who is Jesus? Most people here would say that Jesus is your Savior. To others watching or listening, you might say the same. Others would say he is a historical figure. Some others might say he is an imposter. But to you, who is Jesus? Has he impacted your life in such a way that you want to live like him? If not, why not? Followers of Jesus should want to follow his ways. Followers of Jesus should be learning from his life on this earth as it's recorded in the scripture.

THE WAY HE DIED, WE SHOULD DIE (BUT HE DIED IN OUR PLACE)

SCRIPTURE: I John 2:1-2

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

Because we are sinners, we must die. There is no way around it. A person who doesn't know this truth merely believes that people have a limited lifespan and that's it. They don't know that we are originally created not to die. The Bible tells us in Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.*

When Adam and Eve sinned, they brought sin into the human race. I don't believe anyone here denies we have a sin problem in this world. I don't think anyone here denies we each have a personal sin problem as well. We have a death sentence and none of us can get around it. You might say, "I didn't come here to hear this today," but stay with me.

Because Hebrews 9:27 tells us, *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* Probably no one here denies any of these scriptures to be true. There are many in the world who deny them and there are many who have never heard them. But there is no one in the world who would deny that death is coming someday. There is no one in his or her right mind who believes that he or she will live forever. The penalty of sin is death.

You might say, that sounds bad. Well, it gets worse.

When Jesus died on that cross, I should have been the one on the cross. I should have been the one executed for my sins. I should have paid the penalty for my own sin. All of us should pay the price for our own sin. All of us are deserving of nothing more than an eternity in hell separated from God.

Yes, that precious person you know... that person is guilty of sin before God. That person will meet God for the judgement. No one is spared.

But thanks to God, it doesn't end there. The way he died, we should die, but he died for us. Romans 5:8, *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* If it weren't for Jesus, we'd all be guilty before God. We will die physically because of sin, but we will not die spiritually. Our souls will live forever.

The way he died, we should die, but he died for us. As we just read in I John 2:1-2: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

This scripture is the great equalizer that reminds us we are no better than anyone else. Jesus died for all the sins of the world.

What do we do in exchange for this gift of salvation, this gift of eternal life, this gift of exchanging our sins for the forgiveness of Jesus Christ? Here's the answer: we repent of our sin and follow him. In doing so, we die to our own will and live to fulfill God's will.

THE WAY HE LIVED, WE SHOULD LIVE

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 2:3-6

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands. ⁴ Whoever says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, love for God is truly made complete in them. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.

ILLUSTRATION: Years ago, I was at UT Knoxville and walking on Cumberland Avenue one night. A man behind me started walking faster until he was walking right beside me. He started witnessing to me. He challenged me to become part of his Gospel Team. I listened to him as we walked. He talked about the evils of the university education and said that a true follower of Christ would wander like Christ did, telling others the gospel of Christ and trusting God for daily sustenance.

I forget how the conversation ended, but toward the end I told him I was indeed following what I believed to be God's will for my life at that time.

This man from the Gospel team had a misunderstanding of the point that the way he lived, we should live. He wanted to rewind to the cultural times of Jesus. He wanted others to provide for his needs. He didn't want to work. He didn't want to have responsibilities. He had an assumption that Jesus didn't work, and that Jesus let others provide everything for him. In other words, this man's misunderstanding of

what it meant to live like Jesus would make him little more than a burden on society...while he let others care for his needs.

There are a lot of years of Jesus' life that we don't know about. His earthly father, Joseph, was a carpenter so we believe Jesus was, too. We know nothing about Jesus from the time he was about twelve until he was about thirty. I don't think Jesus sat around on his parents' couch, watching TV and eating potato chips. I can't see Jesus as a lazy person in any way. I can't see Jesus putting his brain in cold storage at age twelve and pulling it out at age thirty.

No, I believe Jesus was at work. When I say that the way Jesus lived we should live, what I am saying is that Jesus depended on God for everything. Of course, he was God and the son of God in one person and sometimes we discard the fact that he was 100% God and 100% human at the same time. Of course, this is a mystery that we don't understand, even though we may have lengthy conversations about it. The 100% human side of Jesus completely trusted the 100% God side of Jesus.

I want you to note that the ministry of Jesus flourished at a time when the political situation was less than stellar. The sovereign, strong arm of the Roman empire reigned supreme.

Jesus could have come at any time in history. He could have come during the reign of King Solomon, or King David – from our point of view those might have been better times - when the Jewish people ruled themselves - but no, he came at a time when the Jewish people were ruled by a strong enemy. So, what we can conclude is that he came at the best of times, even though it appeared to many to be the worst of times.

Psalm 121 says that God never sleeps, he never slumbers. He is eternally awake. I read a quote of one person who said, "At night I give all my problems to God. He's going to be up all night anyway." God is not hindered by governments. It may appear that he is, but according to the Bible, God uses all circumstances to accomplish his will, even those circumstances we cannot understand.

There is no political party that can usher in the Kingdom of God. There is no world leader that can usher in the Kingdom of God. My God is greater than the results of any election anywhere in the world. My God is greater than any democracy, any kingdom, or any totalitarian regime in this world. And Jesus knew that. He flourished in a world that was not the prime political climate for freedom of speech.

In the end, the Roman government got him – but it was all part of God’s plan. His earthly ministry was not hindered by the Roman government.

The way Jesus lived, we should live. Completely poured out before God, trusting him in all situations – trusting him in our jobs, our families, our country, and trusting him when things don’t work out like we think they should. That’s what I mean when I say as Jesus lived, we should live.

- The way Jesus died, we should die (but he died in our place)
- The way he lived, we should live, and...

THE WAY HE LOVED, WE SHOULD LOVE

SCRIPTURE: 1 John 2:7-11

Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard. ⁸ Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. ⁹ Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

We’ve all heard the saying What Would Jesus Do, and we’ve seen the bracelets with WWJD on them. The phrase has been overused, because there are times when we don’t know what Jesus would do. We might think we know, but when you read

the Gospels closely, you'll note that Jesus didn't always follow a predictable pattern.

When it comes to love, however, it's good for us to ask What Would Jesus Do. When we ask that question related to love, then we'll no doubt find our answers. Loving like Jesus loved is the hardest thing of all, because we are not naturally wired to love like he loved. We are wired to be selfish. We are wired to hold grudges. We are wired to be unloving to those who don't love us.

The way Jesus loved in the scripture is clearly above mere human love. Let me say, I am not there. Neither are you. We cannot match the love of Jesus, but we can certainly learn about the love of Jesus and try it on and show it off as much as we are able.

The love of Jesus is not easy to define. It seems rather complex to me. He loved all people but he was not a door mat (that's the best way I know to say it). There were no boundaries to his love but there were boundaries with this patience. He loved sinners, he loved the unlovely, but he spoke strongly to the Pharisees and others. He was full of righteous anger at times, but he did not sin. He violently overthrew crooked money changers in the temple, but he did not sin. He didn't seem very loving to those people, but he must have been because Jesus loved all people. His love came through correction.

The strongest love that we see in the life of Jesus was seen on the cross when he said "Father, forgive them for what they do." Jesus loved the people who were crucifying him. We cannot fully love like Jesus loved, but when we do a self-examination, we have to admit we have plenty of room for improvement in this area.

ILLUSTRATION: Several years ago, I was in a discussion with the head of a multi-million-dollar company. He had a suspicion that one of his managers was a tyrant, but he said the manager was a very good producer. I had some inside knowledge of what was going on from some of the employees, so I said, "Maybe he

is a great producer, but at what cost?” He was one of those managers who kissed up but kicked down.

I want you to think about that phrase, “but at what cost?” Loving like Jesus loved means that at times we have to let our opinions go. If you always have to be right, and you always have to have the last word because there is something in you that just cannot let something go, I have to ask the same thing I said to the head of the large company: “but at what cost?” If your desire to win every argument, to make sure everyone knows your opinion, (and to run over people while doing it) repulses others, you may be satisfied that you’ve won, but at what cost? At the cost of appearing to be unloving and repulsive?

I believe the way we become more loving is to start with our inner circle, those we see the most. That’s the testbed for learning to love like Jesus loved – the people you are around the most, the people you live with, yes, those who get on your nerves the most. With Jesus, the inner circle in his adult life was his disciples.

When you’ve worked on your inner circle, you can move on to the next circle, this circle contains those you come in contact with fairly often. And then from there, you have the acquaintances. Let’s remember that Jesus’ love didn’t just stop with family, friends, and acquaintances. It stretched to those who crucified him.

The love of Jesus Christ in us must go beyond those we see most often. It must go beyond those who are easy to love. It should extend to the bank teller, the convenience store employees, flight attendant, your doctor, your uber driver, and others. It’s not possible to love every single person in the world, or every single person we come across in a single day, but it is possible to be generally loving and Christ-like.

Sharing the love of Jesus doesn’t mean that we have to accommodate every single person in our lives. No, it does not. We must speak the truth, even if it does not sound like love. Why do we speak truth? Because we love people. Truth and the timing of sharing truth is important – shoving truth down someone’s throat never goes very well.

If in your life someone refuses to receive your love, I think it's best to move on to those who will. On Friday night, one of our former members who had to move due to his health made an appeal on Facebook to talk with anyone who would talk because he was lonely. There are many, many lonely people deserving of your love.

None of this means that we love everyone on the same level. I love my wife Susan more than anyone in this room. But we can be generally loving to all.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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