

In His Steps; GEMS Sunday
1 John 2:1-6
Westside Fellowship CRC; 29 April 2018
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Jesus lived a life of love. This week, I spent some time looking at one of the favourite love passages in Scripture – 1 Corinthians 13 – and I thought about all the ways that Jesus embodies love as it is described in that chapter.

Jesus was patient. Think about all the times he explained things to his disciples.

Jesus was kind. Think about all the times he had compassion on crowds of hungry people or people needing healing.

Jesus was not envious. He resisted the devil's temptation to take all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor (Matt. 4). He did not need them.

Jesus did not boast and was not proud. He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing (Phil. 2).

Jesus honoured others, preserving the dignity of men and women in their most vulnerable moments.

Jesus did not seek himself, but sought after others. He didn't come to be served but to serve.

Jesus was not easily angered. He did get angry, but not in a quick-tempered way.

Jesus didn't keep records of wrongs. He forgave. Think of the way that he forgave Peter! With love and with an invitation to serve in his name.

Jesus delighted in the truth! He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Jesus protected others. Think of his defense of the children – let them come to me!

Jesus trusted his heavenly Father and placed his hope in him, even when everything looked like it was falling apart.

Jesus persevered and never failed. Even on the cross. Though it may have looked to the world like he failed and gave up. That wasn't him failing. That wasn't him giving up. That was Jesus giving. That was Jesus persevering in giving all the way to the end. All the way through the end. That was victory.

Jesus spoke in the tongues of men and angels and with his love he was a symphony.

Jesus had the gift of prophecy and could fathom all mysteries and all knowledge and his faith not only moved the mountains but created the mountains. All with love. He was everything.

Jesus gave all that he possessed to the poor and gave his own body over to the hardship of the cross, and in so doing, and with love, he gained the world!

This is my Jesus. This is my Lord. Who loves me! This is the one in whom I have life. Jesus lives in me and I live in Jesus. I name this and I claim this.

“Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did” (1 John 2:6).

This is a beautiful of love life that we’re being called into. When I think about living as Jesus lived and loving like he loved, I want to get started right away.

Now, living like Jesus isn’t something that we just magically know how to do... (though sometimes we wish it were!) It’s something we need to learn. Stephen Gambicourt told me a great story about Logan last week. Logan is their four year old son and at night, they read the same book. And Logan has the first page of that book memorized so he was feeling good about how he was learning to read. So, the other night, he said, “Daddy, I don’t need you to read to me anymore. I can read myself!” So, he took his book into his room, and opened up the first page, and read that first page. And then he turned the page and “_____” ???!!? He couldn’t read it! And he was devastated. And S and S talked to him about how he would learn to read – and how he’d learn the alphabet and sound out the words, but he didn’t want that. He just wanted to be able to read right then! And I thought, wow. That’ll preach. That can sometimes be like us in our lives of following Jesus. We just want to magically know how to do it, but it’s something that we need to learn and it takes time and work!

The pastor’s package that came with the GEMS Sunday material had some great ideas about how to get going on this life of living like Jesus.

1. Remember who *Jesus* is – His love, words, and ways! Getting to know Jesus and how he lived his life is an important step. We can’t live like he lived if we don’t know how he lived. So, read God’s word and get to know Jesus.

2. Remember who Jesus says *you* are. Remember your identity. That you are accepted, beloved, and cherished as a daughter of God.

3. Walk toward Jesus! Do the things. Don't just learn it and know it and memorize it. Try it on!

Sometimes we can get all caught up in our heads and think that if we know all the things we are living the Christian life, but that isn't how it goes.

THOUGHT EXPERIMENT: Imagine if aliens came to our planet and have the assignment of reporting on what it means for us to live life the way Jesus lived life. But, get this, the aliens can't understand anything we say or read anything we write or get inside our heads to know anything that we think. The aliens can only base their report on what we do. If all these aliens had were our behaviours, what would they conclude about what we believe about living our lives the way Jesus lived his life?

Sometimes we can say the right words and write down the right answers, but living our lives always looks like something.

I know that if aliens were looking at my life, they might notice... well, she drinks a lot of coffee... and she spends a lot of her time looking at screens and touching screens... She does spend a lot of time with other people, but then they're often looking at separate screens at the same time.

Now, as far as I know, there is no alien looking at your life. On the other hand, sometimes we think of God that way... Not as an alien... but we think of God watching our steps and our actions... and also our thoughts and our words and our writings... and we think oh-my-goodness-God-knows. God knows that I do not do what God commands and he knows I'm a liar and the truth isn't in me.

It's easy for us to look at a verse like this and say, God wants me to do what God commands, and I don't always do that, so why am I even trying? God wants me to be perfect and I'm not perfect. Why am I even trying? This message, that we somehow have to be perfect, is a message some people get out of Scripture passages like this... and it's what some of us think our parents and teachers expect of us... and even if our parents and teachers tell us again and again that we don't have to be, we somehow have this expectation for ourselves—that we have to be perfect or that in order to get to heaven, we need to perfect.

Last week Sunday, I was listening to the radio – to the story of a family. The mom was talking and telling the story of how her six year old daughter, Emilie, had died and her daughter, Madeline, who was a year younger – five years old – asked her husband, “Daddy, how are we going to see Emilie again?” And her dad said, “Well, Emilie is in heaven, and if we make really good choices in our life, we’ll get to see her again in heaven when we die.”

And I was like (face palm) oh my – there it is again. Our entrance into heaven being dependent on our making good choices. Our acceptance from God depending on our making good choices. I can see how someone might read these verses and draw these conclusions, but that is not the full story.

There is a reason I included John 2:1-2 in our reading this morning. “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.”

We are not going to live perfect lives. We can’t. Your sin is not okay, we need to know that, receive God’s forgiveness, and work toward living God’s love every day of our lives AND at the same time, we need to hear – and I wish I could look deeply into each of your hearts and say, “You are loved and treasured and completely accepted no matter what.” No matter what. And that no matter what applies to your past and to your future. That’s how big and unconditional God’s love is.

And that love that God has for you is not just for you and me – it’s for the whole world.

I only told you part of the story I heard on the CBC the other day. The little girl who died, Emilie, was one of the victims of the Sandyhook elementary school shooting back in 2012. This is her family – there is Emilie on the right.



When Emilie’s dad told their daughter, Madeline, that she would see Emilie again in heaven if she made good choices, Madeline asked about the shooter. “What about the man who shot Emilie? What about him?” And her dad asked what she thought God thought about him. And Madeline said, “I think God loves him, but he’s really disappointed in the choices he made.”¹ God is heartbroken at the choice that he made. AND God loves him.

I am not here to claim knowledge of the eternal destiny of anyone—Emilie, Madeline, or Adam. But what I am up here to say is that God’s love for you and for the whole world is big – bigger than we can imagine.

John here is concerned that our actions and our words line up. If we claim to live in him then we need to live like we live in him. We need to live like he lives in us. If we claim to know him, then we need to follow his commands... and more and more as we are able and as we grow. And if we are not following his commands, and if we are not living like he lived, and what’s more, if we’re not claiming to know him... then I trust and rest in the great big love and sovereignty of God. I rest in the wisdom of Proverbs 20:24 where it says, “A person’s steps are directed by the Lord.”



God, the Greatest Lover of the whole world will move you where he wants you to go. Your theme is “In his Steps” by which we mean, follow where Jesus goes... but when you are in Jesus and Jesus is in you – there is no step that you can take where he is not with you. And he will bring you back...

¹ <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/tapestry/hope-and-mercy-in-chicago-and-newtown-1.4172104/how-a-sandy-hook-mother-came-to-forgive-the-shooter-1.4172253>

(Read part of *The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown / images by Clement Hurd)

