

Go And Do Likewise

December 1, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "Go and Do Likewise." Thank you to Amy, Dave, Paul, Achile, and everyone else involved in the service. The scripture reading is Hebrews 8 10 to 11. Happy birthday this week to Lee, Jimmy, and Brian.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning everybody. [Good morning!] Thanks Adam. I want to welcome you here with us this morning. A few announcements to begin. We have a couple birthdays this week. Charlotte's birthday is this week and Matthias's birthday. I think this is little Matthias, not confused looking Matthias, who's sitting over there going, "It's not my birthday." So younger Matthias's birthday is this week. Some upcoming events. Our midweek bible study on Ecclesiastes is happening Wednesday at 7 30 here in the library. And Sunday morning at 9 30 we are beginning a study of Leviticus. So that is coming up soon. Prayer request. Pam's dad Blake passed away recently. This is particularly hard because she is in hospital. She was able to see him the week before he died. But I think that is an extra challenging thing when you are away from family mourning alone. So extra prayers for Pam as she is grieving this in a difficult way. Let's go to God in prayer together.

Dear God, we bring before you Pam. We thank you for her spirit of love and hospitality. Even in her difficult circumstances. God we pray for her heart right now that you would guide her, that you would be her good good father. God we thank you for this community that we have and that we have the opportunity to come together and worship you. In Jesus name. Amen.

Communion

It is hoped that you will be able to make some sense of these scattered thoughts. Age has a way of acutely focusing our perspective on the past and perhaps the dwindling future as we contemplate the end. I'm not terminally ill. I'm not saying anything like that. It's just a fact of life. We're getting older. All of us are getting older and it's never too late to think about the future or the past. There's all kinds of memories and experiences, some created with intention, some by chance. We have been given much. We've been blessed by those of our family and our family's history. A legacy has been given to us. We all likewise will leave a legacy. We're going to leave something behind. What will remain of us in the minds and hearts of those who remain? How will we be remembered?

Last week, Monday, was Remembrance Day. The nation pauses to remember those who served and sacrifices that were made. There's a legacy and it is emphasized on that day. It's kind of a human-centered concept, this idea of legacy. What is handed down from the past, perhaps, it can be seen as an inheritance. So it seems somewhat inappropriate to take this man-centered concept and apply it to God. But it is astounding when we consider what has been passed down to us by God.

How God reveals himself to us through his creation. Each step we take should give us sufficient cause to pause and reflect as it is a proclamation of the Creator. Also, through his revealed word, which is his son. Jesus the Christ shows us how we should live in order to bring glory to God. This should not simply be a contemplation, something you just roll around in your head. It needs to be reflected by us. The challenge of that is we are to reveal God in our lives by glorifying him in all that we do.

A worthwhile legacy is not that the world remembers you upon your death, but your death reminds the world of God. You see it right here, perfectly. As we pause to remember the Son, Jesus, whose life, sacrifice and death were all to the glorification of God, his Father. Let's pray.

Father, we are inspired by your countless gifts, especially here at the table. May we be confident and empowered by these emblems of the body and blood of Jesus. Bless this bread and this cup and continue to move us by your spirit to glorify you always. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 8:10-11

Hebrews chapter 8 verse 10 to 11. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel. After that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

Sermon

Go And Do Likewise

Good day. Good to be with you today. In case you don't know, I am Paul and some have said that I am slightly weird. Can you believe it? I know this is out of date now, but if I said Myers-Briggs, does that ring a bell to anybody? I know that's like two personality tests in the past now to what is current. But if I were to say that I was an INTP, do you have an idea of what that might mean? Introverted, intuitive, perceiving thinker in the Myers-Briggs. And the thing I want to highlight today is the last two, perceiving thinker has built in a contradicting mutually exclusive set of facts. That's my personality.

The thinker says you should be confident. You should be confident. You should know. You should be 100% on track. The perceiving says you'll never quite have all the information you need. So I have an infinite loop that doesn't stop to gather the most information possible with the diminishing returns. So this is a 3% of the population is an INTP, apparently. So thus I tend to find myself thinking a little differently than the average person. But perhaps that's only because one of my favorite sayings is the rule is everyone else is weird, I'm the normal one. So perhaps we're all weird in our own unique, wonderful ways.

But one of the things that I have in my faith journey is I'm the annoying person who always asks why? How? What about challenge the assumptions? Is this really true? Where does this come from? What's the program behind this? Does this really work? And so I've always been a little dissatisfied through my years hearing the various faith building programs, research growth programs, evangelistic programs, etc. that I've come across. Because I'm always, they don't quite seem to fit the text. They don't quite seem to be complete. Now part of that is my perceiving saying there's just not quite enough information. It's not the entirety of the universe of information capsuled in this program. So it's not complete. Okay, disregard that for a bit. But there is also a bit of truth there that these don't tend to come in contain the truth of the text, I would argue. So today I want to suggest to you an idea of how to grow in faith in ministry service to God that I think is biblically bound and fits in a general sense of way of thinking.

So the idea that I want to introduce to us today is, this is the big idea of the sermon, God wants to do in us before what He wants to do through us. God wants to do in us before what He wants to do through us. Second Corinthians 1, 3 through 7, Apostle Paul here tells the Corinthians, "Praise be to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds in Christ. If we are distressed as for your comfort and salvation, if we are comforted as for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer and our hope for you is firm because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort." Notice the sequence of comfort in that text. God is the source of all comfort who comforts the Apostle Paul and his companions who then comfort the Christians he works with and the cycle continues. They are able to comfort because of the comfort they've received from God.

John 13, 1 through 5 and then jumping down to 12. It was just before the Passover festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world to go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The evening meal was in progress and the devil had already prompted, Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to portray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God. So he got up from his meal, took off his outer clothing, wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around them.

Verse 12, "When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes, returned to his place. Do you understand what I have done for you? He asked them. You call me teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another's feet. I have set an example for you that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly, I tell you, no servant is greater than his master nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." Notice in this text, Jesus, the Lord and Master, chooses to be the servant to his disciples, his servants. And his message about this is that they should go and do likewise. The cycle of you do, you do to the people next to you what has been done to you. Being a servant extends from us. Jesus is a servant to God and thus the pattern continues.

Revelation 5, Jesus is pictured as a lamb. I didn't put this scripture up, but he's being pictured as a lamb being led by God for the salvation of our sins in the throne room of God. But he's also our shepherd in John 10. And in John 10, in fact, we are the lambs as Jesus is a shepherd. And Acts 20 calls for Christians there to be shepherds to those around them in the Apostle Paul's farewell addressed to the Ephesians. Again, notice the pattern. Jesus is a lamb to the shepherd God, but Jesus is also our shepherd to us as lambs to him. And we in turn are shepherds to those who would follow us in the ways of faith.

John 7, 37 and 38. On the last day and the greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, a scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." In your Bible, those of you looking at a Bible, do you have a little note on verse 38? Does anybody have a little note? Most Bibles will have a little note that says that one of the other major ways of translating this could be on the last and greatest day of the greatest festival. Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "And let anyone drink who believes in me, and out of him or them will flow rivers of living water." So one is you receive the living water and one is the living water flows out of you. I think both translations actually work. Belief in Christ, we receive the living water from God. Also, by definition, we produce the living water from God. Whoever believes in Jesus has living water flowing within. Whoever believes in Jesus has the living water flow through them and out of them.

This idea of what God wants to do through you, he first must do in you, it kind of makes practical sense to a certain amount of degree. Going from scripture, Peter, the Apostle Peter, going to the Gentiles, he first had to internalize that the gospel was for all people, not just the Jews, before he could actually go and preach to the Gentiles. Similarly, Paul Saul had to be converted on the road to Damascus before he could go and become the Apostle Paul. Just practically, it kind of makes sense. You first have to internalize the belief before you can go and do the ministry. But at some points, there was a decision somewhere in how people thought about faith that people started to separate and categorize things. Separate faith work activities, focusing on exclusive categories like, well, okay, is this an internal thing or an external thing? Is this an inward thing or an outward thing? Is this a thing focused on self or on others? Is this a thing for believers or is this a thing for non-believers? Is this a thing for church folk or unchurched folk?

I would argue that these categories, as useful as they may or may not be, is by definition not mutually exclusive, but rather doors to the same room. Take, for example, we focus on God in our faith. If we truly focus on God, what does he care about? What does he think about? What does he do and what does he want us to do? Well, he wants us to worship him, to strengthen our faith in him, yes, but also work on our own faith and to serve others. It encompasses all of those things. I would even argue that our goal in spreading the gospel is not, and this, hear me out, this might be heresy, is not, in fact, conversion. First, that's God's action, not mine, but actually it's to help someone grow in

faith. If that growth in faith moves someone through conversion, that is absolutely wonderful, but all for growth in faith is valuable and necessary.

Consider 1 Corinthians 3, 6 through 9. Paul says to the Corinthians, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants it nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor, for we are co-workers in God's service, you are God's filled, God's building. Our small contribution to the growth in faith may lead, may lead or may necessarily for eventual conversion or likewise growth in faith after conversion are all equally important.

Just as Jesus was a sheep to God, if there was a person who didn't need to be led by God, it was Jesus, but just like Jesus, we are both sheep and shepherd, led and leader eating, comforted and comforting, being served by God and others and also serving others. Does this mean that we never act before a full understanding, learning or internalizing by no means? This is often a process of incremental change, incremental progress or even non-linear stimulus, simultaneous process. There may be many scriptural examples of people serving and learning at the same time. In fact, I would argue that this is a mostly natural way of doing this, but this is one of the critical things I think about Christianity and it was our reading this morning, Hebrews 8, 10 through 12 and this is quoting, the Hebrew writer is quoting Jeremiah 31, 31 through 34. "This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another, "Know the Lord because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest."

The writer of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah as he, Jeremiah, looks towards Jesus. Jeremiah laments that in his time, you could have family identity, cultural practices, national identity and even religious practices based on God, but not actually have personal faith. To be clear, we know that from other Old Testament passages that this was not God's intent for even at that time, but this was what often was found. There was a change with Jesus. Faith now only comes through hearts.

The Acts principles planned or otherwise come from faith in the heart fundamentally. This change was so drastic in the Christian community that James had to correct the early Christians since it seems some of them had been interpreting faith as being of the heart as being they didn't need to serve each other.

James 2, 14, 19 and then 26. What good is it my brothers and sisters if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes or daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself is not accompanied by action, it's dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, I have deeds. Show me your faith without deeds and I will show you my faith with my deeds. You believe there is one God, good. Even the demons believe that and shudder." Verse 26. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." This is the meaning of actions or deeds in faith in James 2, 14 through 16. Instead, faith in the heart is always linked to an expression of that faith in action. God wants to do us to do in us before he wants to do through us. Sometimes in life it will be in seasons or spots where we focus war on one thing or another thing, but fundamentally we can't stay forever because they are linked. We need all of it.

John 15, one and two. "I am the true vine and my father is the gardener," Jesus talking. "He cuts off every branch in me, bare us no fruit, while every branch that bears fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." Skipping to verse 8, "This is my father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the father has loved me, I have loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this, love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for his friends. You are my friends, so if you do what I command, I no longer call you servants because the servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends for everything I have learned from my father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and

appointed you so that you may go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, and so that whenever you ask in my name, the father will give you. This is my command, love each other."

Seasons of pruning. We are the vine. God is the gardener. God prunes us. During the time of pruning, we are not producing fruit, whatever those fruits may be, of faith may be, a season where the work is mostly internal, but there's also a season of bearing fruit. The point of pruning season is that it bears fruit at some point. Fruits of faith, whatever they form they may take, rarely are produced without pruning. This is a very confusing Christian schema or process. It doesn't fit nicely into some sort of commonly held human belief systems or pattern or booklet or five-point system.

What does it mean to be faithful to God, to live a Christian life? Focus on personal faith. Yes. Focus on acting out our faith. Yes. Focusing on God, worshiping Him. Yes. Focusing on building up faith in community. Yes. Focusing on serving others and sharing faith. Yes.

If you recall our two gallant warriors, you have encountered your standard entrance of an enchanted forest. Now, if you would like to do some impromptu acting, be my guest. Two warriors stand at the entrance of an enchanted forest ready to face whatever challenges lie ahead. The well-rounded warrior, known for their balance of strength, intelligence, and heart, prepares their mind and body for the trials to come. Beside them, the strong warrior with tiny legs boasts their impressive upper body strength ready to power through any obstacle with brute force.

As they venture deeper into the forest, they encounter their first challenge, a series of traps and puzzles designed to test both physical and mental prowess. The well-rounded warrior examines the traps, quickly devises a plan to disarm them using a combination of agility and strategic thinking. With precise movements, careful planning, they navigate through the traps unscathed. Meanwhile, the strong warrior with tiny legs attempts to brute force their way through the traps. They manage to break a few, but their lack of agility and strategic planning leads to trigger several, causing injuries and delays.

Next, they face a group of agile forest creatures quick and cunning in their attacks. A well-rounded, the well-rounded warrior utilizes a mix of defensive and offensive tactics using their shield to block attacks and their sword to counter. Their agility and adaptability allow them to anticipate the creatures' movements and strike effectively. The strong warrior with tiny legs struggles to keep up with the swift creatures, their small legs limiting their ability. Despite their powerful strikes, they find it difficult to land blows on the elusive foes and sustain more injuries in the process.

As they progress further, they encounter a wise sage who offers them a riddle, a promise of powerful artifact to one who was able to solve it. The well-rounded warrior with their keen mind and experience and problem-solving quickly deciphers the riddle, earns the artifact, grants the increased strength and protection. The strong warrior focuses solely on physical might, struggles to understand the riddle, misses the opportunity to gain the artifact.

Finally, they reach the heart of the forest where the ancient guardian awaits. The guardian challenges them to a final duel, testing their overall abilities. The well-rounded warrior, now empowered by the artifact and armed with the balanced skills, engages the guardian in fierce battle using combination of strength, agility, strategy. They manage to defeat the guardian and emerge victorious. The strong warrior with tiny legs, though formidable in their own right, find themselves outmatched by the guardian's varied attacks and clever tactics. Their reliance on brute strength alone proves insufficient against all well-rounded, all the well-rounded warrior's comprehensive skill set. The end. Thank you very much. You can keep it if you want.

What's the point of the illustration? You're allowed to answer. I know it's pretty obvious. The well-rounded warrior is well-rounded. All of his stats are relatively equal. He's pretty well-rounded, he's able to do a lot of things. The buff, top-heavy warrior, has actually had more points, if you added up the total of the points. He actually had more points, but his tiny legs, an embarrassing outfit, really held him back.

This is an illustration I would argue in our faith. We focus on one thing or one group of things. We can become very good at that thing, but we neglect other things, puts us out of weakness when we encounter situations where we might need to use those things. I would suggest in faith we need to be well-rounded Christians, focusing on all the

different areas of our Christian faith and growing them concurrently. The fundamental problem I have with almost every church growth, evangelism, build your faith, change the world program or system, is the next big thing is that they focus on one or two things or put some order on things.

It is true to some practical degree, but fundamentally, scripturally, the answer to how do I grow my faith, my godly actions, my impact with those around me is this. What opportunities do I have? What resources do I have? Where is God leading me? Do that. But the reminder is to balance as our own bias can cloud us. Say yes to study, community, worship, service, and even the occasional pruning. God wants to do in us what he wants to do through us. Thank you.

Closing Benediction

Closing, I'll read from Colossians. For our week this week.

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and dearly loved, let us clothe ourselves with a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with each other and forgiving each other. If someone happens to have a complaint about anyone else, just as the Lord has forgiven you, forgiven us, so we also ought to forgive others. And to all these virtues, add love, which is the perfect bond. Let the peace of Christ be in control of our hearts, for we were in fact called as one body to this peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, teaching and exhorting each other with all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, all with grace in our hearts to God. And whatever we do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen. Have a good week.

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