



## 2020 July Sermon Series: Be Imitators of God

### Message #1: Be Imitators of God

#### Getting the Nod:

**What does Jesus look like?** We know that Luke 2:52 gives us a little information about that question...

NKJV | Lk 2:52 *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*

Luke's assessment of Jesus was wisdom and stature and favor with God and men. It's not exactly a recognizable portrait, but it gives us what happened as He grew.

- **Wisdom** here is the Greek word is ***Sophia***, and that means full of intelligence and knowledge in very diverse matters. **Intellectually sharp.**
- **Stature** here is the Greek word ***Haylikeeah***, and describes a young man who grew in height, maturity, and comeliness in appearance. Comeliness in the original language means elegance of figure and graceful physically. In other words, **Jesus gracefully carried Himself.** But it still doesn't answer the question.

So, I ask the question again, **What does Jesus look like?**

**Isaiah 53:2 prophesized about Jesus saying,** NKJV | *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.* So, He was no more than average in looks.

So, here's what we do know, Jesus was in the eyes of those who saw and knew Him a very sharp person who was about average in appearance and carried Himself well. There's not a lot to go on.

Painting after paintings of Jesus we typically see long brown hair, darker skin, dark piercing eyes, physically fit, and a robe and sandals. But that's an artist's rendering. So, the bottom line is that we aren't for sure what He looks like.

**Transition:** But then we come across Paul's words in Ephesians 5...

#### Connecting Us:

NKJV | Eph 5:1 *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*

**Paul tells us that we are to be imitators of Christ.** So, we can't accomplish that by physical appearance with Jesus' robe style or a barbershop haircut or beard length... if He had one. I guess being imitators of God and Christ will have to be connected to behaviors and acting like Him.

**An Example of Acting Like Jesus:** Will Houghton, a preacher who became the president of Moody Bible Institute during the 1940s, played a large role in the conversion of an agnostic who was contemplating suicide. The skeptic was so desperate, but he decided that if he could find a minister who authentically lived his faith he would listen to him. So, he hired a private detective to watch Will Houghton. When the investigator's report came back, it revealed that this preacher's life was above reproach; he was for real. So, the agnostic went to Houghton's church, accepted Christ, and

later sent his daughter to Moody Bible Institute. – (H.V.L. - Our Daily Bread, September 29, From a sermon by Gerald Flury, Past, Present, and Future, 1/1/2010)

**Transition:** What was Paul telling us to do? He is saying... ask the right question. What did Jesus act like? Because His actions will teach how to be an imitator of God.

### God's Take on Walking in Love:

**Another Illustration of an amazing act that inspires us:** Ron Walters, an American Historian and Author tells this story: In the autumn of 1912, presidential hopeful Teddy Roosevelt was in Milwaukee to deliver an important campaign speech. Throngs of well-wishers lined the motorcade route, hoping for a glimpse of the American icon. In his motorcar.

But from out of nowhere, a deranged man stepped to the edge of the car and aimed a pistol at Roosevelt. From point-blank range he fired a single bullet deep into Roosevelt's chest. The blast knocked Roosevelt across the car and into a crumpled heap. Blood was everywhere. Chaos reigned. The police gang-tackled the gunman. All eyes focused on the fallen hero.

They thought to cancel his speech, but the wounded Rough Rider would have none of that. **"You get me to that speech. It may be the last one I ever deliver, and I'm not going to miss it."**

Literally minutes after the shooting, Teddy Roosevelt stood before his audience. And without a microphone, Teddy said, **"Friends, I shall ask you to be as quiet as possible. I have just been shot, and even now the bullet is in me. So, I cannot speak for long, but I will do my best."** His shirt was blood-soaked. But medical attention would have to wait. The message was the priority.

That night his speech was more candid and urgent. It was driven by passion, not politics. It contained no campaign rhetoric, no jockeying for votes, no idle promises. Instead, he spoke with deep resolve to cure the nation's problems, even at the risk of his own. **The truth had to be told. Political correctness took a beating. Winning an election was less important. Declaring his deepest beliefs was the issue.**

**Ninety minutes later**, an exhausted and weak Roosevelt was finished. He had done what he came to do. Slowly he turned to the nearby doctors and said, **"Now, we can go to the hospital."** A thunderous applause erupted and continued until the motorcade was out of sight. It's interesting that audience reactions tend to change when they sense the urgency of a message; they evaluate it differently. Truth is more acceptable. Vision is caught. Passions are stirred. Even Roosevelt's greatest critic, the New York Herald, saluted him in the next day's headline: **"WE'RE AGAINST HIS POLITICS, BUT WE LIKE HIS GRIT."** **A man with a passionate message is a powerful force.**

**Transition:** The same could be said of the Apostle Paul. He endured unbelievable suffering for the sake of getting God's message of salvation to the world. He simply had to preach and teach and write the good news and much of the world has been saved because of God's inspiration on him.

### Our Response:

And it was his letter to the Ephesians that tells us to BE IMITATORS OF GOD. So, let's take a look at what an IMITATOR OF CHRIST LOOKS LIKE...

**What Does an Imitator of God Look Like? Notice the "Therefore" and what it's therefore.** They are those who have laid a strong spiritual foundation...

## 1. Walk worthy of your calling.

- NLT | Eph 4:1 Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, **beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling**, for you have **been called by God**. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 **Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit**, binding yourselves together with peace.
- **Look at the things that make us worthy in our calling...**
  - Be amazed and thankful that the God of this universe **has chosen you** in His great big wonderful story!!
  - **Treat your church family members with admiration and respect.** Be patient with those who find faith a struggle... and help them to find the deeper walk.
  - Seek to forgive people's faults! In fact... make allowance for their faults. That Greek word for **"making allowance"** means to **"hold up and to sustain and to endure."**
  - And to work overtime on keeping the church unifies. Make every effort!!!
- **Illustration:** There can be union without unity: tie two cats together by their tails and throw them over a clothesline. There you will have union, but certainly not unity!

## 2. Get equipped for ministry.

- NLT | Eph 4:11 **Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church:** the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is **to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.**
- **Why are we to get equipped for ministry?**
  - Because God has given us each a gift to be used in the context of the church.
  - In talking to a major church leader in his denomination, the only churches growing today are the serving churches. If we aren't serving... we will soon be declining!!!
  - It is the goal of every church that wants to be an imitator of God to BUILD UP THE CHURCH!!
  - **Life equals growth!**
- **Illustration: Spiritual Gifts are like a 5<sup>th</sup> grade orchestra:** I read an interesting testimonial from a 5<sup>th</sup> grader... When I was in the 5th grade, our entire 5th grade class was required to take band. We didn't really have a choice which instruments we played. The instructor simply assigned us instruments based on what the school had available. I was assigned the saxophone. And that year, the music instructor had one goal, to help us turn squeaks into notes. We would go home with sheet music to practice, and each day we gathered to play. But when the teacher raised his baton and motioned for us to begin it sounded like a car accident. We played different tempos. We played at different volumes. We didn't watch the conductor. And we didn't listen to each other. Each one of us got a certain degree of pleasure out of hearing ourselves play. Only we didn't want to hear the people around me play. I just wanted to hear myself play. And, I thought I was really good. So naturally I thought the people around me should hear me play too. And so, my objective was to play louder than everyone else. And this was the mindset of everyone in the room. **It was a room full of soloists. And it was terrible.**

- **Christians, we are in an orchestra**, you and I together. And each one of us has an instrument that's been given to us. We don't play our own piece, separately from one another for our own personal enjoyment. We play together. And we follow the lead of our conductor... the Holy Spirit. **Let us get equipped for ministry.**

### 3. Put on the new man.

- NLT | Eph 4:17 **With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused...**
- NLT | Eph 4:22 **...throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.**
- **We are not supposed to look like the sinners we once were.** Inside and out... with a different attitude and different thoughts. And that can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit!!
- **We were saved to be transformed on the inside...** a new nature. That makes us imitators of God.

### 4. Don't play church.

- NLT | Eph 4:30 **And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.**
- What does an imitator of God act like? They don't give the Holy Spirit a **"Heavy Heart"** by the way they live. They aren't hypocrites that live double lives. Saint and sinner... depending on the day of the week!!!
- People who play church have forgotten that they were chosen by God. And when they play church... they have no guarantee they will be saved in the end. **Don't play church.**
- **Illustration: PLAYING CHURCH:** Johnny Moore was the lead singer for a Christian band called "His Glory". He tells his story of how he was on his way home one night before he got serious with the Lord. He'd been kind of "playing church." He was on his way home from a Wednesday night prayer meeting, and he was stopped by a policeman. The officer found some pills and cocaine in his car. Johnny tried to tell the officer he was a church member, a Sunday School teacher, and he sang with a gospel group, and that he was just coming from church. None of that mattered; they still put him in jail. That experience was good for Johnny Moore. It woke him up to the fact that all of his playing at Christianity wouldn't matter when he faces the Lord of Heaven someday. **We can't play church.**

### 5. Reinforce your agape factor.

- NKJV | Eph 5:1 **Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**
- **What does it mean to walk in love?** Paul gave us motivating reasons for walking in love... Christ went to the cross and paid the penalty for our sins so that we might be reconciled to God.

- Moreover, Paul wrote to the Romans, “...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
- **Because of what God has done for us in Christ, we are to respond by walking in love.**

**Transition:** Let me close with a story about Dennis Kinlaw..

### **Drawing the Net:**

**Illustration:** Watchman Nee, a Chinese evangelist, tells of a Christian he once knew in China. He was a rice farmer, and his fields lay high on a mountain. Every day he pumped water into his paddies of new rice. And every morning he returned to find that an unbelieving neighbor who lived down the hill had opened the dikes surrounding the Christian’s field to stole the water to fill his own fields.

For a while the Christian rice farmer ignored the injustice, but at last he became desperate. What should he do? His own rice would die if this continued. How long could it go on? The Christians met, prayed, and came up with this solution... love instead of bitterness.

The next day the Christian farmer rose early in the morning and first filled his neighbor’s fields; then he attended to his own. Watchman Nee tells how the neighbor soon after became a Christian, his unbelief overcome by a genuine demonstration of a Christian’s love for others

### **Prayer Challenge:**

- Lord, help us to walk worthy of our calling. Make each of us people of unity over apathy.
- Show us the place where each of us can serve and make the best impact for your kingdom.
- Holy Spirit... Show us where the old man still lives in our lives... and replace him with the new man and a new nature and attitude of love.
- If someone here is playing church... Stop them now. We don’t have the time to waste.
- Fill us with your love so we can pour it out on those around us. Save people because of your love in us.