Do you believe Jesus is still asking you – “do you love Me?” I do. I believe He asks me that every day. Over the last few weeks, we’ve been looking at the idea that, IF we want His peace, His joy, His hope, His forgiveness, His ABUNDANT life more and more active within our lives, we don’t pursue those “things.” We pursue loving Jesus MORE because all of that is found IN Christ, within us!

Jesus was asked “what is the greatest commandment?” His reply seemed simple – “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.” I want us to think about this – has that statement we’ve known, heard and spoke so much for so long, become comfortable and no longer a driving force within our lives? That seems plain enough. Until we realize that THAT is the key to unlocking all these amazing gifts He has already given us! We love Him “more” AND THE RESULT IS his gifts become a very active reality within our lives! Beware – the more you trust and love Jesus, it’s highly likely you will be tested. Not by Jesus, but just by the world. If we want His peace, chances are there’s going to be something come into our lives to challenge that. Hold onto Jesus! If we want to love other’s more, chances are there’s going to be someone come into our lives, someone who will REALLY stretch our understanding of loving others.

And of course, Jesus didn’t stop there. He also said to “love others as yourself.” If we want Jesus more and more alive in “us”, Jesus tells us, THAT’S what we are to want for “others” also.

So Jesus asks – Dennis, do you love me? Yes, Lord, you know I love you.
   Then how is that showing up in your daily life?
Jesus asks – Dennis, do you love me? Lord, you know I love you.
   Good, go and make disciples.
Jesus asks – Dennis, do you love me? Lord, you know I love you.
   Good, encourage one another, strengthen one another, every day.
Jesus asks – Dennis, do you love me? Lord, you know I love you.
   Good, consider other’s needs greater than your own.
Jesus asks – Dennis, do you love me? Lord, you know I love you.
Good, then stop worrying, pray about everything, thank Jesus EVERY day, LIVE in His peace.

Wow! That sounds like a tough road to follow! But look what Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12-13 **Work hard** to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. 13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. As we love HIM more and more and more, He not only gives us the desire to love others more, but He also gives us the POWER to love others more. I don’t know about you, but I am so thankful it doesn’t just depend on me.

We’re on the journey! We’re learning to give up striving for peace, hope, joy, etc., and we’re learning to just love JESUS more each day. And His awesome gifts come alive within us! Now what? Of course the answer to that is – we are commissioned by Jesus to SHARE those gifts with others, to help them understand how THEY can share in these gifts as well. But how do we do that?

Jesus gives us a very clear road map in John 14:6. He tell us that “He is the way, the truth and the life.” Interestingly, every recorded word we have of Jesus’, He spoke in a very specific manner, for a very specific purpose, and a very specific order. In this case, Jesus is telling us – “I am going to show you the way; the way to live, the way to walk through life, the way to unlock His incredible gifts; and as we do that, we will learn the truth, and the ultimate result will be His life within us!”

Jesus explained in John 10:27 that his disciples, His learners, were those who heard His voice, and then followed. The Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are the record of them “following” Jesus. That was the result of them following His “way.” That was the title Jesus gave Himself – the Way. Our life-long journey must be following the Way. There will most likely be times in our lives where we have to renew that commitment to follow Him. That’s what Peter faced in John 21. He had to be reminded how much Jesus loved him, how much Jesus forgave Him, how much Jesus wanted to use him for God’s glory. Then, after Peter acknowledged the forgiveness and confessed His love to Jesus, Jesus told Him, “now, come walk My way, again.”

Jesus’ goal all along was, and still is, to have close, personal “followers” who were/are literally DOERS of His way. The very beginning of the Church was simple; everyone followed Jesus’ way. For many of them, that meant eventual martyrdom. They acted so much LIKE Jesus, there were described by unbelievers as little-Christ-imitators or “Christ-ians.” Believers are actually called little imitations or “mimics” of Jesus Christ. In the Greek language, the word translated to “follow” is mimetes. It literally means “mimics.” Do we resemble Jesus so much that people easily recognize Jesus when they see us?

At times it can be easy to think, all we need to do is beat up people with the truth, with this scripture and that scripture, with this “holy” thought and that “righteous” thought, and eventually we will break them down and they will accept the “way.” And Jesus comes along and says STOP – YOU be still and know that I am God. Then they will see
My truth in you – they will trust you – they will follow Me when you choose to live MY way.

And here’s the GREAT NEWS – Jesus is not just sending us out into this dark and scary world all by ourselves. He’s not pushing us out; He’s not dragging us out kicking and screaming. Thanks to what is called, prevenient grace, we understand HE is already IN the world, waiting for us to come along, living His way, and earning the right to introduce Him to someone who desperately needs Him. You know “that foul-mouthed, drinking, obnoxious, over-bearing neighbor” that drives you crazy? Jesus wants a relationship with Him. Jesus DIED for Him. What are we willing to do about it? That’s why Jesus says “follow Me.” He’s already there! Oh, and if I don’t think God can actually help me live that way, I’m saying I’m convinced God isn’t big enough.

So let’s get down to even finer specifics – how do we LIVE His way? Very simply put, choice. I must choose to love Him, must choose to follow Him, must choose to live His way. But, then what? What specifically do I choose? That’s where it could be good to fall back to a scripture we glanced at a couple weeks ago, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.

1. To live Jesus’ way is to always see the need of someone’s heart.

In Verse 16 Paul says: we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. To live Jesus’ way is to look at others through HIS eyes, not through our anger-filled, resentful, fear-filled, prejudiced eyes. Gays and Lesbians – what was your first thought in reading those words? Yuck? Gag? Revulsion? People covered in tattoos – Sick, gross, ugly, why would someone do something so stupid and ugly? Sorry folks, that’s called prejudice. Think about this – God loves them and He hates a prejudiced heart. Hmmmm. Selah. 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us: 7 The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. Truly we see people differently than He does, and yet that is not to be the end truth. He desires desperately for us to look at others through HIS eyes.

I remember riding my motorcycle one day and coming up to a stop light where there was a rather large, nasty looking bunch of bikers. First thought – Hell’s Angels! Ahhhhh. They were all riding big, noisy Harleys, they all had long hair, scraggly beards, tattoos and piercings covering most of their bodies. They were all wearing leather pants, leather boots and leather sleeveless vests. What was interesting was that on the back of all their vests was a HUGE cross with the words “BIKERS - FOR - JESUS.” I pulled up to them and said, “hey, dude, nice ride. Oh, but I REALLY like your vest!” At which point he replied, “Hey, God bless you brother. Ride safe. Ride for Jesus.” Outside – YIKES! Inside – a tender child of God, or someone who DESPERATELY needs Jesus!

Several weeks ago we had a visitor at Westside – a cross-dresser. His name was Cathy Moon. It would have been VERY easy to discriminate, to judge, to resist, to pull away. And, if we were all honest, that probably was happening a LOT on the inside. But what I saw on the outside was people trying desperately to practice living the “way.” We were polite, we engaged her in conversation, we introduced ourselves without hesitation, we fed her, and we tried to help clothe her. In short, we were being forced to live Jesus’ love
through us because we had so little to give from ourselves. Things like this we CHOOSE
to do by loving Jesus more, not by choosing to just muscle up and do it. That seldom if
ever works. In Philippians 2:13 Paul makes it clear it’s not us, it’s Jesus working
THROUGH us when he says: God is working in you, giving you the desire and the
power to do what pleases him. Living HIS way, loving Him more, loving others
sacrificially is what pleases Him and HE gives us the desire AND the power to do just
that. All we have to do is let Him – and we do that by loving Him!

2. To live Jesus’ way is to truly understand who WE are.
17 ... anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a
new life has begun! Lamentations 3:22 tells us Because of the LORD’s great love we are
not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is
your faithfulness. His mercy, His compassion, His faithfulness that He exhibits towards
us is new EVERY morning! Think about how AWESOME that is! Now think - what
kind of difference is that making in my every day life? God looks at us IN Jesus and no
longer holds our sin against us! To live His way, I must understand, I am no longer the
OLD me – and it is now up to ME to live that way.

3. To live Jesus ways is to understand our “call” from Jesus
IF we are going to pursue loving Jesus more, IF we are going to choose to live life
JESUS’ way, that means we look at people with Jesus’ eyes; we daily understand we are
NEW creations, we’re not the same old grumpy, self-centered person we were before
Jesus; we are now taking up permanent residence, living IN Jesus! And look what He
“calls” us, every single Christian, to be doing - And all of this is a gift from God, who
brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of
reconciling people to him. (2 Cor 5:18). Jesus usually doesn’t just magically “save”
someone, although you will occasionally hear those miracle stories of someone picking
up a Bible, reading it and accepting Christ. But Jesus DOES give each and every one of
us the commission – Go out there and bring people to me. If we’re going to be one of
His soldiers, we have a war against death to fight – not OUR death, but the eternal death
of a friend or relative of ours. And again, this is not difficult. We do it by living HIS
way, by loving HIM more than life itself! And think of this – if we’re not willing to do
this, are we just playing a Christian game? Is Jesus saying “do you love me?” and we’re
saying, “well, sort of,” and He says “follow Me” and we say, “mmmm, how about
later?”

And lastly:
4. To live Jesus’ way is to understand – this is NOT optional.
Jesus says, “follow me,” and we say, “well, you know, what you’re asking me to do is
pretty hard work, and I’m getting pretty old, and I don’t really know anyone who isn’t a
Christian, and I’m not sure I know how to “evangelize” anyone, and this is scary, and I
don’t think I know enough about how to do all this and and and…” And Jesus’ reply is,
“BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD! Now, do I have your attention? Follow
Me. Live MY way! Paul says in 2 Cor 5:20-21 we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is
making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to
God!” 21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, \[e\] so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

THIS IS REAL! This is not imaginary, or something we wish we could achieve but know, most likely, we never will. Jesus tells us YOU are my representative. Period! It is then our choice as to whether we truthfully represent Him or if we just show a cloudy, dim picture of Him to a world who DESPERATELY needs Him! If we are choosing to NOT live this way, we are choosing to disobey Jesus!

Paul understood what it meant to be an ambassador for Jesus, to follow Jesus, to walk the Jesus “way.” He knew HE didn’t have that power, it ONLY came from Jesus! He knew he needed to pray for it and he needed others to pray FOR and WITH him for this power to walk and talk the Jesus way! Eph 6:19-20 pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God’s mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. \[h\] 20 I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God’s ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should. Even Paul had a choice. My question is – is this OUR daily request to Jesus; is this our main prayer request when we ask others to pray for us?

I have come to believe we don't need to know more information on how to love Jesus more, how to LIVE His way, how to walk and talk His way. We need to seriously ask ourselves, why do I choose NOT to love Him more; why do I choose NOT to live His way? And then give that, completely, once and for all, to Him.

Jesus says - Love Me! Jesus says - Follow Me! Jesus says - Live MY way! All we have to do is say “yes Lord”. Will you? Are you?

A New 30-day-challenge: I was struck with a realization this last week. My wife and I tell each other we love each other every day, usually multiple times a day. Every time we see our daughter, our son and his precious wife, our grandkids, we tell them we love them. But when was the last time I prayed a “love prayer” to Jesus, the Living Savior, the Creator of the Universe? We often think we do this when we ask Jesus for something and in the course of the conversation we tell Him we love Him. I want to challenge us with the thought that that is not enough. The challenge: pray, daily, a “love prayer” to Jesus. This is not a prayer thanking Him for the beauty of everything around “us.” That pertains to US. This is not a prayer thanking Him for the salvation He has granted to “us” – that pertains to US. This is not even a prayer thanking Him for loving us, that still pertains to “US” - this is a prayer, simply proclaiming our love to HIM! “Jesus, I love you completely – help me love you more, because it’s all about you!” As Paul would say, “I beg you to do this, for at least the next 30 days, and hopefully it will become such a part of you that you’ll never give it up.”

Take home: Loving Jesus calls for action. Honestly ask yourself this - am I living His way or my way?