Love Like Jesus – Part 2

# Embracing this Moment

# (Matthew 4:18-24)

Welcome to Christ’s Community Church. Today we're continuing our series called “Love Like Jesus” and I want to talk to you today about “Embracing the Moment.” Some of you may have a smart phone with a camera that boasts of having auto focus feature. What that means is that the lens is automatically able to identify and zero in on the subject of the photograph making sure that that object is sharper and clearer than the other objects in the image. It’s amazing that these little cameras in our phones can do this but it’s even more amazing when you live your life this way.

You see, all the things that life brings our way have a tendency to blur our vision and make everything look fuzzy and unclear. But when you know what your priorities are, what matters most, and you live your life committed to doing what matters most, then the most essential elements become clear, sharp, and easy to identify. We’re talking about learning to “Love Like Jesus” and last week we talked about the importance of love, how God gives us the opportunity to know his love in the heat of the moment and how he demonstrated through his death on the cross what love really is. And today, we’ll examine how Jesus was so focused, so purposeful, and how he embraced the moment so that we can discover the power of his intentional love.

I wonder how many of you have ever thought about what your reason for living is? I mean, if someone were to seriously ask you, what would your answer be? Just think about that for a moment and you may discover that you have trouble answering that question. You might even say what you think the answer should be, instead of what you know it is or what your lifestyle reveals to be your true reason for living. And so, when you wake up in the morning, during the day, and as you fall asleep at night, what tends to dominate your thoughts? Most likely the answer to each one of these 3 questions is the same and that would be your reason for living.

If for example, you’re a football coach, you might say you think about winning the championship, a writer may think about finishing their book, a parent might think about how they’re going to care for their children, and others may think about food, financial problems, or their career. But whatever it is that you think about all day long, the object of your auto focus, that is your reason for living.

The important thing to ask yourself is simply, “Is my reason for living a good reason?”

We’ve been talking about how to “Love Like Jesus”, and Jesus knew his reason. He was focused, he had purpose, and I’ll tell you, there’s an easy way to determine if your reason for living is a good reason. Just ask yourself one simple question. Ask yourself, “Is it worth dying for?” That’s a question Jesus considered on the night of his arrest. As he was in the garden praying with his disciples, he said to them,

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38).

Going away from them, going a little farther into the garden, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed,

"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39).

You see, Jesus knew his purpose, he had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). And so, we focus on Jesus, as the Bible says, “we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith,

“Who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Hebrews 12:2).

Jesus embraced the moment and I’d like you to consider in your mind, if your job is worth dying for? Is that pizza worth dying for? Is that relationship or whatever your living for worth dying for?

In the Gospel of Matthew, there’s a story about Jesus taking a walk beside the sea of Galilee. Some of you are familiar with the story as Jesus calls his disciples, causing them to consider their reason for living.

As we look at how Jesus invites the disciples to share in the work of the ministry and in his own life, some of you hearing this message are weighed down by a situation in your life, something you never expected, something really difficult, maybe a sickness or a financial crisis. But today I’m excited to be able to encourage you and tell you about a God who loves you so much that he desires to enter into that moment with you. You see our God is able to save, he is our deliverer, and our provider, and so if you came in here feeling discouraged, worried or anxious, I really believe that as you embrace God’s love, as you embrace him in this moment, that God’s going to turn your situation around.

And so, as we begin, we’re going to look to the Word of God, reading from Matthew chapter 4, beginning at verse 18,

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him (Matthew 4:18-22).

From the context of this Scripture, according to the previous verses, Jesus had already been preaching in the area, and so there’s no reason to think that this was the first time Peter, Andrew, James or John had seen or heard Jesus. They undoubtably knew who he was, they’d heard him speak, but when Jesus said, “Follow me”, that was their moment of decision. That was their chance to seriously consider their reason for living and to make the transition from being mere listeners of the Word to becoming doers of the Word. And this is what Jesus calls all of us to, a life of purpose, a life of fulfillment, a life of accomplishment. The Bible says it this way, “You are God’s workmanship…

“Created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

And so, you were not created to simply drift aimlessly from day to day, but you were created to live with a sense of mission, having focus and determination, knowing that you’re accomplishing something of lasting value. Jesus calls us to embrace his vision, in this moment, right now, and Peter, Andrew, James, and John dropped their nets, embraced the moment and began following Jesus.

Today our reason for living begins with a commitment to follow Jesus, but he doesn’t want us to keep him to ourselves, he expects us to share the good news with others, helping them to make the same life-changing connection with Christ. And so, he wants us to be committed to following him, helping others, and sharing what he’s given to us with the world around us. Jesus gives us a reason for living — to know him and make him known — but his invitation is now, it is in this moment. Following Jesus isn't a matter of fitting him in with all the other activities you pursue, but it's a matter of abandoning everything else and putting him first. And so, number one, following Jesus is about appreciating the moment, wherever you are, whatever you’re going through, and in whatever season you’re in.

## 1. Appreciating the Moment

Peter, Andrew, James, and John left their nets acting on the moment and followed Jesus. They had encountered the living God and Jesus was about to do new things in them and through them, not based upon their past or even what he knows of their future, but according to his loving grace. You see, God’s love is now, his love is present, and that’s where we find Jesus ministering with his disciples as we get back to our story in Matthew chapter 4. The Bible says in verse 23,

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them (Matthew 4:23-24).

You see, this was extraordinary, because Jesus was healing every disease and sickness among the people. Not just the faithful sick people, not just the deserving sick people, but he was healing the demon possessed, the greedy, and the abusive. Jesus was healing sinners with hearts filled with hate, eyes filled with lust, and in these two verses we see an amazing picture of God’s loving grace. In spite of his knowledge, in spite of his wisdom, he’s overcome by compassion lovingly healing people who just might use the very thing that he heals to do bad things.

In fact, the Bible tells us in Luke’s Gospel that one time, 10 men with leprosy met Jesus calling out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” Verse 14 tells us,

“When Jesus saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him…” (Luke 17:14-17).

And so, 10 guys come to Jesus pleading to be healed, being God, he knows that only one of them is going to be thankful, but he healed all ten of them, even the entitled, self-serving, ungrateful majority. He didn’t withhold their healing because the love of God takes mercy to another level. In fact, if you remember last week, we had talked about how Mary and Martha had sent a note to Jesus, but I never finished that story.

The Bible tells us that Jesus read the note and he was in fact compelled to go and minister to Lazarus. He told his disciples,

“Let’s go back to Judea” (John 11:7).

But the problem was that when Jesus read the note, he made plans for the trip, but he didn’t do anything, and actually stayed where he was for two more days. And so, the Bible tells us that by the time Jesus and his disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had died, and there was already “a bad odor” (John 11:39). In other words, everyone had lost hope, at this point there was no possibility of healing Lazarus, what he needed now was a resurrection. Jesus had waited so that number two, by entering into that precise moment, they would know that he had the power over life and death.

## 2. Entering into the Moment

And so, here comes Jesus, John tells us that he’s walking down the road to Bethany when Mary came to meet him. Verse 33 says that when Jesus saw her weeping,

“… he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied” (John 11:33-34).

And then, the shortest and yet most powerful verse in all of Scripture, verse 35 says,

“Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

His silent weeping was not the loud lamentation of the family and neighbors, but it was more like a heart wrenching sobbing coming from the depths of his soul. This Greek word translated “wept” is actually used nowhere else in the New Testament and yet we must wonder why he even wept at all. You know, why was he wasting this emotion, why was he encouraging the drama when he knew that he was going to heal Lazarus?

As a matter of fact, there’s another instance in Scripture where a man’s daughter had died and when Jesus arrived the people were “crying and wailing loudly”, but Jesus doesn’t weep, instead he said to them,

"Why all this commotion and wailing?” (Mark 5:39).

He took her by the hand, and said to her in verse 41,

"Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately the girl stood up and walked around…” (Mark 5:41-42).

It was a miracle, the people were astonished, but why the tears for Lazarus? You know, he had “fallen asleep” too, but Jesus didn’t quiet Mary and Martha, he didn’t ask the people, “Why all this commotion and wailing?” And I believe the difference in this particular situation is that Jesus healing this little girl was an act of God’s mercy to a believing father in the midst a mocking and unbelieving crowd that “laughed at him” (Mark 5:40).

On the other hand, when Jesus joins his friends, he quietly sobs, grieving for Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, in just the same way as he enters into our experiences. In fact, being God in the flesh, having the knowledge of all things, I believe that Jesus actually experiences these things on a much deeper level than we do. The prophet Isaiah tells us Jesus was,

“A man of sorrows and familiar with suffering” (Isaiah 53:3).

And so, we need to recognize that Jesus’ love is always in the present, he’s purposeful at all times, and everything he does is completely intentional and functional. Jesus knows that in a moment Lazarus is going to be healed, the stench will be gone, the grave clothes will be removed, but that doesn’t lessen the pain that Mary and Martha are in, that doesn’t lessen the pain of the crowd, nor does it lessen the disappointment or disillusionment of Lazarus being called back from heaven into this world where he would have to die once again. You see, Jesus had come down from heaven, he knew what Lazarus was leaving behind, and so Jesus enters into that moment of grieving. And verse 36 tells us, those who were there saw in his emotional response the evidence of his love.

“See how he loved him!” (John 11:36).

And so, Jesus wept with Mary and Martha, he takes time to cry and expresses sympathy and love for the pain of humanity, because God’s love is always in the present. But some of the people there said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying? Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. Entering into the moment Jesus said,

"Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days." Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:39-40).

You see, Jesus understands our difficulty grasping the immensity of eternity, and therefore he wants us to know that his love is right now, it’s in this moment, and number three, Jesus is living in this moment

## 3. Living in this Moment

He is here with us, his love is right now, and as our high priest, he enters into our suffering, our difficulty, our loss, and our weaknesses. And so, the Bible tells us,

“They took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me" (John 11:41-42).

“When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go" (John 11:43-44).

Lazarus is alive! God’s love is right now and Lazarus was a living walking testimony that Jesus has power over life and death. That Jesus blesses and heals both the good and the bad, even those ungrateful nine lepers, and he expresses sympathy and comforts us in this moment. In fact, he promised this to his friends before his arrest and crucifixion, he told them,

“I’ll pray the Father, and he’ll give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever” (John 14:16, KJV).

In other words, I’ll never leave you nor forsake you. I’ll give you another Counselor to be with you forever. Jesus tells us that even though he’s risen and exalted to the right hand of God in heaven, his Spirit is here, and he’s with us in this moment. This is such a powerful and important truth, that God is so compassionate, that he’s so loving and sympathetic, and he enters into that moment when we’re in times of grief, because he’s living in this moment.

Many of you know that both of my parents have passed into the glorious presence of Jesus. My dad passed away in September 2013 and my mom four years earlier in April 2009 and through each one of those losses, people would often say, “They’re in a better place” or “You’ll see them again in heaven”. And though I appreciate the sentiment, in that moment, living in that moment, I’m not in heaven. I know I’m going to be and I’m looking forward to it, but I’ve still got a lot of work to do here. And so, my sorrow is not because I’ll never see them again, the grief is very real because I really wish I could see them now.

Jesus understands that we’re living in the moment, that present tense, because he’s God and he’s ever present. He’s with us in this moment and Psalm 103 tells us,

“The Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we’re dust” (Psalms 103:13-14).

And so, God understands our difficulty, like Martha said, “I know he’ll rise again” (John 11:24) and we do, we believe in the resurrection, we have the hope of heaven, we know that we’ll be in eternity together, but we’re living in this moment. And the Bible says, Jesus understands, “he knows how we are formed,” he knows that we’re living by faith and not by sight, and yet the only context for what we’ve experienced is that which we’ve experienced with our five senses. And so, when we experience great tragedy and difficulty, when our loved ones are gone, even though it’s only a season, even though we’re only separated temporarily, the pain is very real, and the pain is very deep. It’s for that reason when Jesus came face-to-face with Mary and Martha that he wept, because he’s in this moment with us, he’s living in this moment.

You see, God’s timing may not be what you’re expecting, but he’ll never waste a moment, he’s living in this moment, and he’ll share your experiences, anything that you have to learn, or that you have to grieve or suffer through, because God’s love never fails. His love is faithful, it’s constant, it’s here and it’s right now. Because his love is present and it’s now, he doesn’t bring up the past, nor will he impose your future on you, but he’ll love you right now, he’ll heal you right now, and he’ll comfort you right now in this moment.

That’s the heart of God and that’s why Jesus invites us in Matthew chapter 11,

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29).

We are invited to come, to enjoy God right now, to embrace this moment, and to rest in this now love that God has for you. And so, I urge you not to get caught up in the worries of what’s going to happen tomorrow, what happened yesterday, but just enjoy today, enjoy God’s love that is present and now. Embrace this moment because we serve the God of today, a God who is with us in this moment, who rejoices with those who rejoice, and mourns with those who mourn (Romans 12:15). Jesus knows what you’re going through right now and says come to me. His invitation still remains today.

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