

Learn to walk the way of Jesus

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Our Savior is Way Lutheran Church

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We are in Ephesians chapter 4. We have begun this turn into a brand new era for Paul. No longer are we focused on exactly who God is, what his purpose is, and what his plan is for us, but now Paul turns to each one of us, and he asks us the question, what are we doing? What is our purpose? What are we called to do?

In this section from verse 1 in chapter 4 through most of chapter 5, we see that what Paul is calling us to do is to walk the way of Jesus. Seven times he talks about a walk. He calls us to follow Jesus, to see who He is, to understand what His plan is, and to follow. Paul reminds us that in this world, there is going to be trouble, just as Jesus did for His disciples. That there is no getting away from the suffering of the brokenness of this world, either in the abstract of the things that are going on around us, or within ourselves. And I have got to say, this week was particularly tough. It seemed like every day when I opened my email, or came into the office, or spoke with people on the phone, that somebody's life was just falling apart.

In so many different ways. Whether it was the loss of ones that they loved, whether it was difficulties with friends and family, whether it was difficulties in their own bodies, and in their minds, the brokenness of this world was, to me, this week, just incredibly apparent. And not just in an abstract way, either. Because it is in the midst of the tears. In the midst of the hurts, and the pain, and in the midst of the way that the people that you know say, Pastor, I do not know what to do. Or when they say, Pastor, I do not know what God has planned in this. Where you realize at once, at least I do, that yes, the world is broken, yes, things are not the way they are supposed to be, but when it comes down to us, when it comes down to living with that, it is really, really hard.

It is really hard. So today, when Paul turns to say, learn how to walk the way of Jesus, do not hear this in such a way that it adds one more thing to your list, one more thing to get done, one more thing to make sure that you check off this week. Instead, hear it as an invitation that is in the midst of

all the brokenness, in the midst of the suffering, in the midst of the uncertainty, in the midst of all the pain, Jesus invites you to see Him. To see that He is the one who brings peace in the midst of all of that. He is the one who helps us understand what joy is, even in the midst of mourning. Jesus invites you to follow Him. So, let's start. Ephesians chapter four, I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. With humility and gentleness, we approach the world, with patience we approach one another, and we bear up another's burdens. This is the way to walk in the manner that is worthy of the calling to which you have been called. And do you remember the calling to which you have been called? It is a calling that is pretty amazing.

Ephesians chapter 2. You have been created as a child of God. Not somebody separated from God, not somebody far away, not somebody who could be, but somebody who is, who's been adopted into the family. You are a child of your Heavenly Father. You have been brought into that relationship by Jesus. You have been saved by Him through what He did. Through only what He did. And through Jesus, you are given a new life. Not something you can earn, not something you can work your way into, not something that, well, maybe one day I will be a good enough Christian to earn God's love, to earn this new life.

That is not it at all. This all happens at once. You are made a child. You are adopted into his family. You are saved by Jesus and given a brand-new life. At our next service, we are going to have the privilege to baptize another pair of siblings. So many baptisms in the last three months. It is incredible. I cannot, most of the time I am preaching up here, and my hands and my wrists are still wet.

It is amazing. This is God's goodness calling to the people in our communities and our neighborhoods through you. Through the waters of baptism, God brings them into this relationship. He declares each of them to be a child. He saves them and gives them a new life, just as He has done for you. This is who you are.

This is who you are. This is different from what the world tells you. They say, well, maybe you could be that one day. Maybe you feel this way. Maybe you could be this person. Maybe you could be a child of God.

Maybe you feel a little bit burdened and guilty. Maybe you should be a child of God. Maybe you should be a Christian.

But you have doubts. You wonder. And I know that with all of the things that are going on in our lives, and all the things that weigh us down, this, this, is one of the core temptations to give in to. That in some way, shape, or form, you might be separated from the love of God. Paul today, and I today, say this to you.

There is no might, there is no could, there is no should. You are loved by God. You are His child. You are saved by Jesus. You have been given a new life, gifted to be used, and to live according to this calling. Knowing that you are this, that you have been declared His own, gives you a certain sense of freedom.

No longer do you have to worry about who you are, because you know who you are. You are loved by God. He was always with you. He has saved you through Jesus. You are this. Now, what do we do? How do we live? How do we navigate this world? This is where Paul really helps us to learn to see our perspective about walking in this world, is learning how to walk the way of Jesus.

Now there are three things that Paul talks about in this section that he wants to help us understand to help us walk. The first thing that he brings up is that he wants you to know that you have a guide through this journey. There is someone here to help you. And he calls you to engage with this guide.

Paul says that the Lord has given you apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. People who traditionally hold different offices within the church, I suppose. Church workers in a sense, in a formal sense. What is their purpose? Did you know that a pastor's purpose is right here? It is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

Do you know who the saints are? It is, it is you. It is you. If you have not heard that before, that is how God views you. You are a saint in Jesus. He calls you this. Paul calls you this. The role of people who are working in a church through this calling is to equip you for the work of God's ministry. So that in all of your relationships, in all the times when people who are experiencing the brokenness of life come to you, you are able to

be humble and patient, to bear their burdens with them, to show them, great love, just as the Lord has shown you this.

To equip the saints is the purpose of what we do, what pastors do, for the building up of the body of Christ, just as Mr. Ray said. It is all about working together and helping more people experience the kingdom of God. The second thing that Paul wants us to know, is that along our way, learning to follow Jesus means getting out of our own way.

This is often the most difficult thing. We have spoken about this quite a bit, about control, and about pride, and about all of these things. What God's Spirit is working in you from the time that you were baptized is to help you follow Jesus, know what God's plan and purpose are for you, and help you walk that way.

But what often stops that? Well, let's be honest. It is us. We do. Our pride, our selfishness, the things that we want, and our plan get in the way of following Jesus. Paul puts this in a couple of ways. The first way is, is, I love this image. He says, put off your old self, which belongs to your former way of life, is corrupt through your deceitful desires, and put on a new one.

Your new self is created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. There is this sense that when you were baptized, the love of Jesus covered you over, and typically a little child who is baptized—what do they wear? What color do they wear? White.

White. It is a symbol of purity. Why? Because that little child is perfect and pure and blameless. Well, no, most of them still cry through their baptisms, it is kind of how it goes. It is to symbolize the purity of Jesus. You see, at that moment, Jesus is being put on them. This new self, this new person, is Jesus.

And all of who He is, in His love, in His care, in His concern, in His, well, in what He won for them on the cross and in the resurrection, is put on them. And they are given these new clothes, this new self. It is created in the image of God in all righteousness and holiness. Put on Jesus. This is Paul's admonition to us. Let go of the old ways. Let go of your own ways and put on Jesus.

So, as we are walking this journey, learning how to follow Jesus, we have some guides. We have some people that we can trust. We have some

people who can show us the way. And then we have this admonition to get out of our own way, to stay on this path. Not to see the squirrels and the things on the side that we used to like to chase after. Oh wait, that is, that is my dog. I do not know if you guys went on a walk yesterday or were outside. Hopefully, you were outside this weekend. It was absolutely gorgeous. But I am pretty sure that my Golden Retriever found all of the squirrels in all of Northern Virginia. I mean, he was just off the trail going everywhere, so excited. Put on your new self. Stay focused. See what we are called to be. Again, Paul gives a lot of examples. If you are flipping through this section in the Bible, he goes into a lot of examples of what we are not supposed to do. For example, let bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and slander be put away.

Be put away. It is a difficult thing. Instead, be kind to one another. Be tender-hearted. Forgive one another, as God and Christ forgave you. Now remember what I said at the beginning. This is not another checklist. This is not another, can I be good enough at doing this? Paul always focuses back, he says, look, be kind, forgive one another.

Remember that the only power that you have to do this is because Jesus has already done it. That God's Spirit is working within you, and will you do it perfectly? No. But when you do not, will you be forgiven? Yes, and there is freedom in that, knowing that you can approach this world and this walk and the brokenness around us knowing that Jesus is with you, that you can see Him.

That you can follow Him, and that you can do what He did. The last thing that Paul reminds us to do here, as we learn to walk the way of Jesus, is to stay close to the leader. Who's the leader? It is not me. It is not your pastors. It is Jesus. Stay close to Jesus. There is this old saying that the rabbis and their disciples used to be said, stay close enough to your rabbi.

That the dust from his feet would get all over you. That you would learn from his dust. Can you imagine being that close? That as you are walking through that dusty path, as the leader kicks up the dust behind them, that it is coating you? Stay close to the leader. It is only in Jesus that we see all of this being put together.

Paul summarizes this at the beginning of chapter 5. Be imitators of God. Again, is this a checklist? Is this like, here's all the things that God is, I got to make sure that I am really, kind of, making sure that I get to at least

90 percent every day? That is, that is not it. Let that go. Be imitators of God. In all the ways that God has shown you who He is, imitate them.

Be close to Him. Know Him so that you can show who He is to the world. As beloved children, wait, as beloved children, as beloved children who might be beloved children, or are you beloved children? You are. He takes this for granted, that you are God's children. So, he says, then walk in love. Make love the focus of who you are, of what you are doing, because that was the focus of your leader.

As Christ has loved us and gave himself up for us, love the people around you. That means sacrificing yourself. That means being willing to serve. That means Overlooking certain things in order to be tender-hearted and kind. I did not say this was going to be easy. But it is good. But it is good. As we stay close to our leader and see who Jesus is, we learn to walk in his ways and not our own.

More often than not, we start to give up our own way and get out of our way. And knowing that we do this never alone, but together, we have guides who help us, who help us show us the way. So, Paul has turned now to focus you all on following Jesus. How can you do this? Well, engage with your guides. Get out of your own way and stay close to Jesus.

Stay close to Jesus. When we do this, what Paul says is that, yes, there is darkness. And at one time you were a part of it, but now you might be, could be, should be. No, you are light in the Lord. So, walk as children of light. I do not know what's going to come your way this week. I don't know what's going to come my way this week.

I do not know what's going to happen. Only the Lord does. But what he calls us to do is stay close to Jesus. To see who He is and respond to all of the things that happened this week with great love. Be kind to one another, be tenderhearted, be compassionate, be the one who can respond and bear up others' burdens with love, and in so doing, you are doing what Jesus has done for you.

When we do this, as children of the Lord, we show people who Jesus is. We help them stay close to their leader. And see that God's kingdom is the kingdom in which we live.

Let's close in prayer. *Heavenly Father, we thank you for leading us through this incredible letter. Lord, as Paul switched gears and, and*

encouraged us to live this life as children of yours, we pray, Lord, that you would allow us to see that path.

Allow us to stay focused on Jesus this week, to stay close to him. Allow us to get out of our own way and the, and things that we know that tempt us and the things that we struggle with. Lord, allow us to trust in you in those things. When we fail, remind us, as we stay close to Jesus, that there is forgiveness.

Let that free us to continue on, to follow. And Lord, allow us to trust those around us who know your way better than we do. Allow us to trust their mentoring of us. Allow us to trust their wisdom. In all of this, Lord, we pray that you would build us up together as your body right here in this place so that more and more people will begin their walk with you.

We pray it all in Jesus' name. Amen.