



Lutheran Church of the Master, 4800 Ramsey Road, Coeur d'Alene, Idaho
Pastor Neal Buckaloo
Sunday, September 26, 2010
"Make It Simple: Following Jesus"

What are you contending with in your life – the demons, the conundrums, the challenges, the mysteries?

Is there a particular issue – a school course that has you baffled; a situation at work that never seems to find a solution or resolution; a family or close relationship that is deteriorating and you do not know what to do; a teacher or supervisor with whom you regularly are at odds. It could be the simple ongoing-ness of demands and obligations. We become over scheduled and overwhelmed. No exit exists. We feel blocked, tired, confused, do not know where to turn.

When any of us reach that point, it is difficult to hear and receive advice. No one really understands; knows what is going on inside of us. Make it simple. When the things of life become too complicated, we each need to simplify. Number one, if you are there, you need to find someone you can talk to – a counselor, a pastor, a trusted friend, who does not give too much advice, but listens carefully and deeply. You need to talk. Number two, for all of your daily tasks, take one step at a time. Focus on that next step only. Celebrate completing that step. Then prepare to tackle the next step. And begin with one task that you can complete in an hour or less. Number three, follow Jesus. The Message by Eugene Peterson, [Matthew 11] Jesus said ²⁸ "Are you tired? Worn out? . . . Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. ²⁹ Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of (God's) grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. ³⁰ Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." ¹

How will following Jesus help?

If you are doing number one, talking to someone and number two, taking one step at a time, do you need to follow Jesus? While you are feeling desperate about the issues that surround you and overwhelm you, they are not the fundamental issue, believe it or not. What underlines it all is a SPIRITUAL issue. Your life has become distorted; your perceptions of who you are have become overwhelmed by the issues inundating you. You are disconnected from who and what God created you to be in the first place. The stuff of life has blotted out your primary place before God. You may still pray; go

¹ [Matthew 11] ²⁸ "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

through the motions of your devotional life; believe; but the relationship has become masked. You have forgotten that JESUS is the savior who died for the sins of the world – and you do not need to nor are you called to do so. Instead, you are called to follow Jesus.

At such a desperate point in your life it is difficult to hear these words of Jesus.

[Matthew 6] ³⁰ "If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? ³¹ What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with *getting*, so you can respond to God's *giving*. ³² People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. ³³ Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met. ³⁴ "Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes."

Jesus does carry us – spiritually and sometimes physically. Jesus frees us to be who we are. And in him we are freed to be a gift to others. And in being a gift to others we find deep satisfaction, contentment, and meaning. But that freedom in Christ is lost when we are overwhelmed and are withdrawn into survival mode.

[John 10] ⁷ [Jesus said,] ⁹ "I am the Gate. Anyone who goes through me will be cared for—will freely go in and out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ . . . I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. ¹¹ "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep before himself, sacrifices himself if necessary. . . ¹⁴ "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. ²

So find yourself, your true self in Jesus Christ. Attend to your spiritual life. Move one step at a time to be freed in Jesus Christ to be a gift to others. You will find real joy and deep satisfaction – not so much in yourself, but in God and God's love for you and the world. As the 33 verse from The Message proclaims, ³³ "Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions."

W hat does following Jesus mean?

It means keeping your eyes on Jesus, who he is, what he promises, and you will see where he leads.

² [John 10] Jesus said, ⁹ "I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. "

What do you see when you look through your eyes? Do you see overwhelming issues (and those are out there!) or do you see a world redeemed in Jesus Christ. The sad thing is the world as we know it does not know, see, nor understand that it and its people are redeemed in Jesus Christ. But you have the message. You have the hope. You have the promise.

Following Jesus means keeping the regular rhythms of worship. Annually or more often visiting the manger in Bethlehem, the ministry of Jesus, the call of his disciples. It means walking the road with him to Jerusalem and his destiny there. It means entering Holy Week with reverence and reflection. It means standing beneath the cross of Jesus, one of a crowd of sinners, looking up into the eyes of a savior dying for the sins of the world. It means hearing the excited message of Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome as they return from the empty tomb on Easter morning. It means day by day trusting Jesus. Trusting the hope, the promise and the life journey you are making in Jesus Christ.

Yes, can you make it simple? By following Jesus?

Amen.