

Jesus our Lifestyle

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Preacher: Rev. Clive Jennings

[0 : 00] We're just going to put up the question again that we asked right at the beginning. Jesus is, what would you say? Something as we respond to, as people ask us the question about who Jesus is, says something, must say something about our lifestyle. Our lifestyle that we live every day, 24-7, as Christians. I love the 1960s Disney version of Mary Poppins, the one with Julie Andrews, and I think it started, I just loved the film, and I loved the bit where she produces, she meets the two children and produces a tape measure, and she says, if you remember, Michael, extremely stubborn and superstitious, sorry, suspicious. Jane, rather inclined to be giggly and not put things away. Michael then asks, what about you? She measures herself and she said,

Mary Poppins, practically perfect in every way. What would that tape measure say about us if we measured ourselves in a Jesus culture and our lifestyle? Or more importantly, what is Jesus saying to us about our lifestyle as followers of him?

Although never perfect, we are confident, and we should be confident as Christians together, living a life worthy of that calling as disciples of Jesus. And as our home group notes say for this week, if you're in a home group, a Christian lifestyle reflects the victory that Christ has already won on the cross on our behalf. There is no aspect of our personal family and community life and relationships that won't be changed by engaging with a Christian lifestyle. Amen. There is nothing that won't be changed by living a Christian lifestyle. Is that true for our discipleship?

As people often say, it's about doing life with Jesus. And you only get to know somebody by doing life with them. Believe you me, Mandy's been married to me for 40 years next year. She will definitely tell you about doing life with me. We need to know Jesus well. We do life 24-7. Paul, in verse 2 of this morning's readings, encourages us to have confidence in the saving work of Jesus. And because of that, we raise our sights higher, higher and higher. We are in a relationship and we expect more on both sides. We come with an expectation of all that Jesus has done and will do for us. Some people struggle with the word discipleship. Maybe I can understand that. Perhaps a better word is apprenticeship. And doing an apprenticeship, you watch, you learn, you learn and you grow from the craftsperson that is teaching you day by day, mentoring you. In the Anglican Ordinal, it speaks of stirring up the gifts. A good mentor, a good person who leads you in apprenticeship, stirs up the gifts that are in you, sees the potential and wants to get that from you. That is Jesus. That is our lifestyle. That is what we do. And in order to be an apprentice, there are things that we need to learn and do, gifts and skills, and that will become second nature.

Some of them will be new. And that's the beauty and excitement of apprenticeship. There are also things that are unhelpful because things that is Paul has told us need to be put to death. Now that sounds quite dramatic, doesn't it, needs to be put to death. But you notice he didn't say, put to one side. He didn't say, oh, put it on the back burner. He didn't say, put it off until another day. Put those things to death. Paul is deliberate in saying something about our nature and our character that gets in the way of the fullness of that relationship with him and living that lifestyle.

[4 : 38] And things that are tending to squash our confidence. And he lists them. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil, desires, greed, which is idolatry.

Last week, it's good advice if we're living the lifestyle. Because if you were here last week, our next slide, you will realize that those things, that if Jesus is my lifestyle, it brings freedom.

Freedom from that thing that we can get caught up in, which is deceptive ideas that lead to disordered desires in the flesh, desires in the flesh, desires in the flesh, that are normalized in a sinful society in the world. And there are those things that we look at, that are deceptive ideas that we all know.

There may be addictions that people have in various degrees that we have. So, you know, gambling, pornography, no major things, but the other things in life that get in the way that are deceptive ideas that are fed to us, that lead to disorders, desires in the flesh, that are normalized, that sadly are so normalized in our society. And again, Paul says that because of these things, that the wrath of God is coming. Jesus died for our sins, but that doesn't mean we have to keep committing those sins. He steps in and assists us in our lifestyle with each other, to help each other to have that freedom that only he can bring.

I sense that the sinful world, that's fine, thanks, I see that the sinful world, I feel sometimes is stealing some very rich words from us. One of those words is seeking to normalize what we do in a sinful society. And that word is tolerance. Brothers and sisters, I know we are encouraged to be tolerant, whatever that word truly means these days, because it seems to me that it's become highly weighted towards turning a blind eye to sin, that which is wrong in the world. And when do we challenge, what does tolerance, when does tolerance get in the way of a Jesus lifestyle?

[7:16] So where do we have confidence to challenge that? Rather than to turn a blind eye, to put it on the back, where do we challenge those deceptive ideas that lead others into disordered desires that then becomes normalized in a society that we are encouraged to tolerate? And if we challenge them, then often we are accused of being intolerant, because we have named it as the truth. Living a Jesus lifestyle isn't easy, but we are given tools. We are given great tools. And on this Bible Sunday, we are given a fantastic tool.

The tool that Jesus gave us, the disciples, the apprentices of the day, knew because they recorded it. They recorded it for us. They gave it to us. It's the manual. It's where we turn to again and again to set our compass right to live in a Jesus lifestyle. And the apprentices, the disciples on the day of Pentecost, were given tools to use life in the power of the Spirit to live a Jesus lifestyle.

Just like Jesus had been demonstrating to them, things like healing the sick, touching lepers, feeding the poor, caring, calling people to follow him, showing love, extraordinary love in different ways.

This is the Jesus lifestyle. This is what they were learning. And if you're an apprentice, the job your teacher is to do is to introduce you to the tools to use. And on the day of Pentecost, what fun, because he gave us, he gave his disciple the power tools. Imagine that. You know, you're an apprentice and you've been longing, you've been watching, and you're thinking, I've been using this, but now I get to plug in and use the power tools that's been given me in order to live a Jesus lifestyle. Having said that, make sure you read the manual before you use the power tools.

If you're anything like me, I won't ask for hands up. I just like to get the box open and get on and do it. Never mind. And then I'll go back to the manual when Mandy tells me, are you sure that's supposed to go like that? Read the manual. Everything is in the manual about how we use and how Jesus used the power tools, how we can use them, and that helps us to live this Christian lifestyle. It's Bible Sunday. We read about Jesus's lifestyle in the Bible, how he lived, how he worked, how he forgave, how he shared, how he blessed. And it even says about what we should wear. You know, it's all in here. Fashion yourself like Jesus, Paul says. As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. People may even comment on what you're wearing. You know, it's often not the words. It's the way we live our lifestyle that people see where we are coming from and who we belong to. I don't know whether, like me, you've been ever asked at work, oh, what did you do on Sunday? And you think, hmm, I went to church. And then we sort of justify sometimes, sadly, why we went to church. Church is a lovely group of people. It's really nice to go to, and we do this. Maybe we step back from that, and we say, what did you do on Sunday?

[11 : 17] I went to Sunday because Jesus, I follow Jesus, and Jesus is. And that's what leads me to go to church, and to be with my fellow Christians, and to be encouraged, and to bear with one another, and to forgive one another, as Paul encourages us. And the lifestyle guidance goes on. If any of you has a grievance against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you, you know, the church isn't immune from being fractured through grievances, and we need to go back to the manual, back to the manual, back to the Jesus lifestyle, and forgive each other as the Lord forgave us. And over all these virtues, it says, put on love, because people like that. People recognize love and care, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Believe me, life coaches will take thousands and thousands of pounds from you, I promise you, just to do exactly what the Bible tells us to do in a Jesus lifestyle.

I had a guy that I was alongside for some time, and following a funeral of a person very close to him. We spent weeks just talking, just meeting together. And I think it was about six weeks later, he said, when are you going to send me the invoice? I said, what do you mean an invoice? He said, well, you don't get the invoice for all the time you've spent. And I said, no, we don't do that. This is just Jesus. This is a lifestyle. This is what we do. And he said, I think I need to get some money back from my life coach, he said, because he's rubbish and you're good.

Paul preceded this, where he talked about our lifestyle, of the things that have to die and the new lifestyle that has to take in us. He said, you used to walk in these ways, the life you once lived. I can certainly put my hand up to that, a life that you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of such things like anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off your own self with its practices and you have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge and image of its creator. Our life reflects Jesus. That's what people will notice.

If asked about the one who we follow, what would you say? Jesus is.

As you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs of the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts, Jesus is.

[14 : 35] There was a worship song by Delirious that used the line, I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the one I love. Jesus is.

When Jesus is mentioned, we aren't ashamed about our lifestyle, about following him, of sharing the good news about his life, death and resurrection. Our lifestyle means that often we don't have to say anything because we show it already with the way we've clothed it in our generosity and our sharing.

And people say, why do you do this? You say, because Jesus is my lifestyle. Jesus is my saviour. Jesus calls me to do this.

Jesus asks me because I'm in relationship and I want to do that. Jesus is my everything. Jesus is my all in all. It will be amazing the conversations that follows from that.

Our lifestyle means that we don't have to say anything because it is about the way we behave. Back in Victorian times, you may remember that. My children think I still live in a Victorian age.

[15 : 44] But as an apprentice, you reflected your employer. And shop girls and shop boys were expected to ask with propriety and act in propriety and woe betide the apprentice who didn't meet the high standards expected by their employer.

We should be the same. We want to reflect what King Jesus does for each and every one of us and for the world that he came to save. Our culture is obsessed with lifestyle.

I don't know whether you buy those magazines. Websites tell us what to wear, how to get fit, how to drive, how to make love. Everyone wants to tell us how to live our lives.

The manual is here. Jesus is our lifestyle. Jesus didn't leave us with a lifestyle magazine. He gave himself and sent the Holy Spirit and his scripture for us.

He showed us how that we are God's chosen people. How to deal with anger. How to deal with money. What to do when we're faced with difficult people.

[16 : 51] How to have simple, memorable and profound words that we need at the time and the power of the Holy Spirit. Reaching into scripture to give people the truth.

And as relevant and as challenging as that was today, as it was then, it is as real as it is today. Nothing changes for the apprentice.

It's the lifestyle Jesus calls us to live, to give us confidence. That's why we pray in Jesus' name. Do you want to live like Jesus? Amen, says people.

We want to live like Jesus. Do you want to live a transformed life in relationship with God as your Father, Christ as your brother, the Holy Spirit, as our constant help and comforter 24-7?

Do you want your Christian faith to not just be part of your life, but to be your life? If you're like me, you are probably saying yes, yes and yes.

[17 : 59] But we all know our frailty. If you're like me, as you've said those, I want all those things while at the same time remembering how often I've started down that road full of enthusiasm, full of passion, full of vision, only to stumble and falter.

Maybe you've been disappointed by so many false starts towards living a truly transformed Christian life that you're beginning to think it isn't even possible.

Maybe the people that we spend time with think it isn't even possible because life has stepped in. The encouragement we have is Jesus, not only because I say so, but God says so, that the key isn't some hidden formula, secret knowledge or mystical experience only available to some truly spiritual people, whoever they may be.

It's for everyone who puts their trust in Jesus. Everyone who puts their trust in Jesus, no matter where we are. The encouragement today and the encouragement for us all and the confidence we have is Paul said to the Roman church, be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may approve what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

You see, living Jesus' lifestyle means approving of what God approves of, wanting what God wants, calling good what God calls good.

[19 : 41] and being strong enough to stand when it isn't. I think it was Francis Schaeffer that said, sadly, people do do what they think.

We don't. We do as Jesus wants us to do because we live in that lifestyle. Give thanks that we are an apprenticeship course together. We're all at different stages.

Nobody says that there's an ultimate God. We are all apprentices. We are all learning. We are all learning and sharing and traveling together. There is no gold medal only on that great day when we meet the Lord.

And as Paul says, When people ask you about why you are a follower of Jesus after today, you will say, well, Jesus is.

Why do you go to church? Maybe you say, I go to church because I'm a follower of Jesus. And Jesus is.

[20 : 59] People be encouraged in our apprenticeship together. As we not only on this Bible Sunday, reach deep into God's word, but reach deep into Jesus and do life with him so that our church, our lives, our workplace, our homes may reflect a Jesus lifestyle and all we do.

Amen. Amen.