

Imitate the true behaviour and actions of Jesus

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Date: 25 May 2025

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, everyone. Hiya. When we were at Pete Warrig this weekend, we all wore slippers because you couldn't wear! outdoor shoes in the building. And John made the good point that it was like doing life! together, even to the point of wearing slippers. I was going to wear my slippers tonight, but I didn't. But it would have been a very special thing. Can we have the first slide up, please? What a great weekend we had. Okay. As you will know, anything that's in capital letters is what you say, and I'll say the rest. Let's whip through these.

So, John 14, verse 6 to 9 says that Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. That couldn't be more clearer, could it? He then said, if you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. Philip said, Lord, show us the Father. And that will be enough for us. Jesus answered, don't you know me, Philip? Even after I've been among you such a long time, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father? What an incredible couple of verses there. Absolutely amazing. Can we have the next slide up, please? And bear in mind, when the disciples heard Jesus say this, they would have been stunned. And if for no other reason, the fact that he said, I am the way to God, I am the truth, and I am life and can give it you in all its fullness. In effect, that's what he'd said. Now, just hang on to that thought. I read a wonderful story about a guy called Congressman Harry Reid, obviously in America. And he asked the genealogist to search back through his family tree to find out for information about their great, great uncle Remus

Reid. Some of you may have heard this story, but I just love it. They managed to locate a photograph of great, great uncle Remus and found inscribed on the back, Remus Reid, horse thief, sent to Montana territorial prison in 1885, escaped in 1887, and robbed the Montana flyer train six times, was caught by the Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889. But not wishing to bring discredit upon the congressman's family, the genealogist included a report as follows. Remus Reid was a famous cowboy cowboy in the Montana Territory. His business empire grew to include acquisitions of valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with the Montana Railroad. Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to government service, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887, he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton detective agency. In 1889, Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honor when the platform he was standing upon somehow collapsed. Now this fake report was brought about to keep someone's reputation good in the eyes of the world. But would it have really mattered if they'd known the truth? I don't know how many times you've watched, would, um, who do you think you are?

Some of those are good and some are a bit, uh, whoo! Anyway, but in this world we are surrounded, are we not, by fake imitations of the truth. My eyes were opened to this recently when some, uh, folk who came for dinner talked about how easy it was to use AI to do anything you want and it would do it in one or two seconds, even write a sermon. And while we were there they actually did that to prove it. I didn't do that, I promise you. Now we are surrounded by fake imitations but Jesus said, I am the truth. And the trouble is with that, whenever we speak about Jesus and the word of God being the truth, the world at large, and we did at one time, would think, ah, but is he really the truth?

[5 : 02] Well, I declare to you tonight that the word of God is truth. And I declare to you tonight that when Jesus said, I am the truth, he was telling the truth. And it's the truth of God that will set us free.

But yet more to this, we are called as Christians to imitate the true behavior and actions of Jesus. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1 says, Be imitators of me as I am of Christ. This is Paul speaking to the church. Be imitators of Christ. Now that's a big deal, is it not? Because we have to be people of truth who tell the truth rather than try to be something Jesus wasn't.

We have to be someone who copies the behavior and actions of Jesus. Because if we do that, it will make an impression and affect the community at large, which is the whole purpose of this church, to honor God, but make him known. Ephesians 4.22, I'm so glad to say that when we become Christians, God takes off our old nature. The person we were is gone, and we are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

And we're told in Ephesians 4.24, to put on the new self, your new nature created to be like God, truly righteous and holy. Now that sounds impossible, but it isn't, because it's the truth of God. And it's not by our own abilities that we would achieve this, but by God doing it through us. And our new nature desires to please God. It wants to please God in every way possible. And it gives a desire and ability to imitate God, to imitate Christ. So let's look very briefly at what Jesus was in the world when he was on this earth and wants us to be. See, Jesus was different in every possible way. In fact, I will tell you that when I wasn't a Christian living my life a way I shouldn't have done, but then came to be told about God loving me and that Jesus died for me. I had a perception in my mind, a mind's eye view of what Jesus was like. And once I read the Bible or began to read the Bible with people's help and listened to other people speak of him, I found he was different in every single way that I thought he was. You understand what I mean by that? We cannot truly comprehend, can we, the impact his life made on everyone who encountered him? Especially on the cross of Calvary. Can you imagine having that incredible opportunity as he was walking through the land, coming to your village or town and you're blind or you're facing a terrible illness or whatever it was and you could go up where he was because you'd heard people speak of him and say, Jesus, please heal me. Jesus, please save me. Jesus, please forgive me. Everything about Jesus was different in every way possible and as I said, particularly on the cross of Calvary. Don't forget when Jesus was dying on the cross, there were other people who deserved to die that day. And the way they died compared to the way Jesus died was completely different.

In fact, consider this. All of the soldiers, all of the criminals, all of the faint people watching on, everybody looking on would have had an expectation of what would happen that day and Jesus did it all totally different to what they expected. And imagine being one of the soldiers. These guys live for bloodlust. It was horrific the life they led. They would have killed endless people in the most barbaric way possible. And they lived in a world of terror and bloodlust. And they saw Jesus on the cross and they jeered and cursed at him. Now, that doesn't sound like the worst possible thing, does it? But he'd been beaten, as we know. He'd been stripped. He'd been humiliated, if it was possible, in an earthly way.

[9 : 49] And then they mocked him and dressed him as a king, rammed a crown of thorns on his head and all the criminals would curse the soldiers. Yet Jesus saw the soldiers in the midst of the same agony and said, Father, forgive them. Next slide, please. Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing.

See, Jesus was dying in a completely different way to everybody else. But please be totally aware that when he died on that cross, he didn't die physically the same as them because he died in a different way as well. In that, he bore our sin in himself, the Bible says.

He took upon your sin and my sin on himself and then paid the debt, which was the agony of all agonies on that cross because that sin separated him from his father. And he cried out, Father, Father, why have you forsaken me? That was the separation moment. And the Bible says your sin and my sin, however insignificant you might think it is, or however incredibly enormous and overwhelming it is, separates us from God. And that's why Christ had to die so that we could be set free.

Father, forgive them. Not the thing that anybody expected Jesus to do. But Jesus didn't do anything else the same way either. Jesus lived differently in every aspect of his life on earth and consequently, so should we. And then the gospel will have a greater effect on the broken world, just as we were broken and we're not perfect, but we want to reach out that they may know the same.

Jesus had tremendous compassion. And if you're wondering why on my slides there's a picture of a motorcycle, it's because our passion, a number of us in this church, is to reach out to the motorcycle community so they can know God loves them. But Jesus had compassion and his compassion made him go to people to do miraculous things or simply to lift them up in their agony and their broken heartedness. And his compassion made an incredible impact and changed people's lives.

[12 : 10] His mercy was not treating people as they deserved, but pouring out grace, undeserved favor into their lives. His provision was meeting people's needs, not only physically, emotionally or spiritually, but also from the point of simply he looked upon a crowd on the hillside and he had compassion over them.

The Bible says, and they were hungry. And it was wonderful at that moment because Jesus, with all this provision that he had, said to his disciples, you feed them.

You can almost see a wry smile on his face when he said it, because then they came back and said, how are we going to do that? We can't possibly do. And Jesus was saying, of course you can't, but I can. And I'm asking you to feed them and I'm going to provide the provision that they need.

And it's going to be just a little kid's packed lunch and it won't run out. It will keep going and keep going. Oh, and it's going to be over and above anything they ever could imagine. They could eat that day. We ate a lot at Pete Rigg, but oh man, we didn't have as many leftovers as on this occasion. Eleven baskets left over.

But also Jesus' purpose. He came to save sinners. And there is no one in this world other than him that has not been a sinner that needs Christ as Savior.

[13 : 36] And his effect upon those who were even near him was huge. And people said when, or the disciples said, when Jesus was in the storm and he was not snoring, he was sleeping in the front of the boat, the boat banging around, water everywhere, everybody on the boat except him thinks they're going to die.

And then he stands up and says, stop. Stop. Didn't need to scream at the storm. He just said, stop. Be still. And whatever circumstance you're in today, Jesus will say, stop. Be still.

Be still. To the point where the disciples, when it went all suddenly still, said, who is this man? He cared for people.

He challenged the hypocrites, and that's care, going, you know, exponentially further than most people would ever imagine. He challenged the hypocrites who were actually the religious leaders of the time.

But he also cared and protected a woman caught in adultery who deserved to be stoned. And he called out all the people who would stone her. And ultimately, because they knew their sin as well, they dropped the stones and walked away.

[14 : 55] Jesus didn't leave her in her sin. He said, go and sin no more. Because he cared so much for her. And he came with a certain heart. He came to do his father's will.

He came. He said, I've come not to be served, but to serve. To do everything. Everything he said and did, he did because his father told him to do it.

And he had hope and gave us hope. He gave us purpose. He said to the fishermen, don't fish anymore. Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

And that's going to be so much more exciting than just catching fish. Because you're going to see lives transformed. His truth, as I said, was truth.

And the truth set people free. There are many people in this world who will take a verse of scripture and twist it to make it whatever they want it to be.

[15 : 50] And beware of that. Just check it out for what the Bible says. Don't believe the junk that's out there. His tears were real.

Did anybody ever expect the Savior of the world to shed tears? He had emotion just like we do. His heart was sympathetic, empathetic and sincere in everything he did.

He embraced the outcast, even the leper. He went to those who were far away. And he told them that the gospel was for them.

And God loved them as well. Yet the Pharisees had told them that it was because of their sin that they were suffering in the way they were. And Jesus set them free. His heart was for all to be saved.

There is one God, the Bible says, and one mediator. There is nobody else by which man can be saved. Who can reconcile God and humanity, only Christ Jesus.

[17 : 00] His forgiveness set people free. Have you been freed from your sin? Oh man, the day God forgave my sin when I cried out to him.

And I was just beyond myself. And I've never forgotten that day. And when I mess up, screw up, or whatever I do wrong, I come back to God straight away and say, God, forgive me again.

Forgive me again. He knows I'm not going to be perfect this side of heaven. But thankfully, he says, if we ask him to forgive us, he'll be faithful and forgive us every time. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone.

And his challenge left no one in two minds. That's why it was true. You cannot speak truth into somebody's mind talking about the salvation and the loss.

To those who are saved, those who aren't. There are two pathways in that regard. And the two do not end up at the same location. There is heaven and hell. And Nicodemus was challenged by Jesus.

[18 : 05] He was a religious leader. And he came to Jesus. And Jesus said, what you need to do is be born again. Born not of man and woman, but born of the Spirit.

That the Holy Spirit would live inside us. And very quickly to finish, somebody called Cleopas was walking with his friend on a road at one time after Jesus had been crucified.

And he, in many respects in the Bible, was a nobody because we don't know anything about him really. But we do know his name. And he's just known in history because of that. He wasn't a leader, but he was walking with his friend.

And then suddenly, Jesus walked alongside them. And we've said many times this weekend that we want to walk alongside people who come to church to be part of this family.

And if it's the first time you've been here, there's a whole lot more to the church than the folks who are here tonight. But Jesus walked alongside them and said, in effect, trust me, because I have come to save.

[19 : 09] And you know, a member of the persecuted church. This is the church in countries where it is, you would face the death penalty if you told anybody that you were a Christian.

Horrendous experiences that the persecuted church have. And I've personally, in San Diego, and also we've personally experienced what it's like for them. But a member of the persecuted church, recently in the 21st century, said he would rather die than deny the name of Jesus.

Though those who were confronting him, threatening him, simply beheaded him. And he wanted nothing else because he held on to his living hope. That's what God offers to you tonight, you and I today.

And that day, that persecuted church member entered paradise and saw Jesus face to face. Because life on this earth is not the end. And incidentally, this isn't the stance that should be taken by just pastors like John and leaders of churches, but you and me.

We are all to live as imitators of Christ if you're a follower of Jesus today. And the last slide, please. Luke 24 indicates that the women told the disciples the grave was empty.

[20 : 23] So they all ran to see for themselves. It's interesting, the men didn't believe the women. But they raced down there to see if it was true. And when it was true, they proclaimed that the Savior Jesus had risen from the dead.

But even to this day, some don't believe the tomb was empty. Some people don't believe that Christ went to the cross and died and rose again. But there is a lot of evidence of that. If you're unsure about it, ask John or any of us and we'd be happy to share that.

But for us, it is imperative that we tell people what we believe. And it is the truth. Now, in the motorcycle world, we wear quite a lot of badges as Christians, certainly on our clothing, because some of those things that are written on them can really affect bikers if they don't know Christ.

But I think a tremendous big banner I would love to see outside this church, and I'm not forcing that upon anybody, is we believe. In as big letters as possible.

Because I believe that if we say we believe to people more often, they will say, what do you believe? And I think that will be a great conversion starter.

[21 : 45] Not a conversation starter, but a conversion starter. Because we believe that Christ came, died, rose again, and is the Savior of the world.

And if it wasn't for that, this church should not exist. If we imitate the behavior and actions of Jesus, people will see that difference. We are not to get in the way of it.

We are to proclaim Christ so that they can be drawn to the Savior. And to finish, Ephesians 5, 1-2 says, follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children, and walk in the way of love.

Isn't that who God, who Jesus was? Just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.