

Choose the Jesus Way

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 September 2024

Preacher: Sam Bunnell

[0 : 0 0] Are you in service so far this morning? Amen. I have too. I'm grateful to see all of you who were able to join us in person here this morning, as well as I want to welcome you, those who are joining online, and thank you for participating.

We know many watch every Sunday who can't be here in person. Would you take the Word of God with me and turn to the book of Luke, chapter 9? We'll read verse 23 together.

Luke, chapter 9, and verse 23. Have you ever heard somebody say, what would Jesus do?

You ever had a little WWJD bracelet? Yeah? Seen something like that? That was a fad for a while. And it was really based on a book by Charles Sheldon called In His Steps.

And it was interesting that many, many years ago, back in the 1800s, through the ministry of William Booth and the Salvation Army, there really became a groundswell of people who were commonly asking themselves and each other the question, what would Jesus do?

[1 : 1 0] We need to be more like Jesus. Well, last Sunday morning and then again in the evening, our choir sang a song called The Jesus Way.

How many of y'all were here for that? How many of y'all, that song blessed you? Me too. That's a song that's been around just a couple of years now, and it is a powerful song.

It says, I choose the Jesus Way. So as we start a brand new series here in the life of our church on Sunday mornings called Be a Disciple, the first part of that that I would like to draw our attention to is choosing the Jesus Way.

Have you ever heard somebody say, well, that's not the Christian thing to do. That's not the Jesus Way. That's true. It's a phrase we often hear, but what does it really mean?

Today we're going to explore what the Jesus Way is, what that pathway looks like that Christ, the Son of God, laid out for us to follow. It is a way that leads to a fulfilling and abundant life.

[2 : 1 5] Would you stand with me if you're able to, and let's read Luke chapter 9, verses 23 through 25. Luke chapter 9, verses 23 through 25.

Then he said to them all, If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself. Take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life because of me will save it. For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world and yet loses or forfeits himself?

Would you pray with me? God, I pray that you would speak to us from your word this morning. Let no one leave this house today having missed something that the Holy Spirit had for them. God, if there's someone here who has not yet chosen the Jesus Way, giving their life to you, let them make that life-changing decision this morning before they leave.

God, for so many of us in this room who have made that decision of turning from sin and turning to Jesus, we've become your children. I pray that we would once again recommit ourselves to the Jesus Way and walk in it.

[3 : 32] It's in your name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Thank you for standing. How many of you go back to English literature, American literature? How many of you all remember back in school when you studied literature?

Anybody? Anybody? That few. Wow. Chiquita Graves is very disappointed in the rest of you because she had so many of you in class, all right?

Well, how many of you would recognize this name? Robert Frost. There. Okay, good. We had more hands up. Don't worry. They remember. Robert Frost, one of the foremost American poets, and he wrote a very, very famous poem, and part of it goes like this.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference. I bring that to you because we can often learn from all kinds of different things in the world.

We can learn from history. We can learn from science. We can certainly learn from literature, and I want to draw the attention to that phrase, the road less traveled.

[4 : 43] The road less traveled. Can I assure you that the Jesus way is the road less traveled? High school students, junior high students, college students, even elementary students, the Jesus way in your school is the road less traveled.

You will often feel like you are alone in walking the Jesus way, but it will make all the difference. So I'm challenging us this morning from the word of God to be a disciple, and step number one according to Luke chapter nine in being a disciple is following Jesus, choosing the Jesus way.

So let's look back at Luke chapter nine and verse 23. He said to all of them, if anyone wants to follow after me, and then he gives the steps to do so.

But first we must make a decision that we choose to follow. We choose to be a disciple. We choose the Jesus way, and then we can see what all that entails.

But let's look at what the Jesus way is. Number one, if you're taking notes in your bulletin this morning, the Jesus way is a way of love. The Jesus way is a way of love.

[6 : 09] Have you ever heard people say, man, I don't like those kind of churches that just talk about God's love all the time, and they never talk about sin. Anybody ever heard that?

All you ever do is focus on the love of God, and that's it. Can I tell you something? If there is a church that is focusing on the love of God, and you come away feeling like that, then that church is not accurately preaching on the love of God.

Because the love of God should be the most convicting, challenging, exposing attribute of God to us. It should convict us of how little love we show.

It should call us to sacrifice. It should call us to lay down our lives. It should call us to turn from sin, turn from self, and turn to Jesus for the sake of others.

That is the way of love. That is the Jesus way. The Jesus way is a way of love, and that love will make you turn from sin. That love will make you turn from self.

[7 : 20] John chapter 13 says this, By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. You know what the main problem with why Christianity or the church in America isn't as effective as it should be?

It's not God's fault. Funny thing is, it's not even the lost world around us' fault. It's Christians' fault. It's our fault. Just realized I hadn't turned that on.

I'm so sorry. Y'all, we have a, how old is your mother? 97. We have a 97-year-old lady who's just started coming recently, and she comes because she's, we've got a hearing device that helps her hear, and I've got this little thing that I hook up and turn on, and it helps her hear, and she's just so happy to be back in worship, hearing church and worship music and all that.

So, yeah, that is something to get excited about. All right, let me go back and start over, okay? I'm just kidding. You didn't miss that much. Hopefully you were able to hear some.

By this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. There are all kinds of ways of showing love. Sometimes it might be wearing a little microphone when you preach. Sometimes it might be going out at Pioneer Union on Saturday and handing out water bottles before the parade starts.

[8 : 39] Sometimes it might be sacrificing something for the good of someone else. Sometimes it might be putting yourself into an uncomfortable situation and bringing up that big no-no, because we don't talk about politics and we don't talk about religion with people, right?

Because that just gets into arguments and fights. But bringing up the love of God to people and what God has done in your life, that might be one of the best ways that you can show love.

And if we show love, then they'll know that we're His disciples. Because the world around us tries to show love, don't they?

They think they've got love figured out. They think they've cornered the market on love, but their love is so self-centered. Their love is either lust, it's either ego, it's either wanting to make myself feel good about myself.

Whatever their love is, it is not an accurate picture of God's love to us. So if we show the Jesus way of love, then they'll know that there's something different.

[9 : 54] We are His disciples. The Jesus way is a way of love. Matthew 22 and verse 39 says, this is the cornerstone of the Jesus way.

He says this, love your neighbor as yourself. Love your neighbor as yourself. On this hangs all the other commandments.

You must love God. And if you love God, then you will love your neighbor as yourself. If you find yourself not loving your neighbor like you should, then you may want to back up and see, huh, probably not loving God like I should either.

Because if I did, then I wouldn't have such a hard time loving my neighbor. Even when your neighbor mistreats you. Even when your neighbor doesn't deserve it. Even when your neighbor has crossed you, has hurt you, time and time again, you still show love.

The disciples asked Jesus, how many times are we supposed to forgive? How many times are we supposed to give people another chance? And Jesus made the point, 70 times 7, but y'all, when you hit 70 times 7, you're supposed to keep forgiving.

[11 : 05] You're supposed to keep giving more and more chances out of a heart of love. Love is not just a feeling. It's so easy when you're in a dating relationship, you're engaged, you're newly married, it's so easy to identify love as that warm, fuzzy feeling.

But it's so much more than that. Love is a decision that you renew moment by moment, day after day. I will continue to love in spite of whether it's earned, whether it's deserved, because God loved me when I didn't earn it.

I didn't deserve it. It's not just a feeling. It's an action. It's a decision. It's putting others before yourself. The Jesus way is a way of love.

Number two, the Jesus way is a way of sacrifice. The Jesus way is a way of sacrifice. Y'all, you can't have love without sacrifice.

The minute you're in a relationship and you get to the point where you have to sacrifice, and all of a sudden you start growing less engaged with that relationship, feeling like, huh, I'm not sure it's worth it.

[12 : 26] You can take it to the bank that that wasn't really love. That wasn't love. Because real love puts others before ourselves. Real love says, I will lay down whatever I need to lay down.

I will give up whatever I need to give up for the good of the person I love. The Jesus way is a way of sacrifice. Mark chapter 10 and verse 45, the New International Reader's Version says it this way.

It's kind of a paraphrase. I like how it phrases it here. He did not come to be served. Talking about Jesus. Jesus did not come to be served. Instead, He came to serve others.

He came to give His life. Your Bible might say ransom. And I love how it kind of portrays what ransom is. He came to give His life as the price for setting many people free.

What is the price of your love? What is the cost of your love? And if your love for God hasn't cost you something, then maybe it's not real love.

[13 : 35] If your love for God has not sacrificed something in your life, then maybe it's not real love. Maybe it's very shallow. Jesus came to give it all as the price for setting you free, setting me free.

So, the Jesus way is a way of sacrifice. Matthew 20 and verse 28 said, Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. Jesus washed His disciples' feet.

We read that He humbled Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, He laid down His life, He was obedient to the Father, and then He was raised from the dead.

And now God has highly exalted Him and has given Him a name above every other name because He took upon Him the form of a servant, because He laid down His life, because He sacrificed, because He humbled Himself, because He made Himself as less than.

But we don't like doing that, do we? We like to lift ourselves up as high as we possibly can. Jesus is calling you to sacrifice that. If you want to choose the Jesus way, then it's a way of sacrifice.

[14 : 50] He came to give His life as the price. Number three, the Jesus way is a way of love, it's a way of sacrifice, and it's a way of transformation.

The Jesus way is a way of transformation. Would you look over in Romans chapter 9 with me? Romans chapter 9, let's look at verse 19. Romans chapter 9, verse 19.

We just got done reading in verse 18. He has mercy on whom God, God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy. He hardens whom He wants to harden. God is sovereign.

He's in charge of it all. You might think you've figured out how to have one up on God and you don't. Okay? God's in charge of it all. You might think that you're living your life apart from God's power and will, but you are not.

He is in charge. So verse 19, You will say to me, therefore, why then does God still find fault? For who can resist His will? But who are you, a mere man, to talk back to God?

[16 : 03] Will what is formed say to the one who formed it, why did you make me like this? Verse 21, Or the potter has no right over the clay to make from the same lump one piece of pottery for honor and another for dishonor.

Don't forget that part we just read about the potter and the clay. And what if God, wanting to display His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath prepared for destruction?

Verse 23, What if He did this to make known the riches of His glory on objects of mercy? That would be you and me as children of God. That He prepared beforehand for glory on us.

Verse 24, The ones He also called not only from the Jews, but also from the Gentiles. Now there's a lot of theology in this passage. And if this was a seminary course, then I could take you through what I went through in seminary and Bible college and have studied since then.

And we could dive into the rich soteriology or the doctrine of salvation. And what does God have to say in the Bible about how we're saved? We could dive into all these points in this passage about salvation.

[17 : 20] But for our purposes today, I want to draw your attention to the fact that we read from this that God is molding the clay. Some clay will be useful to Him and some will not.

But He's molding all of us. Some will be vessels of honor. Some will be vessels of glory. Objects of mercy. And some will be objects for destruction.

So, the ultimate goal of the Jesus way is not as much about what we do as it is about who we become.

who God is making us to be. Now, I promise you, that concept is different than what you may have heard or believed for most of your life as a Christian.

Because if there's one error that so many of our churches have made over the years, it's that not necessarily in our words, although sometimes in our words, but definitely in our practice as churches, we emphasize that God is more interested in what you do than who you are.

[18 : 41] And that is completely backwards. God is not impressed by our works. He never has been. He never will be. He is only impressed by how much of ourselves we give up to Him.

And then He can do the works through us. And then He gets the glory, not us. When God does something in your life, it's transforming.

That means you change from one form into another. How transformed are you after however many years you've been walking with Jesus.

I love that we have many, let's say, veteran Christians in our church. People have been saved a while. Okay? I love the children that we have turning to Jesus at young ages.

Jesus said, let the little children come to me. And so, by God's grace, 50 years from now, 60 years from now, 70 years from now, some of these kids will still be in churches and they'll be the veteran Christians.

[19 : 53] You know what I mean? But I'm not impressed by how long you've been a child of God. What amazes me is how much God has transformed you over that time.

Are you the same person now as you were 10 years ago? 20 years ago? 30 years ago? 5 years ago? Last year? Or has God been transforming you along the way?

Are you more like Jesus now? Are you more loving? Are you more kind? Do you sacrifice more? Are you more like Jesus now than when it first began?

The Jesus way is a way of transformation. If you're not ready for that, then you might want to hold off on calling yourself a disciple. But if you want to be my disciple, then you've got to choose to follow me.

And he will lead you places that you could never dream of. He will lead you places that will transform you. He will show you things and teach you things that will change you from the inside out.

[21 : 07] So we read back in Romans 9 about this fascinating description of the potter and the clay. And there's a couple things that jump out to me here.

Number one, the clay has no rights of its own. The clay has no rights of its own. Do you see back in Romans 9 and verse 19, who can resist his will?

Verse 20, who are you, a mere man, to talk back to God? Will what is formed say to the one who formed it, why did you make me like this? Can you imagine a potter at his potter's wheel forming something, forming a jar, and then the jar says, man, I wanted to be a serving dish.

I didn't want to be a jar. Well, the clay's not in charge, is it? It doesn't get to choose what it's going to be. It has to conform itself to the will of the potter.

The clay has no rights of its own. But how often have you and I said to our potter, why did you do this to me? Why did you make me like this?

[22 : 18] Because he's got a grand and glorious will for you. And if you walk closely with him, you don't have to go out there and fight and scratch and figure out what exactly you're supposed to be and how your life's supposed to go.

God will lead you by his spirit. You just have to concentrate on being close to him, being submissive to him, learning to love him and love like he loves.

Romans chapter 9 and verse 20 through 24 gets a little bit further in to this clay. In this potter example, number one, the clay has no rights of its own.

Number two, the clay has unseen potential. Unseen potential. You look at this lump of clay and to me, it looks like mud that should be discarded.

To me, it looks like it has no use. But in the hands of a master potter, he sees what it could be. And that is the wonderful, reassuring hope that you and I have that even though some people might look down on us, even though some people might criticize, even though some people might ignore, they might marginalize, they might think that you have no potential, no future, God sees it all.

[23 : 43] He sees the truth. and the truth is stronger than those lies. You have unseen potential. Even your family might not see.

Even your spouse might not see. Even yourself might not see. But God sees it. And out of his heart of love, he's just waiting for you to submit yourself to his hands so he can mold you into something beautiful.

He calls it a vessel of glory, an object of mercy. Verse 22, what if he did this to make known the riches of his glory on objects of mercy that he prepared beforehand for glory?

God is preparing you for glory. Don't exchange it for something less. Don't give up the glory that God has waiting for you for something temporary, something shallow, something so meaningless.

The clay has unseen potential. Philippians chapter 2 and verse 13 puts it this way, it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[25 : 04] Submit yourself to God's good pleasure and he will work in you, he will work through you for your good and for his glory. 2 Corinthians chapter 3, we're almost done.

2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18. The Lord who is the spirit makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Do you see the transformation there? Choosing the Jesus way is a way of transformation. transformation. When you turn from your sin and you turn to Jesus and you hear the gospel preached, gospel, that's just the word that tells us the good news of Jesus that you and I were sinners.

We still are by the way. We were born into sin. We had no hope to redeem ourselves, to fix ourselves. But Jesus in his goodness and his love laid down his throne and came to heaven humbled himself, took on human form, was born of the Virgin Mary.

We got Christmas coming up before you know it. The whole world is going to be talking about Jesus' birth. And then he grew up and he performed many miracles, showed that he was God time and time again.

[26 : 25] And you know who hated him, right? The religious people hated him. That's who couldn't stand Jesus. But then he willingly laid down his life and allowed himself to be put to death because that was the plan from the beginning.

All along he laid down his life, he was crucified, gave it up, but he didn't stay dead. We're not singing to a dead God on Sundays. We're not praying to a dead God.

He's alive, he hears us three days and three nights later, Jesus arose from the dead. We talk about it at Easter time, right? Two most powerful, momentous, transformational moments in history.

Jesus' birth and Jesus' death, resurrection. So, that's the gospel. And now he says, if you just simply turn to me, say, God, I believe, I put my faith in you, I believe you came, I believe you died, I believe you rose, I believe you love me, I believe you will forgive me, then you can be what we call saved.

Saved from the punishment of sin. Saved from that terrible place that God prepared for Satan and all those who will die without turning to Jesus. But if you give your life to Jesus, then he will save you.

[27 : 41] We heard that testimony of Megan earlier in the service, it was powerful, man. So great to hear that. So that's when it starts. But then day after day, we're changed into his image.

Day after day, more and more, by God's spirit, his holy spirit indwelling us, going around with us everywhere we go. He teaches us, he corrects us, we go two steps forward and one step back and then he just never gives up on us and keeps leading us on and changing us more and more into his image.

So if you aren't changed, if you've been changed less and less instead of more and more, then maybe you haven't been open to God's holy spirit and his leading. Well, it's time to change that.

It's time to be transformed. It's time to get back on the transformation train, okay? Maybe it took a stop and you got off the train for a little while. It's time to get back on and let God start transforming you again.

I want to share this verse with you, part of the song that the choir sang last week. I choose surrender. I choose to love. Oh God, my Savior, you'll always be enough. I choose forgiveness.

[28 : 51] I choose grace. I choose to worship no matter what I face. What is he doing? He's choosing the Jesus way. He's choosing transformation. He's choosing sacrifice.

He's choosing real love. It's not a feeling. It's not an environment. It's not an atmosphere. It's not something you get just by being around it.

Did you ever sleep on top of your book at night before you had a test? Because you were hoping by osmosis it would get in there? It doesn't work with the Jesus way either, okay? You can't just hang around Jesus.

You can't just hang around the church house and hang around Christians and all of a sudden you become more like Jesus. No, it's a choice. Now you should hang around the church. You should hang around other people like Jesus because maybe they'll start to convince you to be like that too.

But you have to make the choice for yourself. Children, teenagers, it's not enough to grow up in a God fearing, Christ honoring home. You have to choose yourself.

[29 : 52] Say, I choose surrender. I choose love. I choose God, my Savior. He will be enough for me. I choose forgiveness. That's hard. Choosing forgiveness. I choose to give grace like God's given me.

I choose to worship no matter what I face. It's easy to sing that. It's really hard to live that. I choose the Jesus way.

So our takeaway this morning is commit to the Jesus way and then sit back and watch God transform you into becoming his disciple.

This morning, choose the Jesus way before you walk out those doors. Say, man, I chose the Jesus way a long time ago. What are you talking about? You might need to choose it again. I don't know about you, but I need to choose it every morning.

Sometimes multiple times throughout the day, I've got to sit back and say, you know what? I've gotten off the track. I've gotten off the path. I got off at the train stop. I got to get back on.

[30 : 51] I got to choose the Jesus way again and then watch God start transforming me again into being his disciple. Can you imagine what that would look like if our church was full of transforming Jesus' disciples?

And we showed each other the kind of love he showed to his disciples and his friends and those outside the lost. Can you imagine if we became his disciples?

Would you pray with me now? God, I pray that we would be your disciples, that we would choose to follow you, that we would be a church, not a church that names the name of Jesus and says, oh, yeah, man, I'd go to First Baptist.

I'm a Christian. I love God. God, I love you. I love you. But a church that chooses moment by moment to rest in your forgiveness, to lean into your grace, a church that is powerful, not because of how angry we can get or how much might we show or how impressive we are, a church that is powerful because of our forgiveness, because of our love, because of our sacrifice, because God is transforming us.

And then we're right where you want us to be. We're the kind of church you want us to be. Jared's going to lead us in a song.

[32 : 31] Before he does, let me ask you a couple of questions. I'd love for you to keep your seats as he sings. Just enter into a time of prayer. We've got a few minutes before we dismiss.

Would you just section off this time to be a time of quiet reflection on your heart?

Not talking about what you do. Maybe there's something that God's convicting you about what you do, and you need to answer him and listen to the Holy Spirit and obey. But right now I'm really focusing on those who aren't necessarily going out and doing all the things that we know bring dishonor to God.

You're not living that kind of lifestyle. But inwardly, you might have stopped being transformed along the way. I'm talking to myself, I'm talking to my family, and I'm talking to my church family.

I believe the Holy Spirit needs some room to work within our church. And I pray that right now we would open up our hearts and say, God, transform me once again.

[33 : 45] I don't know what it's going to take. I don't know what it's going to look like for you. It's hard enough to figure out what it looks like for me. But I pray that we would make a commitment to the Jesus way.

And then we watch God transform us. That means every morning, every night, moment by moment, when we mess up, we stop and we step back and say, God, forgive me.

I know you already forgive me. I know your grace never leaves. I know I messed up. I know I spoke in anger. I know I was selfish. I know I was self-centered. I know I was greedy.

I know I was fearful. Whatever it is, God, I know. And I just got to get back on the Jesus way. Get back on the transformation train.

Let you change me again. All right, let me ask you these questions. Is there anybody in here, I shared the gospel earlier. And you say, I need to turn from my sin and turn to Jesus. Would you slip your hand up now?

[34 : 50] I'd love to pray for you. Anybody in here, I've never been saved. I want to do that today. Thank you. For the rest of us, I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand. I'm just going to ask you to listen to the Holy Spirit right now.

Jared, would you lead us in this song? You can let him sing over you. You can join in singing. It's up to you. Let's keep our seats and let God speak to us.