

## “Jesus Shaped Life - Made For This”

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3a; Matthew 1:20b-21; 1 John 1:9; John 16:8; Romans 6:6-7

Graphics: cross, boxes, Grand Canyon

Big Truth: Followers of Jesus at the Panama UMC are called to take on a Jesus-Shaped life. During Lent, we spend time understanding what that means. A Jesus-shaped life is a holy life. A Jesus-shaped life is an obedient life. A Jesus-shaped life is a life of healthy relationships. A Jesus-shaped life is a life of courage. A Jesus-shaped life is a life of justice. A Jesus-shaped life is a life of mission. Many things shape our lives, but the life of Jesus must be the primary life shaper.

Focus Phrase: We were made to be holy.

### 1. Introduction

- A. Recently, in my social media feed, I was reminded that two years ago, in February 2020, I took a trip with my brother and my mom to the Grand Canyon. It was the first time the three of us had taken a trip together like that.
- B. When you look down into the canyon, you can just make out the Colorado River WAY DOWN in the bottom. The shape of the Grand Canyon is 100% because of the carving that the Colorado River has done over the years. The Canyon has been shaped by the river.
- C. Yet, there was another shaping happening. As I stood at the rim of the canyon and watched my brother and mom - who'd never been there before - I could see that they were being shaped by the incredible beauty and vast scale of what was before them. The Canyon is shaped by the river and the visitors are shaped by the Canyon.
- D. What shapes you?
- E. We are all shaped by the people, experiences, and influences in our lives. We are shaped by media and what we watch and read. To prove that's true, let's try some fill in the blanks:
  - i. Wheaties is the, “Breakfast of \_\_\_\_\_ [champions]”
  - ii. Nike tells us: “Just \_\_\_\_\_ [do it]”
- F. See? We know those slogans and many others because companies spend huge amounts of money to solidify those in our heads.
- G. The opinions of our friends shape us. Our devices have changed the way we relate to each other. Our experiences shape our memories, and so on.
- H. And, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, there's another force at work in your life - the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. And he is working in your life to shape you into the image of Jesus.
- I. Today we enter into the first of 6 Sundays in Lent. Our theme of our Lenten journey this year is all about taking on a Jesus Shaped Life.

- J. Now, you may be wondering what Lent is all about. If you've been around the church for a while, you've maybe gone through the season of Lent before, which leads the church from Ash Wednesday to Easter - Resurrection Sunday.
- K. Historically, Lent is a season of preparation and reflection. And I want to invite us to slow down and walk during this season. There are many reasons in our lives why we're running, but when we stop and walk, we can learn and grow.
- L. All the preparation for Easter and reflection on our lives must lead to a third thing: spiritual growth.
- M. I asked a group of folks gathered this week for bible study, "On scale from 1 to 10, how confident are you that in six months you will be more like Jesus?" Now, it's sort of a trick question, but the answer for ALL of us should be '10!' We must all be confident that we CAN and WILL grow from where we are today to looking more like Jesus.
- N. This season of Lent can help us. This is the Jesus-Shaped Life.
- O. You'll notice that we have a huge cross up front here. This cross will be our visual reminder of the process of taking on a Jesus Shaped life.
- P. Lent is 6 weeks. Each week, we will look at one of 6 aspects of Jesus' life that we take on as we grow to have a Jesus Shaped Life. Or maybe for you it's MORE of a Jesus-Shaped life.
- Q. Each week, we'll add a box to the cross to remind us how we're doing. And by the time we get to week 6, we'll have a completed cross, ready for Easter. Each of these boxes represent an aspect of the life of Jesus...that he wants US to have.
- R. So...are you ready? ARE YOU READY!?!?
- S. SWEET! Let's pray and then we can dive into our first part of a Jesus-Shaped Life - holiness.
- T. PRAY!**
- U. The first aspect of Jesus' life that we're called to shape us - and maybe the most important - is holiness.
- V. In fact, we were Made For This, which is the title for our message for today. You and I were made to be holy. But what does that mean and how do we get there?
- W. This morning, we don't have one scripture text that we will look at, but several. We will first see what the bible has to say about holiness, then the barriers to holiness, and we'll finish with the way through those barriers...all because we were made for this...it's what God desires for your life.

## 2. Scripture

## A. God's Will For You

- i. In **1 Thessalonians 4:1-3a**, the apostle Paul wrote this: “Finally, then, brothers [and sisters], we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your **sanctification...**”
- ii. God's will for your life is sanctification. That's a theological word that means to be made holy. And to be made holy is to be like Jesus, who is holy.
  - a. Someone leading a Jesus shaped life thinks like Jesus.
  - b. We relate to others like Jesus did.
  - c. We connect with and KNOW the heavenly Father, like Jesus did.
  - d. We obey the Father like Jesus did.
- iii. Another definition of holiness is to **be set apart for God's purposes**. This cross we had built for this worship series is holy because we are using it for God's purposes. The chalice that holds the grape juice and plate that holds the bread for communion are holy because they are set apart for that purpose. We don't use those dishes for Souper Sundae...only for communion.
- iv. Jesus' life was holy because He was set apart for God's purposes.
- v. The angel said to Joseph in Matthew 1, “...an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:20b-21).
- vi. Jesus' ‘set apart’ purpose was and is to save US from our sin. Jesus wants to continue to fulfill his purpose in your life. Jesus saves us from both the PENALTY and POWER of sin.
- vii. And yet, our SIN is exactly that which is a barrier that hinders OUR holiness...OUR “set apartness.”

## B. Sin can be a barrier for holiness

- i. There's a popular bumper sticker out there that says, “Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven.”
- ii. And while that's true, it might lead us to believe that the difference between a Christian and a not-yet-Christian is simply that we're forgiven. It implies that you can think, talk, and live in the same ways as someone who's not a follower of Jesus, and the only thing that's different is the fact that Jesus forgives you.

- iii. That's not the case, according to Romans 6:6-7: "We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin."
- iv. So, holiness is not about NOT sinning. Let me say that another way, holiness is NOT about behaving. Holiness - sanctification or taking on the Jesus shaped life - IS about being freed from the power and penalty of sin in our lives because Jesus is making us holy.
- v. Miriam Swaufield, who's an author and speaker says that, "Holiness isn't wearing white pants. If you've ever worn white pants, you know that they tend to be a magnet for stains. Holiness, she says, is the bleach that makes the white pants white...and can make white pants white again and still."
- vi. And there's no sin that Jesus can't free us from...not by OUR power, but by the power and present of the Holy Spirit.
- vii. Jesus proved his holy power over temptation, and to live a sinless life.
- viii. In Luke chapter 4, Jesus was tempted in just about every way by Satan, and each time Jesus pressed into the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to block temptation and sin.
- ix. Jesus' example for us in the wilderness is that the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is bleach for our white pants...the power to live a Jesus shaped holy life.
- x. Yet, you and I aren't Jesus. We don't live a sinless life, even though we can grow to be more and more free of sin IN our lives.
- xi. That's where repentance comes in as a key component of living a Jesus Shaped life...a holy life.

### **C. Repentance is the lifestyle that leads to holiness**

- i. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- ii. God saves us from the penalty of sin by forgiving us, and from the power of sin by purifying or changing us.
- iii. A new bumper sticker with that in mind might read, "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven **and becoming like Jesus.**" We are made to take on a Jesus-shaped life.
- iv. Repentance isn't just saying we're sorry and then continuing on the same path. Repentance is turning around to get to the place where Jesus is waiting to change us and grow us.
- v. When Stacy and I made our way to New Hampshire to meet our grandson, Levi, we were pretty excited. So excited, actually, that when we were just a few miles away from their house, while Stacy and I were excitedly talking, I

drove right by the exit. The next exit was 6 miles down the road. That meant that we'd have 12 miles to stew about the fact that we weren't going in the right direction. It felt terrible! Eventually, we got to the next exit, turned around, and made it back to where we started to go off track. And it felt GREAT to finally be going in the right direction again.

- vi. That's what repentance does. We going in a direction that we don't want - that God is trying to call us back from - and while we're going that way, our spirits are grieving...we're miserable. Yet, when we can get turned around and back on track, we begin to understand what repentance does in our lives. We get back to the pathway that leads to growth and life...the Jesus-shaped life we were made for.
- vii. But we can't do that alone...we MUST lean into the power of the Holy Spirit...who gives us the power to BE holy like Jesus.

#### **D. The Holy Spirit is our guide.**

- i. The Holy Spirit helps us to not only recognize our sin but the Spirit also helps us change to be more like Jesus.
- ii. One more car analogy today. Many of the new cars these days have anti-collision warning systems. Ours has front, side, and rear collision warnings that are really loud, and will even slam on the breaks and yell at you.
- iii. The Holy Spirit can help us recognize the danger and consequences of our sin. John 16:8 says, "And when [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment..."
- iv. The Spirit prompts is to recognize the danger ahead and avoid it. Now, we can choose to ignore those warnings, or even turn off the warnings in our minds and hearts, but there are always consequences to doing that.
- v. Yet, God is so gracious, that even if we DO that, the Holy Spirit will point us again and again in the right direction.
- vi. And, as we said earlier, the process of humbly turning towards God and away from our sin is repentance. We are called to not just repent, but live a lifestyle of repentance.
- vii. When we do that, we change. We become more like Jesus. We become more holy as we are sanctified. We take on the Jesus-shaped life!
- viii. You were made for this.

### **3. Application**

- A. We've covered a lot of ground today about this first aspect of Jesus' life which he invites us to take on during Lent.
- B. For our application today, it's pretty simple: Ask the Holy Spirit this week to fill you and direct you.

- C. The Holy Spirit WILL produce fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That sounds a lot like Jesus, doesn't it?
- D. The best way to overcome the barrier of sin in your life is not to focus on the sin - not focusing on the behavior - but to focus on the fruit that God desires to grow in you.
- E. Only the Spirit of God can empower us to live the life of God. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can shape us and transform us unto the image of Jesus.
- F. So, open yourself to Him. Pray, "Holy Spirit fill me and direct me to grow into a person living the Jesus Shaped life." Pray that for your friends. Pray that for your family. Pray that for our church and for me. Pray that every day.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- A. (grab Holy box) The design of this cross is very specific. It's not just for good looks, although it IS good looking!
- B. It has a holy purpose - set apart for us - to be reminded of the pathway for growth.
- C. Each week, we will add one box to this cross...and today it's the box that reminds us that Jesus is holy...and we are to be holy.
- D. In a moment, we will also come to the table to receive the gift of communion. Church tradition calls it Holy Communion. I think that's perfect for today. This time...this message...the songs we sing and prayers we pray are set apart for God's purposes. The elements we will eat and drink are just bread and juice, until we consecrate them to God's holy purposes FOR US.
- E. Jesus is holy. His life is your life as you take on the Jesus shape.
- F. Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you and direct you to that life today. To SHAPE you. You were MADE for this!
- G. Let's pray...