

“Jesus Shaped Life - The Courage of Jesus”

Scripture: John 18:1-5; John 20:19-22; Romans 12:2

Graphics: cross, boxes, courage, lion

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: Courage is given by the Holy Spirit to Jesus people for the sake of the world.

1. Introduction

- A. **PRAY!**
- B. Courage! When we think of courage, we think of brave women and men rising to some incredible challenge that calls for action and bravado, usually against insurmountable odds or some feats of daring.
- C. We only need to read 1-2 articles about the war in Ukraine to understand that courage takes a thousand forms.
 - i. There's one report of 13 Ukrainian soldiers defiantly standing up to a battalion of Russian tanks, refusing to put down their weapons, only to be killed in a ruthless attack from the far more numerous attackers.
 - ii. There are reports of ordinary citizens who are defending their homes and families at all cost and at great danger to themselves.
 - iii. Then there are the courageous moms and sisters and wives who are doing everything they can to move their families to places where safety is more prevalent and they can breathe while they hunker down.
- D. Courage comes in a thousand forms!
- E. Winston Churchill said, “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”
- F. But what is Christian courage? What does it mean to be a courageous follower of Jesus Christ?
- G. When the world around you is racked with warfare and you're protecting family and friends, there are some pretty obvious ways that you need to be courageous.
- H. Yet, I'd also say that every one of us is faced with challenges that call for courage...with health crises, relationships, work, aging, and difficult decisions.
- I. But even more than that, followers of Jesus, who are laying down our lives for our friends - so that people will know who this Jesus is - need to have the courage to love God and love our neighbors like Jesus did.

- J. Our journey to a deeper Jesus-shaped life has taken us through holiness, obedience, and relationships, so far. Today, we dive into the courage of Jesus.
- K. Jesus' life was marked by incredible courage, even in the midst of fear. He didn't do that with swords or M-16s or even big muscles.
- L. The disciples with Jesus had moments of courage, but also many moments of great fear. That is, until they were filled with the Holy Spirit!
- M. Your life, filled with the Holy Spirit, and even in the midst of fear, can be courageous in ways you never thought possible.
- N. Let's spend some time together today seeking the Holy Spirit's leading into a deeper life of courage... a Jesus-Shaped life of courage.
- O. Here's a note to write down: **Courage is given by the Holy Spirit to Jesus people for the sake of the world.**
- P. Let's begin with taking a look at Jesus' courage, then the disciples, and then how we're called to courageously respond to the Holy Spirit.
- Q. Turn in your bibles to John 18, starting in verse 1...

2. Scripture

A. READ John 18:1-5a

- i. Jesus, knowing ALL that was about to happen to him - arrest, abandonment by disciples, torture, beatings, lashings, cross-carrying, crucifixion on a Roman cross, abandonment by the Father, and I'm sure other stuff we don't even know about - knowing ALL that was coming, "...Jesus came forward..." says John.
- ii. In the face of trials that you and I will never face as humans, Jesus stepped forward and said, "I am he." "I'm the one you're looking for..."
- iii. And even though we're tempted to lessen the blow by thinking, "Well, Jesus was divine, so it probably was easier for him," we also know that we say that because we don't want to feel that level of anguish for Jesus.
- iv. Merriam-Webster tells us that courage is *the mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty*.
- v. What Jesus went through in his last day was courage to the max! And it wasn't the kind of courage that protected a loved one or tried to keep himself safe. It was courage that led him directly into the ultimate battle between good and evil! And, I'll give you some good news (ready?): Evil lost!
- vi. Courage led Jesus to the one place he didn't want to go. But it was the place that He knew the Father asked Him to go so that we could stand in the face of the very same dangers and KNOW (KNOW!) that evil cannot defeat us!

- vii. But, see, WE know that Jesus' courage led to the cross and the empty tomb and the ascension and eventually His return. We can take courage in that.
- viii. Guess who didn't know that? The disciples!
- ix. In fact, a little later in that scene from John 18, Peter - who was Jesus' number 1 - got scared and denied even KNOWING Jesus. That was a complete lack of courage. And, guess what, you and I might've done the same thing.
- x. In Mark 14:50, after Jesus was arrested, Mark records that, "All of them deserted him and fled." Courage?
- xi. For three days, the disciples fled and hid and ran and trembled and denied. Not only did they see Jesus arrested, but they saw him die and be placed in a tomb.
- xii. But, they ALSO saw him after he rose from the dead! But instead of finding courage from that resurrection, we read in Mark's version of the resurrection story that after the resurrection, the women that went to the tomb saw angels and then in Mark 16:8, "...they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."
- xiii. The courage that Jesus showed didn't translate to the women or the disciples. And often, the courage of Jesus doesn't translate to us, either.
- xiv. But, that all changed the day the Holy Spirit showed up on the scene...turn ahead in your bibles to John 20, verse 19...

B. READ John 20:19-22

- i. The disciples, hiding in fear, were wondering what would happen next? Jesus was alive, but what does that mean?! Behind closed doors, they waited in fear!
- ii. Then suddenly, Jesus was in the room with them! He walked right through the locked doors! And he said, "Peace be with you!" and showed them all the wounds on his hands and side.
- iii. Then, "...he breathed on them." What was THAT all about?
- iv. Bishop Robert Hayes wrote this, "It wasn't an act of bestowing peace, for Jesus greeted the men with those words. It wasn't an act of power, because Jesus knew the supreme power would come some 50 days later. An older version of the New Testament may carry us nearer to the original meaning than most modern-day translations. A translation from the Aramaic, the language which Jesus spoke, gives us this reading: 'And when he had said these things, he gave them courage.' He breathed on them and gave them courage!"

- v. I love that translation. I love it because it was in that moment that the disciples went from hiding in fear behind locked doors to the beginning of the global movement of the church! We're here today because Jesus breathed on them the courage of the Holy Spirit.
- vi. Literally, the rest of the New Testament - from Acts to the letters of Paul and right on through Revelation - is all about the Church finding courage from the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to tell the world the Good News about Jesus.
- vii. And you and I are part of that heritage. You and I are part of the timeline and lineage of the family of God! And WE are called to be courageous people who are filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. Application

- A. But, do you know what? I don't feel courageous sometimes. I feel like hiding behind locked doors when life gets heavy or painful. I struggle with fear of what is and what will be. You and I don't have it all together. Sometimes I say things I shouldn't, do things out of worry, and find ways to avoid and deflect the Good News being proclaimed.
- B. But remember what our friend Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."
- C. As you take on more and more of a Jesus-Shaped life, then you begin to realize that it's not YOUR courage that's needed, as if you can muster the bravado to do the things that God has called you and equipped you to do. The courage that Jesus is giving you is HIS courage.
- D. Andrew Roycroft wrote, "The courage of Christ is not the bravery of swagger and posturing. The courage of Christ is not immune to legitimate fear, or divorced from natural feelings of infirmity and grief at what must be undergone. The events leading up the cross model this powerfully. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus does not leap into contemplating the cross with the spirited fervour of one cut off from his emotions. Jesus wrestles in the garden, he trembles in deep and seemingly insoluble trouble before the ordeal he must undergo, he sweats and prays, and laments and mourns, and expresses submissive resistance to what he must face under the Father's will. This is true courage. Not a courage which belittles fear, or berates the fearful, but which tremblingly steps forward, feeling the weight, bearing the worry, but advancing in faith." <https://thinkingpastorally.com/2021/03/30/the-courage-of-christ/>
- E. God commands many times in the bible, "Do not fear." Yet God isn't saying your fear is invalid. What He's saying is that your fear isn't bigger than the God who made you, the Savior who redeems you, and the Spirit that comforts and guides you.

- F. Jesus was genuinely and humanly afraid to face the cross...but He stepped forward. Courage. He sweat drops of blood in the Garden, but stepped forward. Courage. He cried out in a loud voice, “Father, why have you forsaken me?” and yet, he stepped forward. Courage.
- G. Andrew Roycroft went on to say, “His courage trembled, but trusted, fear and faith co-mingled, and this is the one we follow.” (REPEAT)
- H. If Jesus trusted in the midst of trembling and was faithful in the midst of fear, then you and I are not failures when we lack courage. You and I are simply called to trust and then step forward.
- I. How do you do that? Well, author Steve Cordle tells us that it’s about allowing the Holy Spirit to change our thinking...and to lead us to live differently than the world around us that’s plagued with fear and worry and scarcity.
- J. “To live like Jesus we need to think like Jesus. We need to think differently from the rest of the world. Our thoughts obey Christ when we stop following the crowd and start following God’s truth. The courage to live differently than others comes from thinking differently than others.” Steve Cordle JSL
- K. Bishop Hayes said, “If you name all the ways and times courage is needed in life, you will agree that courage is almost life itself. Courage is needed to hold fast to our heritage of good. When religion is treated with indifference and disrespect, it requires courage to be true to the deep instincts of the soul. When everyone else is conforming, it takes courage to aspire.”
- L. Really, this is about the courage for the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world...for the transformation of your community...for the transformation of your family and your workplace...and for the transformation of your heart. Aren’t those things worth having courage?
- M. It starts with **living the courage of Jesus through your words**.
- i. Sometimes, that means speaking the name of Jesus in places and ways that you’re afraid to speak His name.
 - ii. Other times, it means speaking the truth in love to someone who the Holy Spirit is prompting you to identify something that needs correction, adjustment, clarity, or just a word. Be very certain that your words are from the Holy Spirit and not your own control issues or sense of justice. And, remember, this is for believers and not for the world.
 - iii. Still other times, it takes courage to NOT speak, even when your anger or frustration or sense of justice is begging to shout or rebuke or give someone a piece of your mind!
 - iv. Courage is given by the Holy Spirit to Jesus-people for the sake of the world.

- v. Use your words courageously for Jesus, led by the Holy Spirit. But, USE them...that's why God gave them to you.

N. Second, live the courage of Jesus through your actions.

- i. We heard last week that LOVE in the bible is about actions.
 - ii. The courage Jesus showed was the pathway to sacrifice and teaching and resurrection!
 - iii. What would it look like if your loving courageous actions were pathways to sacrifice and teaching and resurrection?
 - iv. What if something you did led to someone else coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ for eternity? THAT would be worth it!
 - v. How much courage does it take to tell someone about Jesus and show them what that looks like? A lot, we think. But, remember, it's not your courage and you aren't the one saving anyone. It's Jesus' courage! Jesus is Savior and Lord!
- O. The world wants to shame you into never speaking the name of Jesus. The world wants to negate the actions for which the Holy Spirit is equipping you.
- P. The call on your life from Romans 12:2 is to, "...not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."
- Q. Courage is given by the Holy Spirit to Jesus people for the sake of the world... not modeled after the patterns of this world...but to TRANSFORM the world.
- R. You and I are called to put our full trust in Jesus...to speak courageously, and to act courageously...in the midst of fear...yet, with full faith...FOR the mission of Jesus.

4. Conclusion

- A. I pray that you and I will never be in a war...fighting for our lives. Yet, Jesus calls us to fight for the eternal lives of those around us by courageously loving them and speaking the name of Jesus.
- B. The Jesus-Shaped life of courage is a humbling life because it replaces what we are afraid to do and say with Jesus' words and actions.
- C. (CROSS) The Jesus-shaped life is holy. And obedient. It's called to relationships. And it's courageous in word and action.
- D. This week, pray for ONE opportunity to courageous speak the name of Jesus to someone...and pray for ONE opportunity to act courageously in someone's life.
- E. Keep taking on a Jesus-Shaped Life!
- F. Let's pray...