

SERMON FOR JUNE 24, 2017

TEXT: LUKE 6:46

THEME: BEING LUTHERAN: CLOSELY FOLLOWING JESUS

<sup>46</sup>“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

In the name of Jesus:

Raise your hand if at any time as a parent you have asked your child a question on a preference of theirs and their response is a shrug of the shoulders? “What do you want to eat?” “I don’t care.” If you have asked someone if they are having a good day, and the response is a shrug of the shoulders. Did you know that there is a word for that type of attitude and response? You probably don’t care but I will tell you anyway, it is called: “Meh.” It is a short, beautiful, blasé word that describes verbally the shrug of the shoulders and the attitude that “says it doesn’t make any difference to me.” It is an expression of apathy and boredom because nothing impresses us anymore. Nothing grabs us by the collar and shakes us awake anymore: “Meh, I have been there, done that.”

It doesn’t matter what it is: new technology? Got it. An earth shattering experience? Been there, done that. Meh. Nothing is exciting anymore. And that extends to the Christian walk with Jesus. As Christians we have developed a Meh mentality. Apathy and boredom have extinguished of love for the Lord. Your friend doesn’t believe in Jesus? Meh, what do I care? You call yourself a Christian and don’t know what is in the Bible? What is that to me? You are a Lutheran? So what? Jesus died and rose again for you! Meh.

Jesus speaks to this sinful attitude in the book of Revelation. He says to the Church in Laodicea: <sup>5</sup>“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you

were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” The church at Laodicea was indifferent to Jesus. Jesus says that He wishes that they were hot or cold, but they were neither. Jesus called the people who belonged to the church at Laodicea to repentance; He wanted them to change, to get off the fence! Love God first and foremost, or as the First Commandment says: “Have no other gods besides Me.”

Sadly today many Christians have developed a lukewarm attitude and mentality in their walk with Jesus. There are those in our culture and society who teach and believe that all roads lead to heaven. All religions are the same. It doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you believe. All you need to do is just be sincere in your faith.

It is a nice sentiment but it is entirely wrong! You have heard me use this expression over and over again but it is the honest truth. If you are going in the wrong direction, no matter how sincere you may be, you are still going the wrong way! I remember when I was growing up and we as a family went on vacation. My dad sometimes thought he knew which way to go; only he was going in the wrong direction and got lost. Only when my mom pleaded with my dad to stop and ask directions did he realize he was not only going the wrong way but also that he needed to change direction! If not, we would still be lost some 50 years later and still unable to find our way. If you sincerely believe you are going in the right way but heading in the wrong direction, you are still lost.

So it is with many in the world today. Many Christians have developed a who cares mentality because many Christians falsely believe all religions are the same. They

are not! That is why God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, into this world to save the world not only from this mentality but also from sin, Satan, and death.

Jesus came to earth to deliver you from Meh; He came down to earth to meet people where they were. Jesus came into this world to save it from apathy; He came to save you from apathy!

Need proof? The Bible tells us of the time when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit and that she was carrying in her womb the Savior of the World. “You shall call His name Jesus for He will save people from their sins.” Mary went to tell her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist the wonderful news. Remember what happened when Mary said to Elizabeth that Jesus was going to be born? John leapt for joy in the womb; Jesus lit a fire in John’s bones, even before John was born!

Shepherds were watching their field in the middle of the night. Jesus was born, and the angels broke out in singing: “Glory to God in the highest!” The shepherds were so moved when they went to see this sight of the Babe in the manger, that Jesus lit a fire in their bones, and then once they beheld Jesus, they let others know the Jesus was born.

Stories abound in the Scripture about how Jesus lit a fire in the bones of those who followed Him. Jesus’ invitation was simple: “Follow Me. Stop what you are doing, rise and follow Me.” And what happened? People’s lives were changed, apathy and indifference didn’t rule their hearts, Jesus was now King! Peter, James, John, all left their apathy behind and followed Jesus. Jesus lived a life passionately followed His Heavenly Father and then offered Himself up in love on the cross. Jesus delivered

mankind not only from the dominion of sin, Satan, and death but from the apathy and boredom of Meh. Jesus nailed apathy and boredom to the cross, lukewarm beliefs about Jesus died in the tomb of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus did this for all who followed Him. And the Good News is that Jesus did this for YOU!

Martin Luther believed this, with every fiber and bone of his being. He staked his life on the fact that God so loved Him that God sent His only Son Jesus to save him from sin, Satan and death. Luther didn't follow Jesus from afar. Luther followed Jesus so closely that Luther was stepping on the back of Jesus' sandals! If Jesus were chewing gum, Luther would be able to tell you what flavor that gum was! Luther was not a lukewarm follower of Jesus. Luther was all in on following Jesus.

You should know that it wasn't always this way for Luther. There was a time in his life that he feared Jesus and feared God. It was commonly taught back then that Jesus died on the cross and is really mad at you because He had to die for you. This led many to teach that instead of going to Jesus, you go to Mary, His mother, instead, because Mary had the love of a mother and would treat you much kinder than Jesus would. So Mary became kind of the first line of defense.

Theologians also taught that Jesus was perfect, so you needed to be perfect in your life, just like Jesus. Luther struggled with this teaching, because when he compared his life to Jesus' Luther realized he would never measure up. And this led Luther to despair.

Only when Luther turned to reading the Bible, particularly the Book of Romans, did Luther begin to understand that a sinner could never achieve a right standing before

God. Instead, Jesus gives His right standing with the Father to sinners who believe in Jesus. The righteousness of God is a gift freely given through faith in Jesus Christ.

This gift has already been given to you in the waters of your Baptism. The Holy Spirit has given to you faith in Jesus in your Baptism. Faith receives the gifts Jesus' gives. Jesus' perfect life and resurrection becomes your perfect life and resurrection. Faith gives sins to Jesus and receives His holiness in return. God has done it all.

Luther believed and taught this. It is called passive righteousness, in that your standing before God as His child is given to you as a free gift of Jesus, you do nothing to earn it, it is freely given and received as a gift by faith. But Luther also taught something called an active righteousness. Active righteousness is simply this, living out your faith in service to others. Lutherans aren't lukewarm toward their neighbors. Lutherans, rather are passionate what we believe about Jesus and how we are about showing God's love to our neighbors. Our actions show that we are serious about being the hands, feet, face, voice, and presence of Christ to all around us.

Today Jesus invites you to follow Him. The question now becomes how closely are you following Jesus? Perhaps you are so far away from Jesus that you have to squint to see Him. Would a hybrid car run out of gas before you catch up to Jesus? Do you just give Jesus a wave, a wink, or a nod instead of really following Him? Or do you follow Jesus so closely that you are stepping on the heels of His sandals?

The Lutheran pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, once said that anyone who is not stepping on the heels of Jesus isn't following Jesus close enough. So how is your daily walk with Jesus going? Following Jesus means that each and everyday we

crucify the old sinful person within us so that by the power of the Holy Spirit we rise to newness of life and follow Jesus.

So how do you follow on the heels of Jesus? You do not just follow Jesus by saying you believe in Him, you go to Jesus where He can be found. You come to worship faithfully to hear His Word and receive His body and blood. You read the Scriptures daily so that you can hear the voice of Jesus speaking to you. You pray, going to God daily, continually, calling upon God in your time of need. And you live your life in love, for God, and for your neighbor. God has made you to love and serve others.

Jesus has given to you a new life in Him. You are God's new creation! So no more apathy! No more boredom! Your heart bumps and thumps with the eternal life that God has given to you in Jesus. Jesus' heart is your heart. His life is now your life. Now go live it, closely on the heels of Jesus. In His name.

Amen