

WWJD? – What Would Jesus Do?

[Luke 9:51-62](#)

There is a story of an affluent church assembling for Sunday morning worship. The pastor had put aside all obstacles during the week, including an interruption from a homeless person looking for work, in order to complete a dynamic, emotional message meant to touch the very hearts and souls of his congregation. On Sunday, the music, which was always top notch, did not disappoint anyone. The message was powerfully delivered to a packed church of wealthy members. The message spoke of being a disciple of Christ by following in Jesus' steps. Those steps were obedience, faith, love, and imitation.

Just as the pastor concluded his sermon, a voice from the back interrupted the service. It was the same homeless man who had disturbed the pastor during the week while he was trying to prepare his sermon. The man addressed the shocked

congregation and challenged them about what it is suppose to look like when someone follows in Jesus' steps by imitating what Jesus would do. I'd like to read a portion of this man's speech to the congregation, "I heard some people singing at the church prayer meeting the other night,

*All for Jesus, all for Jesus,
All my being's ransomed powers,
All my thoughts, and all my doings,
All my days, and all my hours.*

And I kept wondering as I sat on the steps outside just what they meant by it. It seems to me there's an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn't exist if all the people who sing such songs went and lived them out. I suppose I don't understand. But what would Jesus do?"

Some of you may recall the mini-movement in the 1980's that had the same basic premise. People would go around sharing those rubber bracelets that had the letters – WWJD? I

wouldn't say there was much force behind the movement because the impact was fairly small, but it did get people thinking again, 'what would Jesus do?' The book I shared the beginning story from is called *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon that was originally published in 1891. This was a time when Christianity was experiencing a time of prosperity, and those drawn and welcomed in most large churches in particular were wealthy businesspeople. People attracted to the churches were very much like the congregations. Sunday morning was the most segregated hour of the week on every level – racial, economical, social. The gap between the wealthy and the poor was astronomical.

So what does this have to do with today's scripture lesson?

When we consider the message from Luke, we see that Jesus is approaching the end of his time on earth so he sets his sights on Jerusalem. On the way he sent a messenger into Samaria to see

if they would be received as guests, but he was refused.

Immediately, the disciples want revenge. They know of the power Jesus had instilled in them and they wanted to command fire to come down from heaven and destroy the town. Jesus rebuked his own disciples for wanting revenge on those who would not receive them and simply went on to the next town.

So when we ask the question, ‘What would Jesus do?’ often we only have to look at what is recorded in scripture. Jesus extended mercy and also noted human free will – we can choose to welcome Jesus or not.

Later Jesus was approached by someone who said they would follow Jesus anywhere, but first he must tend to his family. Jesus called another who said he will follow but only after he goes and buries his father. In both cases, Jesus’ response seems very harsh. Jesus said you must leave

everything behind and follow me. Jesus needs to be first in our lives or nothing else will seem quite right.

But what does it mean to put Jesus first in our lives? The story I shared from *In His Steps* continues with the man who was addressing the congregation literally falling over while speaking and dying just a few days later. But his words and his challenge to this wealthy congregation left an impression. What does it mean to sing, “All to Jesus I surrender?” Do we really mean that? How do we feel when Jesus calls us to give up something of ourselves and follow Him? Jesus does say, “Take up your cross and follow me.” This doesn’t sound easy. It sounds like it would be painful at times. It sounds like it requires real sacrifice.

The pastor of the wealthy congregation in Sheldon’s story was deeply moved by the homeless man whom he had pretty much brushed off because it was more important to prepare a

dynamic sermon. He was so moved that the next Sunday he issued a challenge to the congregation. “I want volunteers from the First Church who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, ‘What would Jesus do?’” I have spent time thinking about this ever since I read this book. What does it really mean to consider what Jesus would do before you take any action? When I’m ready to yell at someone for cutting me off in traffic I think, what would Jesus do? When I am ready to spout off at my kids for the state of their rooms I think, what would Jesus do? I spent time in class this week where we reviewed some disheartening statistics of incidence of violence and child abuse and pornography addiction and I think, what would Jesus do?

One movie clip we saw this week was a presentation of church history and the different movements that helped to shape

Christianity as we know it today. The common denominator between all the surges in Christianity, where a sudden rebirth occurred with people experiencing real revival with the power of the Holy Spirit descending in different areas of the world, was the movement of prayer. Major issues were facing people at different times throughout history. Voltaire who lived from 1694-1778 predicted the end of Christianity within a 30-year period. Voltaire said, "Another century and there will not be a Bible on earth." In the early 1700's in America, bank robberies were a daily occurrence. Women were not safe to go out in public alone. Outlaws were revered and in many areas idolized and fully in control of every area of town function. The church had no power or influence whatsoever.

Does this sound familiar? Are we seeing this type of environment now? This was the tone of the day when pastors and congregations of all denomination saw the future of

Christianity dwindling and committed to one joint action – prayer. What did Jesus do when faced with difficult situations? He turned to prayer. In the story of the community in Sheldon’s novel, the ones who committed to the WWJD challenge dropped to their knees in prayer more than ever before. Before every revival Christians came together in a spirit of unity through the power of prayer. When disaster strikes through war or earthquake or terrorist attacks, people turn to God in prayer and God answers.

I would present to you that Christianity is once again in crisis. Our society is promoting super-saturation of our senses, while statistically the internet is actually harming intellect in general. Commercialism is driving every area of our lives including the church. Pornography, gambling, alcoholism – all of these areas are creating unhealthy addictions that are literally plaguing our society. We have heard about the breakdown of

the nuclear family for years and this situation has not improved. As a society we have done a fairly good job of turning away from God and we are reaping the downside of that push.

What would Jesus do? As Christ's disciples this should be driving our actions. What does it mean to take up our cross and follow Christ? As Christians we are being called to prayer. We may differ in our viewpoints among ourselves and other denominations but prayer is universal. Pray for our children. Pray for our church. Pray for our families. Pray for our society. As a starting point I would like to use our Church Directory. I would challenge each of us to pray for everyone on this list. We are a fairly small congregation so if we choose to pray for 1 page per day and maybe add a few names each day we can pray for everyone in a week. Think of the power of this. Know that you will be prayed for by everyone in this congregation each week. That is the challenge I present to us as our 'what would

Jesus do?' challenge. Prayer is revolutionary. Prayer is the untapped power that can be grossly underutilized. Pray for one another and pray for our community and our society. What would Jesus do? He would pray. Let us pray together.