



Is That You? Wait, It's Me.

TEXT
Galatians 2:19–20

October 18, 2020 — Sermon by Rev. Tom Are, Jr.

Faith is a road trip, a journey, a long walk in the same direction. And as we have said in this series, it is a road trip to find ourselves — an authentic life in an inauthentic world.

And from the first words of this series, I have been drawn like filings to a magnet to these few words from the apostle Paul. I think our road trip finds its destination. Paul says, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

I don’t know how your day has gone so far, but I bet you didn’t wake up this morning and look in the mirror — or if you share coffee with someone, look across your coffee cup and say, “You know, Christ is living in me today.”

The truth is that sounds a bit weird. But if I understand the text, what Paul means is, the more he looks to Christ, the more it dawns on him that he sees himself, or who he is to be. To say it more plainly, Christ shows us what our lives are for, and that is a gracious gift.

I think a shift that happens in the journey of faith is that for most of us, I think for most of us, we might begin thinking that a real life is unique, set apart from

the crowd. I make my own path. But what Paul realizes is that real life is found in living as close to the life of Christ as we can. It’s not about being unique; it’s about being like him. In the words of the song we just heard, “Let me walk the way you do, let me learn to choose like you.”¹

Novelist Leslie Jamison said that the burden of being a good novelist is that you have to tell a story that is unique — tell a story that has never been told — to be original. But Jamison struggled with addiction, and as such, found her way to 12-step meetings that were mostly gatherings to tell stories. And there is nothing original in these stories.

The power of the story is that when someone else tells their story, they are telling your story, she said. The power is that the storyteller knows what you have been through, understands every struggle and dream and can name it. Jamison recalls a friend of hers, upon hearing someone tell their story, she said, “That’s me.” Jamison said, it was like she realized she had spent her whole life listening to the wrong radio station until she heard her name called by the voice of someone else.²

I think the longer Paul looks at Christ, the more of himself

he sees, or he sees the self he is called to be. If I understand the text, Paul is telling us the life of Jesus Christ is our home; he is telling us our story.

That can be intimidating. I mean, Jesus is Jesus, and the ways in which I am not like him is not a short list. But if I understand this confession in the heart of Paul, he is not intimidated; he is at rest. He has found home, where he belongs. It’s grace. To say Christ lives in me is to say my life matters. The love of God has claimed me. I don’t have to accomplish to matter; I don’t have to succeed to matter. I am enough. I need to say this to you today, in these that feel so often like crisis days: Christ lives in you. The love of God dwells in you, and that is enough.

Look, I know you are stressed. In so many ways, it feels like things are spinning out of control. Parents want their kids in school and worry if they go. So many are facing financial challenges. It’s hard to know where to look for mentors, those who can show us how to live a mature and gracious life, because so many in the spotlight lack in character. There are so many who are grieving and so many who are afraid. It is easy to assume that unless we can change all of that,

life has no meaning. But that's too much.

I think what the apostle tells us is to live an authentic life in an inauthentic world; just do your part. Just remember who you are and let the love revealed in Jesus Christ breathe in you. That will be enough. Live a life shaped by love and see what God might do with that.

Storyteller and songwriter John Craigie has a song called *Dissect the Bird*. It's a song that has no haunting melody, the musicianship is basic, but it has something to say. He sings:

You're doing it wrong dissecting the bird trying to find the song

It's a miracle that you're here at all. ...

So when the candle flickers, when the days get dark They call them first world problems but they still break your heart The universe feels like it's against you Just take a minute to realize, all it took to make you

Your parents had to meet, as random as that was And hang out long enough at least, To fall in love and have a baby And give it your name And ALL your ancestors had to do the same exponentially backwards To the start of life

So much had to happen, just exactly right

Sparks had to catch, oceans had to freeze, Billions of cells had to survive, endless disease, Civilizations had to crumble, wars had to be fought, Bad presidents had to get elected, Good presidents had to get shot,

People had to leave, hearts had to get broken, People had to die, just so your eyes could open The universe is not against you The universe is not against you, It went through a lot just to give you a chance,

It must have wanted you, pretty bad No pressure though, no pressure though The universe went through a lot but no pressure bro You don't gotta be perfect, you don't gotta be a saint Just don't waste it, this was not a mistake

You're doing it wrong, dissecting the bird trying to find the song

It's a miracle that you're here at all.³

You don't need to be perfect. You don't need to be a saint.

Just don't waste it, this is not a mistake.

This remarkable life, This incredible world with all its heartbreak and all its beauty, With all its joy and all its brokenness...

God has gone through a lot just to place you here.

Enjoy it, Be grateful for it, even in a crisis; don't waste a crisis.

For the love you give in this world will never be lost.

For Christ is alive in you. But don't waste it.

¹Choose Like You was written by Becky Bliss, and I am so grateful for Becky and Nathan's frequent contributions to our worship service.

²James K. A. Smith, *On the Road With St. Augustine* (2019,) p. 159

³*Dissect the Bird*, by John Craigie, from his album *Live Opening for Steinbeck*

This sermon was delivered at Village Presbyterian Church, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, KS 66208.

The sermon can be read, heard or seen on the church's website: <http://www.villagepres.org/current-sermonsermon-archives.html>.