

First Things First

By Scott Runyon

First Baptist Church of Birmingham

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Colossians 1:11-20

SERMON

Here we are at the final week of our series on Following Jesus. This week we will work our way back to the beginning. First Things First.

So, what does it mean to follow?

Following means that we are not first. We are not out front leading. We are not in charge. Instead, we follow. This isn't very comfortable for many of us because we have been taught by our culture to put ourselves in the driver's seat, so that we can say with Frank Sinatra "I Did It My Way." We want to be in control.

But, Jesus asks us to follow, to let go of our control, to relinquish being masters of our own destiny and hand over our allegiance to Jesus, the Christ, as not only the ruler over all of the creation we see around us, but the one who leads our very lives.

READ COLOSSIANS 1:11-20

In this passage, we find that Jesus was the first born among all of creation, and that all things were created through him and for him.

Jesus is before all things, the primary leader in whom all things (both what we see and what we can't see) in this world are held together.

Not only was Jesus there at the beginning, but he was the firstborn from the dead, and the head of the church, and is first in everything that matters in life.

In Jesus, everything finds its purpose. We are not talking here of a small subset of people on this planet. We are not talking about only those who find their way into church. We are not even talking about religion. We are at a much bigger scale than that.

Colossians says that God reconciled ALL things together by bringing peace through the work Jesus did on the cross. This leaves out nothing.

What is missing in this picture? One of your enemies? A hurricane or fire? Uncle George, the black sheep of the family, who likes to piss everyone off around the Thanksgiving table by bringing up offensive and inappropriate topics?

No, nothing is left out!

There was a teacher who was cleaning out her attic and found a cross that she thought was thrown away long ago. She placed the cross on her home office desk where it sat for a few days. Then, she needed the space to do some work, so she moved the cross on top of her checkbook and her bills.

She didn't think about it at first, but the cross sitting on top of her financial things, made her think about how her faith impacts her finances. If her money were truly under the cross of Jesus, what would she buy? What would she refrain from buying? What would she give away? How much would she keep for herself?

A few days later more papers accumulated on her desk and she needed to balance her checkbook, so she moved the cross and placed in on top of some of her students' papers she was grading. This had her think about how her faith impacts her work. If her job was truly under the cross of Jesus, would she treat her students any differently? What about her colleagues? Would this change how she prepared to teach?

A few days later the cross found its way on top of some pictures of her family and friends. This had her

consider how her faith made a difference in how she related to her family. If her relationships with family and friends were under the cross of Jesus, what kind of wife might she be? What kind of mother? What kind of friend?

For several weeks the cross sat on her desk in different places continually asking her how her faith makes a difference all of the areas of her life.

What does it mean for you to place Jesus first in your life?

What areas of your life have you kept to yourself and not allowed your faith to impact?

What would your life look like if you placed Following Jesus first?

Let's recap what we have talked about through the past few months regarding what it means to follow Jesus.

Sept 2: Serious - "Taking Faith Seriously"

Way back on Sept 2, when we began this series, we talked about taking faith seriously. Even though humor and joy are part of the journey, following Jesus is serious business and requires our attention and commitment.

Sept 9: Share - “Shhh! The E Word”

Then, we talked about how we are called to share our faith with others. It is too good to keep to ourselves and in order for faith to grow, we authentically and joyfully share with others from a center of faith.

Sept 16: Shrewd - “Expanding Our Borders”

The next week was interesting. We talked about how, as followers of Jesus, we are called to be shrewd ... but like Jesus, in a positive way. We are encouraged to move beyond the limits of what we often think about as the world of religion, to take our faith into unconventional places in the world.

Sept 23: Generous - “Affording Generosity”

Then we talked about generosity related to our Why. We asked three questions: What are we committed to? What is standing in our way? and What can people count on us for?

Sept 30: Family - “Down On The Farm”

The last week in September had us talking about family and how, as followers of Jesus, we place value on faith inside our families.

Oct 7: Light - “Let The Light Shine In”

Then, we discussed light and how important it is as people of faith to bring God’s light into the dark places of this world. We talked this week about how easy it is to become overwhelmed by the election cycle and who is in office, but can remind ourselves that Jesus is Lord over it all.

Oct 14: Questions - “Wrestling With The Questions”

Oct 14 we talked about how asking honest and sometimes difficult questions, without sugar-coating or pretending, is important in our journey of faith.

Oct 28: Humble - “ Resisting Toxic Faith”

Then we talked about how being humble is important when following Jesus. This moves us away from a self-righteous or judgmental place that can be toxic to our faith, so that we can follow Jesus more completely.

Nov 4: Hope - “The Standard Of Hope”

Then we spent two weeks on “standards.” The first was the standard of hope that we live by no matter how difficult and challenging life is around us.

Nov 11: Faith - The Standard Of Faith”

Then we talked about the standard of faith that we hold like Job. We talked about how our faith is not dependent on our successes or failures, whether things go well or not. In God’s world all that is required is a bit of faith, because we rely on God’s faithfulness.

Nov 18: Engage - “Going Public”

Then, last week, we discussed how we go public with our faith and take part in building God’s dream for the world as described by Isaiah as well as Jesus.

Today, we discussed how we set priorities and place our relationship with Jesus first in our life and allow everything else to organize around that relationship.

I know that there are many things missing in this puzzle that are also important as we follow Jesus. What is missing? What else belongs?

As people of faith, we are called to follow Jesus and continue to wrestle with what that might mean for us. It will never be a perfect walk, but it can continue to grow and continue to evolve over time.