**It Is Easy to Follow Christ**

Based on [Matthew 11:25-30](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Mt11.25-30)

Preached on July 9, 2017

Fifth Sunday of Pentecost

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Today’s gospel lesson is about how easy it is to follow Christ. First, Christ reveals God’s will to us freely. Second, God’s will for our life is not complicated but simple, not difficult, but easy.

First, Christ reveals God’s will to us freely. Jesus begins by praying to his Father, “**I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children.**” To know Christ and believe in him is not something that comes through intensive study, years of schooling, testing and accreditation. It is a free gift of God. He reveals knowledge and faith in his son, Jesus Christ, and he does so selectively.

He hides it from the wise and understanding. A professor of mine once pointed out that faith is not a mystery, unbelief is. It is astounding that there are doctors, lawyers, dentists, men and women of all professions, especially in this area, who have a great amount of schooling and learning, and who lead disciplined and ethical lives, who know and have read the bible and yet they do not know or confess Jesus Christ as the one true God. Instead they believe ridiculous, blasphemous things about Satan being Jesus’ brother, and how Jesus earned his divinity and we will too someday. They are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. **They believe the doctrines of a man who was a treasure hunter and scam artist, who invented a new religion by perverting the word of God and writing a new revelation that he says he received from an angel, another bible written on Gold tablets against God’s clear word and with no proof.** A man who claimed to be a prophet, but changed his mind about what God said to him over and over again and contradicted God’s word. Joseph Smith was not a prophet, he was a false Christ anyone can see, and the church he founded is a synagogue of Satan. And yet God has sent them a strong delusion, because they exchanged his truth for a lie. And it doesn’t matter how smart they are. Did you know that the man with the longest winning streak on jeopardy is a Mormon and believes their blaspmemy? How can a guy who seems to know everything, not know the most important thing? It doesn’t matter, because God reveals the truth of the Gospel, not to the wise, but to little children.

Martin Luther once said that the plain teachings of the bible are so obvious and clear that even a schoolboy can understand them. If you know simply how to read a sentence, you can know what the bible is teaching. Isaiah 46:10 says “**My counsel shall stand and my will shall be brought to pass.**” What does this mean? Simple…what God teaches is eternal and always reliable, and what he promises will happen. You don’t need a PhD in biblical studies to understand what this means. In fact, excessive learning has served more to muddy the waters and make men doubt the plain words of scripture so they don’t have to believe God’s Word and obey it as a child obeys his parents.

Those who seek knowledge from the world, peace from the world, salvation and safety from the world will not find it from God. He withholds it from them. Jesus spoke in parables so that “**In seeing they do not believe, and hearing they will not understand**” (Matt. 13:13). Some of the smartest people I know, even pastors, have trouble simply saying “Thus sayeth the Lord” to settle a matter. They believe there is always more to consider, more to study, more to know about the world before you can commit to what the bible seems to be teaching.

We subscribe to and confess the Apostles’ Creed because it so simply confesses what the bible teaches. Jesus came down from heaven, was born, died for our sins, rose again, ascended to heaven and will come again to set all things right. And yet intellectual men of high reputation continually question, “Did God really say?” Did God really say what he said? Yes he said cross-dressing is a sin (Deuteronomy 22:5), but did he mean it? Yes okay, he meant it *at the time he said it*, but does he really mean it for the world today? Okay, maybe he said it and meant it for always, but does he really want us to teach it when the world won’t listen to us anyway?

Jesus says, “**All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him**.” Thus sayeth the Lord. And the Lord reveals himself not to the proud, the self-sufficient, the intellectuals who would try to know God through their own investigations. No one finds God unless He wants to be found, no one comes to God unless He calls them. And He calls them to believe, not through schools and universities, not through historical investigation and the scientific method, many seek him in these things but they will not find him. The Father reveals himself only through His Son, who is his Word made flesh, and who teaches his eternal and unimpeachable will to little children, disciples who hear, believe, and obey what they have been taught from the Scriptures.

It is a great comfort to know that it is not up to your intellect or your investigations to reveal God. He reveals himself freely through the Son. There are those who try to find God apart from Christ and His Word. Scripture says this about them: They are “**always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth** (2 Tim 3:7). Because by the Holy Scriptures, the truth is handed to them on a silver platter, and they put it aside to find it another way, and their investigations entrench them ever more in the world and further and further away from the master who bought them, and who would freely give all things to them of only they would receive from Him. Instead, they want to become wise without Him in the eyes of the world, and so God regards them as fools and will not entrust himself to them, for he knows the hearts of men (John 2:24-25).

Second, following Jesus is easy because God’s will for our life is not complicated but simple, not difficult, but easy. First, God in Jesus Christ tells you who he is, what he has done for you, and what he expects of you. You don’t have to work for it, he tells you all you need to know and you can rest, and not be anxious. Jesus says, “**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light**.”

It is a common question in protestant evangelicalism to ask “what is God’s will for your life.” I can think of no greater burden to lay on God’s people than to tell them that it is up to figure out what God wants them to do. No, instead He tells them. Jesus says elsewhere, “**If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me**” (Matt. 16:24). That’s what Christ wants you to do. And that cross is heavy and will crush you if you try and hold it up by your own powers, without Christ. You must first deny yourself, repent, turn away from your own ideas and ambitions, because they weigh you down. Jesus says it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. He says to the rich young man who kept all the commandments, “go sell all you have, give your possessions to the poor and come and follow me”, and the young man left weeping for he had many possessions.

I’m sure it’s not just my children, but I know for sure my children have this sort of a problem. My son will be reading a book or playing with some toy. I send him upstairs to get dressed for the day, or tell him to go get his shoes on cause we’re leaving. Fifteen minutes later I see him still trying to get ready. He didn’t drop his book, he didn’t put down the toy, but he continues to read or play. Rather than set down the book and grab the shoe with both hands to put it on easily, he’ll wiggle his foot forever in the shoe hoping it’ll eventually slip on. He’ll sit upstairs and play with his toy and I’ll ask him two three times why he isn’t dressed yet. “Oh, I forgot” as he continues to play with his toy. Distracted. First put down the book, and you can put the shoe on easily. Put down the toy and you won’t forget what you were told to do.

So too, for those who want to balance their worldly ambitions and desires while serving God, the cross he gives them will be heavy, and it will be a yoke they cannot bear and they will cast Christ’s yoke aside, and Him with it. But to those who cast aside their ambitions, and self-serving priorities, even their very self, they will find that Christ’s commands are not burdensome; they will find his yoke is light because he is the one who carries the load. You simply follow. You cannot serve two masters, you will love one and hate the other (Matt. 6:24). Serve Christ, his gift is eternal, his peace is now, his way is to the heavenly Father who gives all things freely to his own sons and daughters.

This is not to say that there is no struggle in this life for those who live with Christ. St. Paul gives a powerful account of his own struggle against the flesh in the Epistle lesson today (Romans 7:14-25a). Though he has Christ, and Christ has him, he still struggles with sin that remains in all believers until death. He says, “**The good that I want I do not do, and the evil I do not want I do…who can save me from this body of death…thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

When you come to Christ, he gives you his Holy Spirit, who makes you holy and gives you the desire for righteousness, to hate things that are sinful and to love things that are Good. And though you struggle to do what pleases God, you keep the struggle because you are not content with your sin and want to do better. And where you fail, have failed, and continue to fail, Christ has succeeded in fulfilling all righteousness for you who believe. And by your faith, his righteousness is yours.

Without Christ, you cannot do anything but love sin and hate God. But following Jesus is easy, because he reveals all things to you, and because he teaches you to cast aside your sin and love his commandments, and he gives you the ability to do it from the heart, because he has already accomplished your salvation, and your following God’s law is not an unwelcomed burden but a labour of love for your heavenly Father.