

Live the New Life (2): **Worship and Obedience to Jesus**

Romans 12:1

12 Therefore I urge you, brothers *and sisters*, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*

John 14:21

²¹ The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will **reveal Myself** to him.”

Introduction

Recap:

Last Sunday, I spoke about what it means to be a “Christian”—a follower of Christ. I also talked about what it means to be in Christ. Here’s one way to understand the concept. Consider this way: Christ is the book, and you are the bookmark. As long as the bookmark is in the book, it will go wherever the book goes. Since it is in the book, whatever happens to the book, it also happens to the bookmark. In the same way, since we are in Christ, whatever happened to Christ, it also happened to us.

That’s why God sees your old self dead when Christ died on the cross. God sees you resurrected when Christ resurrected from the dead, too. In Christ, you are a new creation. You are ‘born again’ in Christ. It is Christ who makes you a new creation, not you being morally good.

The sign of a new creation is this: Christ lives in you. You no longer live for yourself, but for Christ. Who’s sitting in the throne of your heart right now? Who’s calling the shots in your life? Is it Christ or is it still you?

Remember you are in Christ. You serve Christ, not yourself or anything else.

Let’s go to our first verse Romans 12:1. *Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.***

Present Your Bodies:

Apostle Paul urges us here to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable.

Present your bodies: Do you present your bodies to the Lord? Most of us don't, because we don't know what it means. Do I do that? Yes, I do. Why? First, God commands me to do so. Next, I think it is a great way to start the day. It works much better for me than a morning coffee. This is what I do every morning in my bed. As soon as I open my eyes, I say to God, "Lord, I offer myself to you today as an instrument of righteousness, joy, and peace. Use me for your glory."

Living Sacrifice: Let's think about the meaning of sacrifice first. For thousands of years, animal sacrifices had been an integral part of worship. Throughout the Bible, you see a pattern. Wherever worship took place, and whenever God's people called upon the name of the LORD, they always offered animal sacrifices until Christ came. Here's a little bit of detailed information about sacrifices.

In the Old Testament days, no one would go to God's temple without sacrifices/offerings. Of course, they went there to pray and worship; however, God commanded them to bring something to God, either animals or grains in the form of sin offering, or peace offering, or even thank offering. We the Church of Christ continue that tradition in worship even today; no longer in animal sacrifices but in monetary offerings.

Remember this: your offerings mean more than just dropping a couple of dollars on the plate in worship. It means to give **all** you have—that is, yourself. E.g. An American missionary to Korea, Horace Grant Underwood: when he was a child, during the offering on Sunday, he had no money to give, so he offered himself to the Lord by sitting on the offering plate. Present yourself as a living sacrifice to the Lord. Holy and acceptable to the Lord.

Holy and acceptable to God: What's that mean? It means quality control on your part. You don't want to give God anything that isn't holy or the best, do you? The Lord detests the sacrifice of the wicked (Proverbs 15:8). You'd rather want to present yourself as holy and acceptable to God, don't you? How do you do that? By examining your heart condition before you give yourself to God. By repenting of your sins and asking God to forgive your sins.

Spiritual Worship: Worship first, then spiritual.

What is **worship**? Is it just to show up, sit up, sing up, listen up, pay up, and stand up? No, it is much more than that. Worship is an encounter with God where you offer yourself to God. That's why even though you can't sing, even though you have no money to give, and even though you don't get a thing from the pastor's sermon, you still join others to worship God. Before you expect to get something from worship, learn to present yourself to God first. Let me repeat: the main purpose of worship is to come and offer yourself to God. All others are extra. It seems, though, that we do everything else in worship but the offering ourselves part.

Spiritual Worship. What is spiritual worship, then? It means for us to offer ourselves to God **in spirit and in truth**. Jesus explains like this: *“the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks”* (John 4:23, NIV). When the Holy Spirit guides us in worship, we worship in spirit. Worship in spirit also means we are not limited to space and time as spirit is not limited by space or time. That also means, we don’t have to limit our worship services only to Sundays or certain times, either. We can worship God anytime and wherever we are; we can worship in nature (note: it doesn’t replace the regular corporate worship at sanctuary, though). We can worship in the car. We can worship in our private room while praying. We worship God in spirit, because God is spirit.

Spiritual worship also means that we **worship God in truth**. In other words, don’t worship with feelings alone. We worship God with God’s Word the truth. That’s why in the Protestant tradition, the Word of God proclaimed is so important that it takes up about 1/3 of the worship time. We Methodists take this tradition of proclaiming God’s Word very seriously. I will speak more about how important God’s Word is in our life next week.

Let’s move on to the next verse, John 14:21.

Love of Jesus: John 14:21. ²¹ *The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and **the one who loves Me** will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.”*

Does Everyone Love Jesus? Not every one loves Jesus. I get that. What about you? Do you love Jesus? If you say, “Yes, I do,” how do you love Him? Is it that feeling you have, the fuzzy and cozy feeling? Or, does your love for Jesus change often depending on whose definition of love you follow? E.g. A popular song I used to hear on radio in 1970s: *“Love is feeling, feeling is love.”*

Let’s find out what Jesus means about the love of Him. He says, if anyone has My commandments and keep them, they love Me. His love language is action, not just words. E.g. Last month, I spoke about Gary Chapman’s “5 Love Languages”: words of affirmation, quality time, gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. Obviously, the love language for Jesus is action. Love is a verb. Jesus says, “Show your love through keeping my commands.” I would be a hypocrite if I confess that I love Jesus and yet don’t keep His commands. E.g. *“I love Jesus to death, yet I will never forgive John Doe.”*

Revelation of Jesus:

²¹ *The one who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will **reveal Myself** to him.”*
(John 14:21)

Did Jesus ever appear to you? If so, how did **He reveal Himself to you**? Of course, there's more than one way that He appears to us. Many different venues such as dreams, visions, written words, prayers, and circumstances; however, there's **a common denominator**: Jesus doesn't appear to anyone and everyone. He reveals Himself only to those who obey Him (differently put, to those who keep His commandments)—today's verse, John 14:21, confirms that.

I can testify to His truth: Jesus indeed made Himself known to me after I obeyed His commands. When I obeyed His voice, I also witnessed that God's promise came true: "*When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him*" (Proverbs 16:7, NKJV). When I pleased Him, Christ made my enemy at peace with me.

We all want to experience Jesus in a real way, not in a superficial way. Here's a reality, though. Many of us have head knowledge of Jesus. We know Him by reading devotionals and commentaries or hearing someone else's testimonies or sermons. We hear a lot about Jesus. Yet, we lack personal knowledge of Christ. Please get this. It is time that we knew Him personally. He too wants us to **experience the living God**, the Almighty God, **in a tangible way** so we can say to everyone that we know God and Jesus.

So, how can we know Jesus personally? By keeping His commands. Obeying His will is the prerequisite for experiencing the living God. Let's say you want to take a course "Economics 201" in college. Before you take 201, though, you must pass Economics 101 first. Same with experiencing God. Love Jesus first through keeping His commandments before you expect Him to appear to you. When you love Him, He will love you back and reveal Himself to you.

Remember: To love Jesus is to know His commandments and keeping them. I will speak more about this next Sunday.

Action Points:

Say a daily prayer to offer yourself to God as a living sacrifice.

Know God's will for you in the Bible. Dust off your Bible and put it in the most visible place. Start reading it. Download the Bible app on your smart phone. Start reading it. In fact, next Sunday, I want everyone to bring your personal Bible to church. Invite your friend to come to our service with their Bible, too.

Amen.