**SERMON SERIES:**

**LIVING A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE**

 **“The Victory Of Full Obedience”**

*John 14:21-24*

Let the rejoicing begin! We’ve reached the end of our summer sermon series about living a victorious Christian life! Very quickly let’s review where we’ve been during June and July: we’ve studied how we can have real victory in our daily lives by recognizing that we’re “in Christ” and no longer “in Adam.” The old sinful self in Adam was crucified and put to death with Christ on the cross. Because of that we now live under grace rather than under the law. Our relationship to God is through the grace of Christ, not through perfect, sinless obedience to the law.

We now understand that we’re the very righteousness of Jesus Christ, and when God looks at us he doesn’t see wretched, miserable sinners―but rather he sees the good, holy, pure character of his Son on us. This righteousness is worked out in us as we allow the Holy Spirit to fill us each day, and as we allow the Spirit to help us have seeking hearts which hunger for God in worship, prayer and the Scriptures. Last Sunday we discussed how there’s victory in suffering—in imitating the example of Jesus and dying to our own agendas and desires. As we willingly give up and do without so that others may be blessed, we find that we’re living as true children of our heavenly Father.

Let’s turn to today’s Scripture reading, John 14:21-24.

A foundational principle of living a victorious Christian life is obeying the will and commands of Christ. This draws together all that we’ve been learning: what’s been done for us in Jesus Christ—what we’ve received as members of his adopted family—and what we’re called to be—all are united and dependent on our response of full obedience.

However, obedience isn’t a word―or response—that we get overly excited about, amen. We tend to hear it and imagine being forced to do something we really don’t want to do: ***like the*** ***story*** ***about the*** ***father who had problems getting his son to*** ***clean up*** ***his room. The son would agree to pick things up but*** ***then*** ***wouldn’t*** ***follow through. After high school the son*** ***joined the*** ***Marine*** ***Corps. When he came home after basic*** ***training, his*** ***father*** ***asked him what he’d learned. “Dad,”*** ***the son replied, “I*** ***learned what ‘NOW’ means.”***

Before his betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus told his disciples that their obedience to his teachings and example would be what identified them as his.

*21”Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.”*

*22Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, “Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?”*

*23Jesus replied, “All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them.  24Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.”*

Do we hear what Jesus was saying? Those who’re obedient to the commands of Jesus are the ones who love Jesus. Our love is reflected in and through our willingness to do what Jesus did and to live as Jesus lived. He didn’t say “Those who go to church every week” or “Those who sit on a committee are the ones who love me.” True love for Jesus manifests itself in how we respond when we’re called to live a certain way, or to do what Christ desires us to do.

***In his book*** **“Radical: Taking Back Your Faith From the American Dream*,*** ***pastor David Platt talks about obedience. He says:*** ***“God beckons storm clouds and they come.  He tells the wind*** ***to blow and the rain to fall, and they obey immediately.  He*** ***speaks to mountains, ‘You go there,’ and he says to the seas,*** ***‘You stop here,’ and they do it.  Everything in all creation*** ***responds in obedience to the Creator...until we get to you and*** ***me.  We have the audacity to look God in the face and say,*** ***‘No.’”*** If we obey the commands of Jesus, then we love him; if we refuse or ignore the commands of Jesus, then we don’t―it’s that simple.

Jesus also said if we’re fully obedient, he will *reveal himself* to us. As the Lord speaks to us through the Spirit or through the Scriptures, and as we respond with obedience, we discover more and more about Christ: we feel his heart for the poor and lost. We know his grief over sin and violence. We understand the joy of serving and blessing others. Without such obedience and submission, we fail to see and understand. We may possess great intellectual knowledge about Jesus, but without obedience, we don’t truly *know* him.

That explains much of the powerlessness and apathy in the modern church: many Christians have failed to be obedient to the commands of our Lord, and as a result we don’t know him like we should. We’ve chosen to replace full obedience with the accumulation of knowledge.

***We’ve probably all known someone who*** ***knew the Bible backward and forward, who could quote*** ***verses for just about any situation…but whose lifestyle or*** ***attitude was an embarrassment to the name of Jesus Christ.*** There was no obedience to the teaching and example of Jesus. Lots of knowledge but no obedience. Jesus said there would be those who want the benefits without the obedience. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus said, *“Not all people who sound religious are really godly. They may refer to me as ‘Lord,’ but they still won’t enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The decisive issue is whether they obey my Father in heaven. On judgment day many will tell me, ‘Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you…”*

I particularly like the way this passage is worded in The Message translation: *“Knowing the correct password—saying ‘Master,* *Master’ for instance—isn’t going to get you anywhere with me. What is required is serious obedience—doing what my Father wills. I can see it now—at the Final Judgment, thousands strutting up to me and saying ‘Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects had everyone talking.’ And do you know what I’m going to say? ‘You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don’t impress me one bit. You’re out of here.’* What a frightening thought! Yet this tells us plainly that a lot of spiritual talk or biblical knowledge isn’t going to cut it. Once again the key issue is obedience.

In our Scripture reading today we hear: *Judas (not Judas Iscariot, but the other disciple with that name) said to him, “Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?”* ***I think what Judas was asking is similar to*** ***the sort of thing we may have heard others ask: ‘Why doesn’t*** ***Jesus just show himself or do something so that everyone*** ***would see and automatically know? Why doesn’t he just*** ***prove to everyone he exists so there would be no doubt?’***

Jesus responded to Judas’ question: *“All who love me will do what I say. My Father will love them, and we will come and make our home with each of them. Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me. And remember, my words are not my own. What I am telling you is from the Father who sent me.”* Yes, Jesus could supernaturally make everyone in the worldsee and recognize him as the Son of God, the Savior of theworld, the Alpha and Omega. He could speak a word anddispel every doubt. But if he did that, would we need faith? Would we love him?

Jesus doesn’t magically zap us into knowing and accepting him for that would rob us of our free will. Instead, he desires that we love him, just as he loves us. And not the squeaky, cutesy love like on a greeting card; but rather the raw, uninhibited, all-out love we should have for the One who has become our sin and died for us.

If we love Jesus more than our material goods—more than our reputations—more than our goals or dreams— more than our families—more than our church—more than our pride—more than our comfort—more than what others think—then we’ll seek to be obedient in order to please the One we love so much.

Jesus said it as plainly as it can be said: *Anyone who doesn’t love me will not obey me.* Therefore, each of us must look inside ourselves—and at our outward conduct and witness—and admit whether or not we have a true, honest, everything-on-the-line love for Jesus Christ. Because if we do we’ll walk in obedience.

I don’t pretend that being obedient is easy. We learn very early in life that obedience is challenging to our rebellious spirits. But the more we respond in obedience, the easier it becomes. ***As children, we learn that if we clean up our room, do our chores, and finish our homework when we’re asked, things go much smoother in the house! And the more we do those things, the easier it is to do them the next time we’re asked. Eventually, we can reach a point where we do them without being asked.***

This can also happen in our Christian lives. In fact, God desires that we mature in the same way, so that we do what pleases him without even being asked. Just like any good parent, God longs for his children to grow whole and healthy, full of life and love. He provides all that we need in order to achieve this, if we’ll let him be our “Daddy” and Jesus our Master.

If you’re ready to take a deeper step, to make a firmer commitment, to choose obedience to Christ in all things, I invite you to open your hands, palms up, in your lap. Let us pray: *Lord Jesus, master of our souls and author of our salvation, have mercy upon us. Search our hearts in these moments. You know those who hunger and desire to live in victory and joy. Help us to follow you and be fully obedient to your will. Show us what the attitudes of our hearts are; where we have loved the things of this world too much; what habits and actions we have that continue to stand in your way. Show us where and how we need to adjust our lives to be in accordance with what your Word expects from us.*

*If we have not been adopted into your family, died to our old self in Adam, and surrendered our life for yours, in these moments you stand ready to receive us. Your Spirit is at work in us, and if any are ready to live fully and obediently as your disciple, let them open their heart now and receive you.*

*We no longer wish to be ordinary people, indistinguishable from the world around us. We want to be victorious people! We want to live in grace, filled with the Holy Spirit! If others reject or misunderstand us as a result, we shall embrace the suffering, no matter the cost. We will remain faithful to you and ask that you will use us to bring your kingdom into reality here on earth. In the name of the Father who has created us; in the name of the Son, with whom we are heirs of life eternal; and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who sets us apart for every good work: amen.*