

Welcome and Announcements – Brendon

Good morning, Emmanuel. Welcome to our service for the twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, or the twelfth Sunday of ordinary time. It is wonderful to be back with you after a couple weeks of holidays. Karen and I drove out to Vancouver to see Stefan, our older son, and got to see some family and a few friends along the way - all at a responsible distance. And then we went camping for a few days up north. Both trips were wonderful and refreshing. But, as I often say, it's always good to come home. I am grateful to Robin for hosting the past two weeks, and for the rest of the staff who keep doing what they do so well, whether I'm here or not.

We gather each week to imagine what our lives could be like because Jesus is Lord, and we believe he is at work in our world making all things new. So we gather to be reminded of who Jesus is, King of kings and Lord of lords, of who we are as his beloved children, and who together we can be as a community seeking his kingdom and pursuing his righteousness and justice in our world. My persistent prayer is that our times together will help to form and shape us into people who delight in Jesus and his kingdom and who are seeking to live out his righteousness and justice in all spheres of our lives.

As we enjoy the last few days of summer, I imagine most of us are thinking about the fall and what it will bring, wrestling with questions around schooling and returning to work, the coming flu season and the potential for spikes, upcoming elections and all that, as well as the particular challenges that we all face. Let's continue to pray for each other and to do what we can to support and encourage each other in the ongoing journey.

We continue to pray and plan for the possibility of returning to in-person gatherings. You should have received a survey in your inbox this past Friday. I trust that each of you will take a few minutes to complete it and let us know how you are feeling about re-engaging this fall. As we mention in the survey, we will continue to provide an online option for those who choose not to re-engage at this time. I am personally longing for us to be together again in person, in spite of all the restrictions of this particular season. So please click on the survey and give us your feedback before Tuesday at 6:00pm.

Monday, August 31, is the deadline to send in your video or audio clip with your response to the question, "What do I appreciate about Emmanuel Baptist Church?" Your response could be a word, a phrase, or a single sentence. Those will all be combined into a video collage to celebrate our 90th anniversary as a church on September 13. When I first mentioned this a month ago, I said that I was hoping for at least ninety responses. It appears that I may have to drastically reduce those expectations as we are far from that. But I am still living in hope that much can happen this week. So please take a moment to record your clip and send it to 90years@ebap.ca.

Speaking of deadlines, we have extended the deadline for nominations for elders to the end of this month. We are still looking for one or two candidates to serve as elders. This is a great way to serve our church family and support the leadership of our church. If

you would be interested in serving in this way, or know someone you'd like to see serve as an elder, give them a nudge and get in touch with the nomination committee through the church office. Send an email to info@ebap.ca.

As always, you can find more information on our website, www.ebap.ca, about ways to connect. Simply click on the banner that says "New Ways of Connecting @ EBC". A lot of that information is also included in the weekly email that Jan sends out on Mondays. And remember to check out the weekly bulletin for prayer concerns and other information about our church family.

Now, let us lift our hearts in joyful worship and grateful thanksgiving to Jesus, our Lord and King. May we awaken to his presence with us and in us. May we worship with awe and wonder the God he has revealed to us as Father, Son and Spirit - Unity in Trinity, Trinity in Unity. Amen.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

Everything We Need

In the morning Lord we do look to You
for the strength we need just to make it through
Have mercy

In the evening Lord we look back and say
it was in Your strength that we made our way
Have mercy

You are everything we need
feed us Lord
You are everything we need
feed us Lord

Gord Johnson

Kids Moment - Beverly

Hi everybody. And a big howdy to all the kids listening today! I am thinking of you and praying for you and your families as September is coming quickly. There is so much we don't know about the future. But let's remember friends, God knows. God knows. And whether we are in the middle of a crazy storm or calm seas, we are not alone. God goes with us.

Today I'm reading from the Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd Jones. Speaking of storms and still waters ... let's listen to a story from Mark 4 and Matthew 8. Even the winds and the waves obey Jesus.

The Captain of the Storm

The sun was going down. The air was warm and still.

"Let's go across the lake," Jesus said to his friends. Jesus had been helping people all day and now he was tired. So they left the crowds at the shore and set out in a small fishing boat.

Jesus climbed into the boat to take a nap. As soon as his head touched the pillow, he fell fast asleep.

It was a beautiful evening. A gentle breeze rustled the sails. The friends were chatting happily as they headed out into the middle of the lake. Everything was perfect. Just right for a nice quiet sail...

They were only about halfway across when, out of nowhere, whirling winds swept across the lake, fierce and strong, like a hurricane. A blinding flash of lightning lit up the sky. Thunder roared right overhead!

The storm blew the water into towering waves that hurled the little boat up, up, up - then sent it hurtling, CRASHING back down, down, down!

The fishing boat was blown and buffeted and tossed and turned - back and forth and up and down and left and right and round and round! And in the middle of the storm, Jesus was sleeping.

Now Jesus' friends had been fishermen all their lives, but in all their years fishing on this lake they had never once seen a storm like this one. No matter how hard they struggled with their ropes and sails, they couldn't control their boat. This storm was too big for them.

But the storm wasn't too big for Jesus. "Help!" they screamed. "Wake up! Quick, Jesus!" Jesus opened his eyes.

"Rescue us! Save us!" they shrieked. "Don't you care?" (Of course Jesus cared, and this was the very reason he had come - to rescue them and to save them.)

Jesus stood up and spoke to the storm. "Hush!" he said. That's all. And then the strangest thing happened. Immediately the wind stopped. The water calmed down. It glittered innocently in the moonlight and lapped quietly against the side of the boat, as if nothing had happened. The little boat bobbed gently up and down. There was a deep stillness and a great quiet all around.

Then Jesus turned to his wind-torn friends. "Why were you scared?" he asked. "Did you forget who I Am? Did you believe your fears, instead of me?"

Jesus' friends were quiet. As quiet as the wind and the waves. And into their hearts came a different kind of storm.

"What kind of man is this?" they asked themselves anxiously. "Even the winds and the waves obey him!" they said, because they didn't understand. They didn't realize yet that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus' friends had been so afraid, they had only seen the big waves. They had forgotten that, if Jesus was with them, then they had nothing to be afraid of. No matter how small their boat--or how big the storm.

Have a great week everybody!

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

I Lift My Eyes Up / Too Proud

I lift my eyes up to the mountains
where does my help come from
My help comes from You maker of heaven
Creator of the earth

Can you sing over me words of comfort
can you satisfy me sweet honey
Can you break through me strong hands
can you undo me enough to heal me

Oh how I need You Lord
You are my only hope
You're my only prayer
So I will wait for You
to come and rescue me
Come and give me life

You take the weight from my shoulders
my hands were clinched now their open
I'll take Your goodness poured from the sky
food from the ravens water from the dry well

Brian Doerksen
Aaron Strumpel
Laura Elizabeth Thornton
Timothy Thornton

Community Prayer – Jan

Good Morning. My name is Jan Nerenberg and I will lead us in community prayer this morning. It is good to gather together, through technology, although I miss seeing all of you. Let us begin with a prayer of confession:

We confess to you, Lord, what we are:
We are not the people
we want others to think we are;
We are afraid to admit even to ourselves what lies in the depths of our souls
But we do not want to hide our true selves from you.

(Silence)

We believe that you know us as we are, and yet you love us.
Help us not to shrink from self-knowledge;
Teach us to respect ourselves
and affirm our uniqueness and worth;
give us the courage to put our trust in your guidance and power.

(Silence)

We confess to you, Lord, the unrest of the world,
to which we contribute and in which we share.
Forgive our reliance on weapons of terror,
our cold indifference to the needs of others,
our discrimination
against people of different races
our preoccupation
with material standards.

(Silence)

Forgive our being unsure
of the good news about you and from you,
and so unready to tell it, share it and live it.
Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt into the freedom and energy
of forgiven people.
And for those who through long habit find forgiveness hard to accept
we ask you to break their bondage and set them free through Jesus Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

Baptist Union of Great Britain

Father God, Jesus the Son, and our Comforter the Holy Spirit. You who are Holy and good and just. The Ancient of Days. We come before you today as we gather in our homes, on a walk or sitting in the sunshine. We acknowledge that this has been a difficult season for most of us, yet You have been so faithful to us. We come before you with open hands and grateful hearts knowing that Your presence brings us hope.

We are thankful for this season of sun and warmth and chances to have moments with family and friends. But we are aware of those who might feel alone at this time. Help us Lord to reach out, as You lead us, to those who are isolated for many reasons.

We are grateful for Your provision for us. You have blessed us abundantly and we are very thankful for being able to continue to operate our church. But we know that there are many struggling financially or out of work during this time of uncertainty and economic upheaval. Please help them to find work, as we continue to trust You for our needs and our future.

We thank you for the progress that Peggy Antonichuk has made in her healing. We thank you that Shirley Hildebrand is recovering at home now. For Emily, Ann and others that are both mentioned in our bulletin and those who are not, who continue to need recovery ...we lift them to You now and ask for your healing Hand on them. For those

who are grieving losses of family members or walking with others who continue to have health issues; may our Comforter be with them in their grief and distress and grant them all that they need in this time.

There are also many of us who are struggling mentally or relationally. There are prayers that seem to go unanswered. We understand your faithfulness to us O God, but we are often impatient waiting for your timing. Help us to recognise Your grace and mercy to us, as we wait.

It seems that this list is long, Lord, but we also have two, maybe three elections coming this fall. Daniel tells us that You “change times and seasons; You depose kings and raises up others. You give wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning”. We ask this of our leaders that You are raising up. May they be people who want to serve others and You, not themselves. May they be wise and discerning. And for our own leadership on the elder’s board. Will you place this calling for leadership and service on people in our congregation? You know what the future holds for Emmanuel Baptist, Saskatoon, our province and our country and we trust our future to You.

We thank you for each of our staff and the work that is done for you and for our benefit. Bless them Jesus and keep them well and thriving in You. As we look at our options for reopening, grant them wisdom to lead us through this time.

We want to be a people of praise and gratitude. So, for all that you have done, give, heal, bless and most of how You love us; may we reciprocate Your love and grace to others that you bring in our lives.

In Jesus name and for Your glory, Amen.

Scripture Reading - Rachel

Good morning. My name is Rachel Bueckert and I will be reading John 15:1-17:

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹ “I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will

be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶ You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

Awaken My Soul

Come, come like the rain
a quiet stream, a holy downpour
Come, come like the rain
a truer fount than I could ask for

Reign over me, awaken my soul

Come, come like the wind
a gentle breeze a Holy breath here
Come, come like the wind
Your perfect love removing all fear

Breathe into me, awaken my soul
breathe into us, awaken our souls

Joel Davis
Brady Toops

Abiding Reflections - Roger and Marilyn

(Brendon) Please join me in prayer: Triune God, Father, Son and Spirit, thank you for your love for us and for this life that you have drawn us into. Grant us the grace to pay attention to you and to all that you are doing in us and among us as we walk with you and live in you day by day. Speak to us now by your Spirit and help us to hear from you those things you want to say to us now. We ask in your holy name. Amen.

We are almost at the end of our summer series called “Abide” in which we’ve been exploring the invitation from Jesus to abide or remain in him, as he abides or remains in us. And as we’ve been doing, let’s listen to a couple of people in our church family as they respond to the question: “What does abiding in Jesus look like in your life?” Today we hear from Roger Deweerd and Marilyn Kolosky:

(Roger) When I think of what abiding in Jesus means I think of the words that David Toth shared about the Trinity, and after reading *Experiencing the Trinity* by Darrell Johnson, I have a new idea about what abiding in Jesus means. As the Trinity represents the Father, Son and Holy Spirit joined in a triangle with love at the centre connecting each one, to abide in Jesus means I also abide in the Father and the Holy Spirit. As I thought about the word abide, I decided to see how the dictionary defines it and it was defined as: "Accepting or acting in accordance with a rule, decision or recommendation". As I think of how the definition fits in with the Trinity, the Father has set some rules, the Ten Commandments, Jesus allows us the opportunity to decide to follow Him and the Holy Spirit gently recommends how we interact with the Father, Son and others in our lives. My role is to accept and act in accordance with what the Father, Son and Holy Spirit place on my heart.

There was also a second definition for abide that also fits into the Trinity and that is the informal one that says: "Be unable to tolerate someone or something". What comes to my mind here is sin, how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit condone sin, as a human I fall short of being the person I would like to be, as sin is part of my life that I struggle with. Yet the love that connects the three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is passed on to us, this love is full of mercy, grace, and forgiveness towards us when we acknowledge and confess our sin. That is the love and compassion all three have for us, to forgive us with mercy and grace. To abide in Jesus means to have that same type of love with mercy, grace and forgiveness the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have shown towards me. As I continue to grow in abiding in the Trinity, as well as to fill my heart with mercy, grace and forgiveness, I also work to add the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control (Galatians 5: 22, 23). Together with the help of the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I will continue to develop and grow in these characteristics so that I can abide and serve God to do His will with all my heart.

(Marilyn) Our whole world is in chaos right now and now more than ever we need to look to Jesus, to cast all our anxiety on Him for He cares for us deeply and has a plan for each of our lives, even though we maybe can not yet see what that is. We have led lives filled with so-called purpose, schedules, commitments and needless busyness that has led to stress, fatigue, anxiety and needless expectations but we have left Jesus out of the equation. Jesus wants us to look to Him. Psalm 16, verse 5 says, "You, Lord are all I have and You give me all I need. My future is in your hands." God has promised He will never leave or forsake us. He will use these troublesome times to shield us in his mercy. A quote from Jenny Howell I recently read that I liked that said. "God chooses to harvest hope in the midst of wild uncertainty and deep heartache."

We are in this place today none of us ever dreamed to experience and though God never promised life would be easy He does promise He will always be with us. This is a time of opportunity to strengthen our relationship with Jesus, to abide in His presence and trust in His provision for our needs. It means giving up control, which we think we need and giving it back to Him and to immerse ourselves in His presence. We may have to endure more than we think we can handle but the greatest strength and growth in faith often comes in midst of greatest pain and struggles. God wants our attention. I pray we will give it to Him freely without questioning. He wants us and we need Him.

Something I read on Facebook said, "When life knocks you down you are in a perfect position to pray." Pray that God will take away your fear, give you rest and wait to be

refreshed and for the renewal He has planned for each of us. Remember to always remain in His presence.

Teaching - Brendon

Thanks, Roger and Marilyn. As I've said before, I would love to hear how others of you abide in Jesus. We have two more Sundays in this series so there's still time for you to offer your thoughts on abiding. What does abiding look like in your life? Please send me an email with your response.

Before I get into today's teaching, I want to express my gratitude to the three women who shared in the teaching over the past three Sundays. Beverly, Robin and Laura all did a great job in exploring their respective topics of friendship, prayer and joy. Friendship and prayer are both means by which we abide in Jesus, but they are also the fruit of abiding in him, as is joy.

I want us to continue to think about the fruit of abiding in Jesus over these next three weeks. Fruit is something that Jesus speaks about frequently in our text. It is an emphasis that is woven throughout his discussion on abiding.

In verses 1-2, he says: "My Father, the gardener, removes branches that don't bear fruit, and prunes branches that do bear fruit so that they will produce even more fruit."

Verse 4: "A branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me."

Verse 5: "Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."

Verse 8: "When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father."

Verse 16: "You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit..."

As far as Jesus is concerned, abiding in him results in fruitfulness. When we abide, we produce fruit. And notice the progression from "fruit" to "more fruit" to "much fruit" to "lasting fruit". Both gardener and vine are looking for fruitfulness from their branches. They are anticipating an abundant crop.

So what is the fruit? What is Jesus referring to when he speaks of fruit that increases through our ongoing attachment to him? What results from us sticking with Jesus, clinging to him, and making our home in the life and love that he shares with us in the Trinity?

I want to suggest three areas of fruitfulness for us to consider - three types of fruit that is produced in us as we abide in Jesus: The fruit of our character, the fruit of our witness, and the fruit of our work. As we will see, there is some overlap among these areas of

fruitfulness, but we will explore each of them separately over the next three weeks. We begin today with character.

To abide in Jesus is to become like him. Just as a branch takes on the nature and character of the vine or tree to which it is attached, so too, we take on the nature and character of Jesus. Because of our union with Jesus, because we have been joined to him through the Spirit, his life is active in us - his life flows through us as the sap from a vine or tree flows through the branches. And as we maintain our attachment to him, as we nurture our connection to him, our lives become like his. We become like him.

We begin to live like him, to think and act like him, to love and serve like him. We begin to reflect his character. And over time, we come to resemble him. We are transformed into his likeness. We are renewed into his image. The fruit of abiding in Jesus is Christlikeness - looking like Jesus, living like Jesus, becoming like Jesus.

As I noted earlier, we've already explored some aspects of such fruitfulness over the course of this series. We've heard Jesus call us to love one another as he has loved us. Love is the essence of who Jesus. Jesus is God, and, as John reminds us in his first letter, God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). Jesus calls us to remain in his love so we can express his love. As we receive his love, as we rest in his love for us, we are able to love others out of our experience of his love. Love is one aspect of Jesus' character that we reflect as we abide in him.

Friendship, prayer, and joy are also aspects of Jesus' character that we experience as we abide in him. Our capacity for each of these grows as we root ourselves deeply in his life and his love. And over time, we come to look like him and live like him in our friendships and our prayer life and our joyfulness.

In last Sunday's teaching, Laura reminded us that joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit that Paul speaks of in Galatians 5:22-23, as is love. Interestingly, in his reflections on abiding, Roger also called attention to the fruit of the Spirit. Because of their mutual indwelling as members of the Trinity, this fruit belongs to both Jesus and the Spirit - and the Father. The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of Jesus. He produces this fruit in us through the Spirit as we abide in him. The fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

The key to experiencing the fruit of the Spirit, as Paul notes in Galatians 5:25, is living by the Spirit and keeping in step with the Spirit, which is the same as abiding in Jesus. That is the way we open our lives to Jesus and the Spirit so they can produce their fruit in us. We don't produce such fruit ourselves. We can't make ourselves more loving or joyful or peaceful or patient or kind or good or faithful or gentle or more self-controlled. That is the work of Jesus and the Spirit. Our primary responsibility is to abide in Jesus; our most important task is to live in the Spirit. That's how the fruit is produced. That's how we grow up into Christlikeness.

In 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, Paul uses a different metaphor to speak about our transformation into Jesus by the Spirit. He speaks of "contemplating" or "beholding the glory of Jesus." He writes: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the

Lord, who is the Spirit.” The King James Version, on which many of us were raised, speaks of “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord.”

Sisters and brothers, we become what we behold! We take on the character of that which we contemplate. What we look at, repeatedly and persistently, informs who we become and how we live. Here, we are back to the issue of attention and attentiveness that we spoke about in the opening teaching of this series. To behold Jesus, we must awaken to him, again and again - “unnumbered times a day” as George MacDonald notes in his *Diary of an Old Soul*. We must become aware of Jesus as the one who is present with us and in us. Some of you may recall this quote from Greg Boyd from that first teaching. “Remaining aware of God’s presence,” he asserts, “is the single most important task in the life of every follower of Jesus” (*Present Perfect: Finding God in the Now*, 15).

We become what we behold. Paul says that as we behold Jesus, as we contemplate him in all his glory, we are transformed into his image. We begin to look like him. We begin to live like him.

Where do we behold Jesus? In the Scriptures! In John 5:39 he said to the religious leaders: “You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” And when he wanted to instruct the two disciples on the road to Emmaus about his life and death and resurrection, he took them through the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-46). We behold Jesus in the pages of the Scriptures. He is foreshadowed in the lives of the patriarchs; he is foretold in the teachings of the prophets; he is anticipated and celebrated in the songs of the poets of Israel. He is revealed to us in the four gospels - his life and teachings are on display there for us to delve into. He and his kingdom are proclaimed and interpreted in the book of Acts and the letters of the Apostles. And we are given multiple portraits of him in the book of Revelation, along with glimpses of how his unfolding story will finally end.

We behold Jesus by immersing ourselves in the Scriptures, by inhabiting them and allowing them to saturate our minds and transform our lives. Jesus speaks of this as abiding in his word (John 15:7). We consider his life and teachings; we steep ourselves in them so they come to shape our imaginations; we wrestle with their implications for us, and we work at obeying them. We wade into them and we settle into them and we allow them to wash over us; we open ourselves to the truth that is spoken in them about him and about who we are in him. We seek to have his story become the dominant story of our lives. We work at fixing his portrait as the primary image in our minds. We contemplate him; we meditate on him; we ruminate on him. We turn him over and over and over in our minds so we grow increasingly familiar with the details of his life and teachings.

Like a parent examining the face of their precious child, like a lover enthralled with the face of their beloved, we behold, we contemplate, we become enamoured and enthralled with him. Over time, his image is transferred to us and we become like him. We are transformed by the Spirit into his image and likeness. We become what we behold.

What are you beholding these days? What’s been capturing your attention? To what are you devoting the precious moments of your life and the priceless gift of your attention? What’s consuming you? I recognize and acknowledge with sadness how

easy it is for us to become distracted by lesser visions of glory, how readily we devote our time and our attention to images and ideas and stories that are unprofitable for us, that deform rather than transform. I wonder how many of us will look back and lament the times and attention we devoted to our screens over the Scriptures? Yes, I recognize that many of us engage the Scriptures and other profitable teachings through app on our screens, but from all reports, we devote much more time and attention to our screens than to the Scriptures, we devour many more stories about our favourite celebrities and sports teams than about Jesus, and we are shaped more by their example and teaching than by his.

If we become what we behold, what are we becoming? Consider carefully what you are beholding, what you are devoting your time and attention to. Whatever we devour with our eyes will consume our minds and transform our souls. Paul calls us to become like Jesus by beholding him. Jesus invites to become like him by abiding in him. Different language, same process, same result.

Recently, I have been considering the portrait of himself that Jesus paints for us in Matthew 11:28-30. In his wonderful invitation to those who are weary and burdened to come to him to find rest and instruction in the easy yoke of living with him, Jesus gives us a description of his heart - of who he is at his core. He says, "I am humble and gentle at heart."

I am drawn to this portrait of Jesus. I want it to inform who I am becoming and how I live - humble and gentle. Neither pretentious nor aggressive, neither haughty nor harsh, not full of myself nor filled with contempt for others. Humble and gentle - in my speech, in my thoughts, and my actions. Humble and gentle. That's who I long to be. Am I there yet? Not by a long mile, but I want to devote myself to beholding Jesus, to contemplating him so I can become like him. I want to abide in him so that he and the Spirit can produce the fruit of his character in me. I want to receive the fruit of Christlikeness by beholding Jesus and remaining in him.

What image of Jesus is holding your attention these days? Which of his portraits are you admiring and pondering? The Scriptures are full of them. Some of my favourites include the Shepherd from Psalm 23 and John 10, the servant from Isaiah 42 and 53 as well as Philippians 2, the friend of sinners from Matthew 9 and Luke 19, the donkey-riding king from Zechariah 9 and from the Gospel accounts of the triumphal entry, the big-brother leader from Hebrews 2, the great high priest of Hebrews 4-10, and the lamb-lion from Revelation 5.

I wonder what it might do for us to sit with a portrait of Jesus from the Scriptures for an extended season, using our imaginations to enter the scene and to gaze on him, delighting in his person and asking him to give us insight into his character, to help us to see his glory. What might it do for us to return to that scene again and again, day after day, for extended periods of time, to carry that image of him with us throughout the day, pausing to revisit and reflect on some particular aspect of his character or some insight that the Spirit brings to mind? How might that help to transform us into his image? How might that help to form us in Christlikeness? How might we look different over time from beholding Jesus and knowing that we are seen and known and loved by him?

In addition to living in the Spirit and beholding Jesus in the Scriptures, another way we can enter into the fruit of Christlikeness is by imitating Jesus – by doing what Jesus

does. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says that we should imitate him, just as he imitates Christ. Some may hear that as an arrogant statement from the apostle, but there was nothing arrogant about Paul. He was simply confident in his convictions and committed to pursuing Jesus. And he called the churches he invested in to do the same.

Some of you may recall the phrase that was popular when I was younger, “What would Jesus do?” It was a phrase drawn from Charles Sheldon’s book, *In His Steps: What would Jesus Do?* Several centuries before Sheldon, Thomas a Kempis wrote *The Imitation of Christ*. Both books take as their premise that we are called to imitate Jesus, to follow in his footsteps. We look at the life of Jesus, we see how he lived his life, and we imitate him. We seek to live like he did, in close relationship with God; we work at nurturing our relationship with God. We look at how he lived his life, in humble simplicity, without pretensions, or the pursuit of power or status, and we imitate him. We embrace humility and simplicity and we resist the allure of power or status. We look at how he treated others, with love and compassion and gentleness, making room for the excluded and outcasts, and we imitate him. We treat others with love and compassion and gentleness, and we create space in our lives for those on the margins. We welcome those who are ignored or excluded. And on and on we go, looking at Jesus and imitating him.

Imitation, however, can only be sustained by abiding in Jesus, by staying attached to Jesus, by participating in his life. To abide in Jesus is to participate in his life. It is to live in ongoing fellowship with him, in continual communion with him, feeding on him through his word, cultivating our friendship with him through ongoing conversation, opening our lives to his love through contemplation, receiving and resting in his love through gratitude and worship, practicing dependence and trust in him in our daily living, and engaging in mutual encouragement and loving service with our brothers and sisters, our fellow vines with whom we are entangled and intertwined in this life of abiding.

Our imitation of Jesus is meant to flow out of our participation in his life. We abide in order to imitate. Just as beholding Jesus and abiding in him can only be done through the gracious work of Jesus and his Spirit, so too our imitation of Jesus comes through the work of Jesus and the Spirit in us. We live in him in order to live like him. He is the source of our life. His life in us is what makes it possible for us to imitate him and live like him. I am regularly reminded of Paul’s words in Colossians 3:4 that “Christ is our life”. We will only succeed in imitating him if we allow his life to be active in us.

Jesus is both the source of our life and the fruit of our lives. We grow into Christlikeness as we abide in him. We experience the fruit of his character by living in the Spirit, by keeping in step with the Spirit. We are transformed into his image and likeness by beholding him and by imitating him. None of this can be done in our own strength. It can only be done by abiding in Jesus. By staying attached to him. By resting in his love for us and allowing his life to flow through us.

As I was finishing my writing yesterday morning, Karen sent me an article from Anne Voskamp, which explores much of what I have been saying from a slightly different angle, but with very similar takeaways. I would encourage you to check out what she has to say online. Anne writes: “The way the faithful grows is they decide to be Wooed by God — and Abide with God” (<https://annvoskamp.com/2020/08/need-a-lifeline-right->

now-this-is-the-visual-that-will-get-you-through-impossibly-hard-seasons-how-to-survive-a-virus-chapter-5/).

How are you allowing yourself to be wooed by Jesus these days? How are you abiding in him?

Let's pause now and ask Jesus to help us to pay attention to whatever he has been saying to us, and to give us the grace to respond as he invites us to.

Lord Jesus, You are indeed our life. Deepen our awareness of this reality and help us to live into it more fully, day by day by day. Give us eyes to behold you in all your glory and the grace to rest in your love for us and to receive your life in us. Teach us, Lord, to make our home in you, to abide in you, to make your story our dominant story and to make you our primary attachment. We ask all this in your holy name and we pray now as you taught us:

Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy name,
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

Let me say again that I would love to hear how you have been engaging with this series. How you are working at abiding in Jesus? What practices are you using to help you stay attached to him? Please send me an email me, bgibson@ebap.ca and let me know how you are doing. If you'd like prayer for anything, I, or one of the other staff would be happy to hear from you as well. We would love to pray with you and do what we can to support you. May we abide in Jesus and grow into Christlikeness. May we behold him and become like him. Amen

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness
I dare not trust the sweetest frame
but wholly lean on Jesus's name.

When darkness veils his lovely face
I rest on his unchanging grace
In every high and stormy gale
my anchor holds within the veil.

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand

His oath, his covenant, his blood
support me in the whelming flood
When all around my soul gives way
He then is all my hope and stay

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand
All other ground is sinking sand
All other ground is sinking sand

Edward Mote
William B. Bradbury

Benediction – Brendon

May we go now, dependent on God, rooted in Jesus and led by the Spirit, to fully love God and all people for God's Kingdom, pleasure and glory. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Musicians

Adam Bourassa, Amy Bourassa, Marc Bourassa, Kari Elliott, John Erik Gustafson, Scott Jeschke, Lauri Lee, Rob Lee, Scott Lepp, Chloe Meadows, Barb Milner, rob Priestley, Dave Young.