

Walking in His Steps

LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church

April 29, 2018 – AM Sermon

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1 John 2:6

Today's sermon is aimed at younger people. Because it's GEMS Sunday I hope everything I say will be understandable for a 9 year old. I also hope it will be beneficial for everyone. So the GEMS theme for this year has been *In His Steps*. All year long the GEMS have been thinking about how to follow Jesus, how to walk in his steps, and how to live the way he lived. Of course, that's what all of us Christians try to do. And so this morning using 1 John 2:6 and the passage around it, I want to think about how we do that, how we follow in Jesus' steps.

As I thought about walking with Jesus, I found myself thinking about what it's like to watch Larry play the organ. Have you ever watched Dr. Visser play the organ? It's hard to do because he's hidden away back there in his cave. If you ever get the chance you should do it, because it's pretty amazing. The easiest place to watch him is on a video. If you watch a video of our worship service online, sometimes the camera will zoom in on Dr. Visser and you will see his hands and his feet flying over the keys as he plays. Maybe you didn't know that Dr. Visser used his feet as well as his hands. That's how organists are different than piano players. When you play a piano you don't use your feet much. When you play an organ there are two keyboards so your hands are playing at different levels and your feet are playing a special foot keyboard down below! Everything is moving! Because it's so hard you would think that Dr. Visser would really have to concentrate when he plays. You'd think that he'd always be looking at his hands and feet to make sure that they are playing the right notes, but a lot of the time he doesn't have to look. Especially for the songs he knows well, Dr. Visser can look at his music and then over at the choir and then in his little video camera and then over at Mr. Mustert and he just keeps playing. He makes it look so easy. His hands and his feet just bounce around and beautiful music comes out!

Maybe when you see Dr. Visser make playing the organ look easy you say to yourself: "Man I would like to do that! That looks fun! I would like to make those big pipes and all those cool trumpets make joyful songs! I would like to do what Mr. Visser does! I would like to walk in his steps!" OK. Suppose you try to do that. You sit down at the organ and try to walk in his steps. You try to play like Dr. Visser. How do you think that would go? Not very well. You would not make the beautiful sounds Dr. Visser makes; you would make squeaks and squawks. Here's the truth: even if you came to the organ every day for a whole year your hands and feet wouldn't dance on the organ like his. You might be able to play a really simple song, but when you played your hands wouldn't dance. You would be watching your hands and watching your feet. You would play one slow, stumbling note after another. You would find it really hard to walk in Dr. Visser's steps. In fact, you would probably do what most people who try to learn the organ do. You would give up. "This is hopeless. I can't do this. I'm no good at this! I'll never be able to do this!" I'll never be able to walk in his steps.

Our Bible passage isn't asking you to imitate Dr. Visser, but it is asking you to imitate someone else who is an expert. Only this person is not an expert at something like playing an organ which, let's face it, is finally not that important. This person is an expert at living life and loving people, which is really important. This person is Jesus. All year long the GEMS have heard that we are supposed to walk in his steps. We are supposed to live life the way Jesus lived

it. That's what John is telling us to do in this whole passage. John knew that there were a lot of people in his day who thought that following Jesus was just about what you thought and what you felt. All you needed to do to was know all the Jesus stuff in your head you were fine. John does not agree. It's not just about what you think in your head; it's about what you do! You've got to do the things that Jesus commands. You've got to obey him. "Whoever claims to live in Jesus must live as Jesus did!" You've got to walk in his steps.

So... we are all supposed to be like Jesus. We are supposed to be humble like Jesus. We are supposed to be wise like Jesus. We are supposed to be courageous like Jesus, and forgiving like Jesus, and patient like Jesus and accepting like Jesus and generous like Jesus, and kind like Jesus. We are supposed to pray like Jesus. We are supposed to be holy like Jesus. We are supposed to love like Jesus. You know what, walking in Jesus' steps is not only more important than playing the organ, it's way harder! If you or I say to ourselves, "Starting today I'm going to do it! From now on I'm going to be holy and good like Jesus!" How do you think that will go? It will be like trying to play the organ. Even though you really want to do it, you won't be able to. If Jesus' life is this beautiful song full of love and holiness, my life will be a sloppy song full of squeaks and squawks. There will still be times when I am selfish and nasty and unkind. I hate to say this to you young people, but most of us older folk have be trying to follow Jesus our whole life. And even though we want to become like Jesus more than anything else in the world, there are still days when we feel like beginners.

You can probably guess what happens when people figure out how hard it is to walk in his steps. A lot of people give up. "I will never be like the Master. I am a mess. This is hopeless. I'm no good at this." They stop following Jesus. John does not want us to stop following Jesus. He wants us to keep going and in this passage he gives us some encouragement and advice; encouragement and advice meant to keep us walking in his steps. I want to share with you three things that John suggests in this passage and each of them is summed up in a word.

The first word is **abide**. Abide is an old-fashioned word and in older versions of the Bible it was the word that was in your theme verse. 'Whoever claims to abide in Jesus must walk as Jesus walked.' Abide is one of John's favorite words. He uses it 40 times in his gospel. He uses it 27 times in his letters. One of the most famous places is John 15 where Jesus says to us: "Abide in me as I abide in you." When John calls you to abide in something he wants you to stay with it, to stick with it. So in that word and the rest of the passage John says, "Abide in Jesus. I know it's hard, but stick with him on his path. With the Spirit's help, you can do this!" Think of how it is with regular walking. All of you young people are pretty good walkers. If I asked you to walk down the aisle here, you could all do it. If I asked you to walk down the aisle and do a spin halfway down you could do it. If I asked you to walk down the aisle backwards you could do it. How did you get so good at walking? Walking is hard. Especially on two legs. My dog can't walk on two legs. Cats can't do it. But you can! And you can do it no problem! It wasn't always that way. There was a time when you couldn't walk. There was a time when you could barely stand. You had to hold onto something to keep from falling. But then one day you tried to walk...and you fell. So you tried to walk again...and you fell again. But then you tried a third time...and this time...you fell over, hit your head on the coffee table and broke your Mom's favorite mug and cried for 20 minutes. But still, even with all the cuts and bruises you kept trying and eventually you got it. First it was five stumbly steps, then ten, then 30, and pretty soon you are running and spinning and skipping. You learned to walk! You learned to walk so well you don't even have to think of it!

It's the same with walking in Jesus' steps. It's hard to do and you fall a lot. And there will be scars and there will be tears, but with the Holy Spirit's help you will learn to walk like Him. Jesus is determined to see you succeed! John doesn't promise that in our passage. But just a little

later in this letter, right at the beginning of chapter 3, he promises that we will learn to walk like Jesus. “And now, dear children, abide in him. We know that when Christ appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as He is.” You might be finding it hard to walk as Jesus walked, but John tells you how this will end: you will be like Jesus. So John tells us to abide.

The second word is **love**. When you think about making the whole journey with Jesus, when you think about all the steps you have to take to be like him, it can seem like too much. But in verse 9 and 10 John gives you a strategy for walking in the light. When you are trying to walk in his steps don't think of the whole journey, just think of one step at a time. And the one step John wants you to think about is loving your brothers and your sisters. You may not be able to make all of the Jesus steps yet, but you can do something to love another person. You could do that today! The other day I heard about a group of guys who gave themselves a challenge. They were going to give one compliment per day. They were going to make sure that every day they would say one kind, loving word to someone in their life. What a great idea! Anyone could do that. Maybe you tell your Mom you love how much work she put in to making dinner. I bet Mom would like that. Maybe you tell your friend that she has a great laugh. Maybe you tell your teacher you liked his math lesson. There are simple things you can do to love your brothers and sisters and neighbors and friends, and when you do those simple things, John says, you are walking in the light.

There is one more word, and that word is **advocate**. As you walk in Jesus' steps, John wants to make sure you understand how Jesus looks at you. Here's an example of how Jesus doesn't look at you. Jesus is not up in heaven with his hands on his hips looking down at us and saying: “OK people! I showed you how to do this. I showed you how to be holy and good! I walked the path! There are my footsteps! Now come on! Walk in my steps!” If you want to see how Jesus is looking at us as we try to walk the path, listen to what we are called in this passage. We are called dear children. We are called dear friends. We are called Beloved. If you want to see how Jesus is looking at us, look at verses one and two: Jesus is our advocate with the Father and the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not just for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

What does that mean? We talked a minute ago about how little babies first learn to walk. Let me ask you this question: When a baby takes her first few steps, what usually motivates her to take those first few steps? What's the thing that makes the baby let go of the table and take a few steps on her own? Usually it's a parent, right? Usually a Mom or a dad stands a few feet from the baby and with a big smile on their face and their arms outstretched they say, “Come on! Come to daddy! You can do it!” And the baby takes a few waddling steps and falls into daddy's arms. When John tells us that Jesus is our advocate, that means Jesus is on our side. Jesus is cheering for us. Jesus is rooting for us. Jesus is our advocate. With every step we take, He's right there, standing a little in front of us with his arms outstretched. “Come on! You can do it! I know that this is hard! I know that it's scary! But I am here and I will catch you!” And...if you look closely at his outstretched arms you will see that his hands have holes in them. Holes where the nails used to be. Holes from when he was hanging on the cross. Holes from that day he died to save us from our sins, and to make sure that all his Father's children would finish their walk; to make sure that the end of our journey we will all find ourselves safe at home with him. Dear children, may we always walk in his light.