Becoming a Reflection of Jesus (TITLE SLIDE)

Ephesians 4:22-24

Good morning. Today we are going to talk about becoming a Reflection of Jesus. Would you stand with me as we read today's scripture, Ephesians 4:22-24

22 *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;* ***23*** *to be made new in the attitude of your minds;* ***24*** *and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

You may be seated.

Let me start out with a full disclosure. A few times a year, I am blessed with the opportunity to share God's Word with you. God will put on my heart a particular message that He wants me to share. One of my favorite pastors or teachers is Dr. David Jeremiah. Each month, I read his magazine, The Turning Point. It always has a number of articles and daily devotionals tied to a specific theme. In July, the theme was "The Time Has Come for a Great Reflection" or Reflecting the Savior To The World. And I knew immediately that the next time I delivered a message, this was going to be topic.

You know there are certain things in your life that you NEVER forget, no matter how old you get. I remember when I was in grade school that I had to write a paper about a historical character and I waited until the very last minute to get it done. So the day before it was due, I found myself in a panic because I hadn't put one word on paper. So I found a great article on Mark Twain in the library and did what would be called a "cut and paste" job today and turned it in the next day. I just thought that the article I read was so obscure that no one would recognize the content. Boy was I wrong! I handed it in, relieved that I met the due date. A few days later, the teacher returned our papers and as mine landed on my desk, I saw a big fat D and the word, **Plagiarized** in bold letters. Now I didn't know what that meant so I had to look it up. Imagine my embarrassment and shame when I read.. *the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own:*

So I vowed that I would never do anything like that again in my life. So I want to tell you today in full disclosure that much of what I will talk about today comes directly from that July edition of Turning Point.

So, to put this process of becoming more and more like Jesus and becoming His reflection in context, we need to review the order of our salvation. The order goes from Justification to Sanctification to Glorification. Justification is the instantaneous act of God in which He forgives our sins and assigns Christ's righteousness to us. Believers are justified and declared righteous in conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. This is entirely a work of God. Romans 8:29 says

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Sanctification is a progressive work of God **and** man that makes us more and more free from sin and LIKE Christ in our actual lives. Believers yield to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to do His work in their lives, changing them from the inside out. Romans 12:2 says *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Glorification is the final step in the order of redemption that happens when we receive our resurrected bodies and the believer will be transformed into the likeness of Christ and presented to the Lord as Holy.

In Philippians 1:4-6 Paul says *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

SLIDE 2

So Justification delivers us from the **penalty** of sin, Sanctification delivers us from the **power** of sin, and Glorification delivers us from the **presence** of sin.

Earlier this year, I shared a message on the Great Commission. We talked about 2 lifelong journeys that we commit to as followers of Jesus. The first is external… go and make disciples of all nations. The second is internal. It is a journey of becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ, imitating Him in every way.

Sanctification is that lifelong journey that can only be achieved when we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we become a Christian and accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we begin this lifelong journey with the Holy Spirit to transform us into the image of Christ that ends when we are with the Lord.

With that as background, let's focus on the Sanctification process, becoming more and more like Jesus.

We tend to imitate those we admire and love and want to be like. You have heard of the old saying, a Chip off the old block? It's often used to describe someone who closely resembles their parent, either in appearance or behavior. It's a way of saying that a child has inherited specific traits or characteristics from their parent. Depending on the situation, this idiom can be used in both positive and negative contexts.

A Christmas Story has become a classic holiday movie. You know, the one with Ralphie and the BB Gun that people keep telling him he can't have because he'll shoot his eye out. There is a scene in that move where Ralphie uses an infamous curse word when a tire changing goes wrong. And under pressure, when asked where he heard that, he said his friend Schwartz said it. As Ralphie and Schwartz are being punished, the narrator in the movie says that the truth is that Ralphie had heard his father say that word more times than you can count. A chip off the old block

So what does it look like as we become more and more like Jesus and reflect his image?

Those of us who know Christ reflect His character through our lives like a mirror reflecting the sun. So that others will see that reflection.

In 1896, Reverend Charles Sheldon popularized the phrase "What Would Jesus Do" and it became a slogan encouraging people to model their behavior on that of Jesus, asking themselves how Jesus would respond in a particular situation. (show them the bracelet). Do you all remember when everyone was wearing one of these bracelets as a reminder to imitate Jesus behavior?

But Dr. Jeremiah went a step further and he says that in order to conform to the image of Jesus, we not only have to act like Him, but we need to think like Him, and speak like Him. Our attitudes or thinking, words, and actions, must reflect Jesus. Philippians 2:5-11 says *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:..*

There are many performers today who make a living imitating or reflecting a famous artist, like Elvis or Michael Jackson. I remember as I grew up that I always loved Elvis so when I started singing, I practiced hard at imitating his unique singing voice. And I dreamed of becoming a famous Elvis impersonator. But I was missing something vital. I was imitating his voice, but not his actions or the way he thought or even the way he looked. Those who became successful at being an impressionist imitate everything.

In 1992, Gatorade released one of the most iconic marketing campaigns in history called Be Like Mike. The campaign helped to solidify Michael Jordan's status as a cultural icon, inspiring a generation of young athletes to aspire to be just like him

But we know that true Christian transformation isn't brought about by just changing our behavior or by acting in a way that we think is more Christ-like. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us. And when people imitate other people, it is accomplished from the outside in. Through the Holy Spirit, we are transformed into the image of Christ from the inside out

The way you learn to imitate is to really get to know that person inside and out. We reflect Jesus when we study His life, internalize His Words, and let the Holy Spirit dwell in us and put Jesus in the driver's seat, not just as a passenger. And as the Holy Spirit works within us, we become more and more like Jesus.

In this short time I have with you today, I can only graze the surface of reviewing how Jesus spoke, acted, and thought. But let me share a few thoughts and examples

Imitate the way He spoke. (SLIDE 3)

Obviously, we cannot reflect the sound of Jesus' voice because there are no recordings. But we do know the content of His speech. His words, meaning style, and verbal mannerisms. We know what He said and how He said it.

One of the problems with using modern technology to communicate with each other is that we miss out on the tone of the words that we read and also the body language associated with those words. It's really easy to misunderstand someone's intent when we read an email or text. So HOW we say something is as important as what we say. This is true in all of our communications. If you have a dog, try this test once. In a very calm voice and gentle voice, call your dog over and say come here you ugly nasty little dog and he/she will come running with tail wagging looking for love. Now in a raised angry voice, say, come here to beautiful little puppy and see if he comes anywhere near you. Or how much bigger of an impact is it when you say to your children or spouse or other family member in an unexpected moment how much you love them and maybe

you don't tell them enough versus ending a phone conversation with goodbye and a brief "love ya". Tone and mannerisms in our communication matter.

If we could print off all of **our** words and conversations over the last year and compare them with Jesus' words in the Gospels in terms of themes, tones, and priorities, how different would they be? We can see all of Jesus' words in the Bible, because they are highlighted in Red. Reading these words over and over again within the context of the scripture is the best way to learn to have His speech and values reflected in your own.

The way we use words and tone of voice is impacted significantly by what we listen to and what we read. If we listen more to the words and tone of the voice of the world around us through movies, television, the internet, we can begin to sound more like this world than like our Lord.

Our words, conversations, opinions, verbal style should reflect those demonstrated by Christ. And again, the best way to learn to speak like Jesus is by immersing ourselves in God's Word and specifically in the Words of Jesus.

Let's look at some of ways Jesus spoke.

2 Timothy 3:16 says that

16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,* ***17*** *so that the servant of God[a] may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

First of all, Jesus was not afraid to tell people they were wrong. And he used scripture to make His point. In the Sermon on the Mount, He tells people that the law says you shall not murder but if you have anger in your heart towards another man, or call them an idiot, or curse them, you are subject to judgement. And the law says you shall not commit adultery, but if you look at a woman with lust, you have committed adultery in your heart,

He corrected and confronted wrong motives and excuses

But when Jesus rebuked people but he did it with compassion and love. Remember the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus asked her for a drink and she was taken back because she said Jews don't associate with Samaritans. He then went on to talk to her about Living water and when she asked for the living water, He told her to go and get her husband. Now of course Jesus knew she had no husband when he asked. He also told her that she has had 5 husbands and was with a man now who was not her husband. So He called out sin in her life. But, He did not do it with anger or condemnation. He rebuked her with compassion and love. And as a result, she returned to her people and told them she had met the Messiah.

Note also that Jesus was willing to speak with anyone who was willing to speak with Him. From sinners to scholars, from nobodies to royalty, from outcasts to officials, from disciples to the downtrodden. In Phillipians 2:6, Paul tells us that Jesus , *being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage*

Remember the story of when Jesus was teaching at the temple and the Pharisees brought out a woman caught in the act of adultery. They said to Jesus, this woman was caught in adultery and the law of Moses commands us to stone her. And Jesus said let he who is without sin be the first to throw a stone. And one by one, they left. Then He turned to the woman and said where are your accusers. Did they not condemn you? She said, no Lord, not one of them. And Jesus said I do not condemn you either, Go and do not sin any longer. He rebuked her for a life of sin, but again, did it in a compassionate and loving way, not with anger and condemnation

And one more example. Even when Jesus exhibited righteous anger when her turned over the tables in the Temple, he rebuked and corrected behavior in a very effective way. It that were me, I would spend the next few hours after losing my temper, lecturing them on what they did wrong. Or holding on to a grudge for years to come. Jesus corrected them and moved on.

Secondly, The words of Jesus were always other-centered.

He never focused discussions on Himself, other than to make it clear who He was. His conversations were characterized by His speaking AND listening.

Matthew 23:12 tells us that *those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.*

One of the lost skills in today's communications is listening. Often when we have conversations with others, we are hearing, but not necessarily listening. We're just waiting for them to finish so we can say what we want to say. And how often have you been talking to someone about something in your life and somehow, during the conversation, the subject turns to them. It's like that old joke of two people having a conversation and the one is going on and on about himself. And finally, he stops and says, but enough about me, Let's talk about you. So what do You think about me. Self centered instead of other centered.

Many of you who know me know that I have been friends for over 40 years with Mike Singletary, former all pro middle linebacker with the Chicago Bears. When I met him, I was not necessarily impressed with his status as an athlete. I just knew there was something different about him. How he was humble and had a servant heart. AND about the way he talked to me. He would always start out a conversation asking about me instead of telling me about himself, although his life was certainly more interesting

and exciting then mine at the time. Again, like Jesus, other centered rather than self centered

Third, The encounters Jesus had with others could be defined with two words, compassion and confrontation. He was compassionate with those who had physical needs or spiritual needs. But when he encountered unrighteousness or sin, He was not afraid to confront. But he spoke Truth in love. His goal wasn't to condemn as much as to confront them with a view to change.

When we confront someone with unrighteousness or sin, is our objective to point out their sin or to help them overcome it? Are we compassionate or judgmental.

I remember friends in my life who would say something hurtful and they would justify it by saying I have a right to say how I feel. It wasn't communications with compassion and a goal to help them overcome inappropriate behavior as much as a desire to get something off their chest. In other words, self centered, not other centered.

Reading the Words of Jesus consistently over time is the best way to have his speech and values be reflected in our own.

Imitate the way He acted (SLIDE 4)

Sometimes in our world, we feel like we have to act in a certain way to fit in. Our actions can tend to mirror the behavior of the people we surround ourselves with . And it's easy to take on the attitudes and actions of the people we hang out with. Remember when we were growing up how concerned our parents were about the people we were friends with. They were concerned that we would imitate their behavior.

We want to be accepted and liked and without the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, it's very difficult to stand our ground on our values and beliefs

Remember in the Old Testament that when God instructed the Israelites to take over certain lands, he told them to destroy all living people. At first glance, we might think that was cruel, but God knew that the Israelites would adopt their actions and way of life. And in fact, because they disobeyed God's command to destroy them, that's exactly what happened. The Israelites started worshipping false Gods and even sacrificing their own children.

When we walk with the Lord and spend time with Him, listening to Him, talking with Him, and studying His habits in the Bible, we find ourselves becoming more like Him. Because we will become known by the company we keep and that means increasingly reflecting Jesus actions to the world

So what behaviors of Jesus should we be reflecting

First of all, His blamelessness

John 8:29 says that Jesus always did those things that please His Father. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that *He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*. He never spoke a word, had an attitude or committed a deed that wasn't perfectly Holy. Now of course our response would be that we could NEVER be sinless like Jesus. But the process of sanctification makes us more and more like Christ and as we grow in Him, we should have increased victory over all temptation and sin. We can't claim to live a sinless life, but we can learn to live in consistent victory over known sin

Secondly, His Graciousness

Jesus was always selfless and gracious in his approach to people. We reflect Jesus actions when we have compassion over the brokenness of our neighbors and when we are overcome with love and compassion for them. He never turned anyone away who came to him. Remember when the disciples were irritated when the children were coming to Jesus and He told them, let the children come to me. You saw His graciousness whenever anyone came to Him for healing or compassion.

Thirdly, His Fearlessness

Pastor Kerry just preached in September about overcoming our fears. Fear is the greatest barrier for us in growing and taking a step forward. We fear rejection, failure, dealing with uncomfortable situations. In Matthew 10:28, *Jesus tells us not to fear those who can kill the body, for they cannot touch the soul*. Courage allows Christians to stand tall in the face of opposition. It means taking a stand against evil in the world around us.

Nelson Mandela once said: "I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.

Jesus fearlessly confronted sin and unrighteousness, never considering the consequences of upsetting many people with his teaching

I read this statement in one of my devotionals. Courage is not an absence of fear but a willingness to let faith take precedence over the fears. For courage comes from the presence of God with us and God will never call us to act where his power and promise will not sustain us

Fourth, His Joy

When we have courage combined with growng sinlessness and growing compassion, we'll find greater joy in all we do. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

No one had any problem approaching Jesus. They felt His Joy and encouraging demeanor. And they never felt like they were imposing on Him. Do people feel comfortable approaching you any time and any place?

Fifth, Jesus was the greatest Leader ever and a living example of leadership for us, Jesus taught with authority, He engaged and inspired others around His mission and vision, he spoke to inspire, And although he took time for people, He also took time to pray and to reflect by getting alone with the Father.

<u>Imitate the way He thought (SLIDE 5)</u>

Phillipians 2:*14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, **15** so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation."*[1]

Have you ever served or helped someone, but your attitude was not right? People can see what we do, but they cannot see our motives or our hearts, I know in my past, there have been times when I have done something to serve someone or serve somewhere and in my heart, my motives and attitudes were not right. I might have served out of obligation or to make myself look good instead of to share God's love with others and reflect Jesus to others.

So what were Jesus thoughts and motives?

First, Jesus spoke the truth and lived the truth

Today, when people say they are speaking truth, what they are often saying is that they are speaking their perceptions or their views or interpretation of reality. There is a saying that everyone is entitled to their own opinion but not their own facts.

The view that truth is relative rather than absolute grew out of the late twentieth century movement called postmodernism. One of the movement's beliefs is that truth it relative. There are not absolutes that govern human actions. What is true for one person may not be true for another.

But for Christians, the Bible forms the foundation of our beliefs and is the source of all truth. God did not give us the ten suggestions or ideas or opinions… they are the 10 commandments

To reflect Jesus thinking, we must speak and live the truth like He did, as defined by the Bible. Recently, I got into a discussion talking to a friend who was sharing their opinions about Sexual identity, transgender, and same sex marriage and that person challenged me saying we are supposed to love everyone and have compassion for them. I had to explain that I agree with that, but that is taken out of context. God does not tell us to accept someone's interpretation of truth that contradicts His Word

Secondly, Jesus purpose was to reflect the will of the Father and ours should be to reflect the mind of Christ.

Since Jesus purpose was to carry out the will of his Father He revealed the truth about God to mankind.

As we learn to think more and more Like Jesus, we will reflect him more and more in this world

If we are to have the mind of Jesus, we have to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We have to remember that sanctification is a process and reflecting the mind of Jesus involves renewing our own mind through prayer and studying God's Word

Paul tells us in Romans 12:1-2 "**I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Third, Jesus had a clear priority

Our highest priority, like Jesus should be to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We learn the values of God's kingdom though studying the life of Christ and reading Scripture

Fourth, Jesus Attitudes were visible through his actions

If we walk in the spirit, we will manifest the fruit of the spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. Jesus didn't just talk about these things. Again, they were reflected in everything He did

Consider your priorities, attitudes, purposes, and words. Are they the world's or are they God's

James 1:23-24 says for if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.

Conclusion.

So let me bring this to a close

In 2019, Renee Zellweger was given the role of playing Judy Garland in a story about her life. To prepare for that role, she poured all of her energy into transforming herself into the image of Judy. She read every book she could find. She took music lessons to learn how to imitate her voice. She learned choreography so she could mimic her moves. She studied Judy's gestures, her posture, her walk, her speech patterns. She even used prosthetics, contact lenses, wigs and costumes to transform herself physically. Zellwegger sat in a makeup chair every day for 2 hours to transform herself into Judy Garland. And as a result, she became like her from the outside in

Who else would you want to be transformed into other than Jesus Christ? And if we are going to continue to become more and more like Jesus, it has to happen from the inside out by allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us. And like Renee Zellwegger, we have to immerse ourselves in the Word and know God better by knowing Jesus. And we are not going to just wake up one morning and be like Him. It is a life long process.

So I want to leave you with two key reminders as takeaways.

First, The Holy spirit works in us to conform us to the image of Jesus, when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior and are born again.

Secondly, our role is to yield to the Holy Spirit's work in our live AND to stay in the Word. To reflect Jesus and become more and more like him, we have to know him and to study how He talked, how He acted, and how He thought. It's not just about WWJD.

We need to stay in the Word. Jesus is the earthly picture of God. God has revealed Himself to us by sending His son Jesus Christ in the flesh. The more we know Jesus, the more we know what reflecting Him in the mirror looks like. I pray daily that people will see Jesus in all of us who follow Him as our Lord and Savior.

When we open the Bible, we see ourselves, what needs correcting and what needs improving by studying how Jesus spoke, how he thought, and what he did. And remember we don't look at the reflection of others in the mirror as the standard. It is how WE are reflecting the image of Jesus to the world

We can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the spirit works within us, we become more and more like Him Imagine how different the world would be if Christians around the world truly reflected Jesus in the way we act, the way we talk, and the way we think

Let me pray for us.

Father, we thank You for Your Word today. And we thank you that you send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us and to conform us into the image of Jesus. We know that our part in that process is to submit to the Holy Spirit's work in us and to stay in the Word to continue to know You through the life and teachings of Jesus. Please give us the strength and courage to run the race with endurance that is set before us looking to Jesus, the founder and perfector of our faith. And we pray this in your Holy and Precious name. Amen