

**A Sermon for Dayspring Baptist Church**  
**By Chris Fillingham**  
**“Mind, Heart, and Body: A Model for Spiritual Formation”**  
**5<sup>th</sup> in the series, *Becoming Like Christ*.**  
**Mark 12:28-31; Romans 12:1-2**  
**June 10, 2018**

This morning I’m going to ask you all to do something a little unusual, but you have to promise not to tell anyone, especially my professors.... because I’m going to ask you to help me write my dissertation... and I don’t want them to know I got you to do the work for me.

You all don’t mind helping your pastor cheat, do you?  
I didn’t think so.

That’s why I’m preaching about being like Jesus, by the way. You all have some serious problems! But we’re going for it anyway.

In your worship guide there is an insert with a series of questions... at the end of this sermon I’m going to ask you to write down your ideas there. It’s going to help me with my work.

But it’s also going to help us as a church to keep processing what I’ve been talking about for the last month...this idea that Spiritual Formation is at the core of what we are called to as a church.

Spiritual Formation, remember, is  
the ongoing journey (It never ends. You never arrive.) the ongoing journey  
of becoming (It’s about who you are deep in your being, not about what you do or think or feel,  
but about becoming.)  
the ongoing journey of becoming like Christ.

And when we dig into the gospels, and the New Testament, and the wisdom of the best Christians we know, what we find is that there are really three qualities of a Christ-consciousness.  
Becoming like Christ is to be:

**At one with God** -- This deep intimacy with the Divine, the lover of our souls.

**Enlivened by the Spirit** -- Made alive by the life of God.

**Enacting Shalom** – Actively bringing about the flushing of all of creation, as I talked about last week.

Now, I know that has been a lot for us to digest, but it’s really quite simple.  
The whole point of Christianity... the point of our faith, is to be like Jesus.  
Our kindergarteners can get that, right? ***“We’re trying to be like Jesus”***

Because, as I keep saying, ***Jesus is at once the way we must follow and the goal we must reach.***  
It’s that quote from Augustine that I had you all say last week, and I’m going to ask you to repeat it again today.

So repeat after me:

**Jesus is at once  
the way we must follow,  
and the goal we must reach. [repeat]**

And what I hope we’re beginning to see is that this has to be the guiding center of our life together. The whole point of the church is to be a community of people, helping one another, and partnering together to become more like Christ.

So that when we go out from this place...  
into our homes, and our schools, and our work places,  
and on the golf course, or to the Cardinals game,  
when we go to the tea room, or the board rooms, or the living rooms, or the bedrooms....  
when we encounter all the messiness and complexities of our lives...  
we encounter them... a bit more like Jesus would:  
At one with God.  
Enlivened by the Spirit.  
And enacting shalom.

If we aren't becoming like that...  
If we aren't helping one another to be a bit more like Jesus...  
then... I'm not really sure why we're here.

If we just want to hang out and make a few friends, we could use the "Meet Up" app. No church needed.

If we just want to think about ideas, then we could watch a Ted Talk ... and it would be a whole lot less work.

If we just want to feel something inspiring, then we could buy season tickets to a concert venue for a lot less than our tithe.

I don't mean to belittle any of those impulses.

But what I am saying is that the church has a deeper aim than any one of those by themselves. Being part of the church should call us into the life long journey of becoming like Christ, a journey where we will be creating a community and one that requires engaging our minds, and engaging our hearts, and engaging our actions, our bodies...

but our aim... our aim is to become more alive in God,  
more like Christ along the way.

\*\*\*\*\*

And if we're going to help one another do that, then we have to know how, right? It's one thing to say, "We should become like Christ." It's another thing to say we should be intentional about doing that.

So, *how do we become more like Jesus?*

How are we gradually transformed?

What are the mechanisms? What are the levers that we can pull that keep us going? What is essential?

That's what I want your help exploring.

But before you write anything down... I want to remind you of the basic instructions that Jesus gave us all.

One day Jesus was out debating with the Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the Herodians in the temple court, which is kind of like sparring in the town square of his day. Jesus was once again taking them to task, arguing with them, you know, doing his normal Jesus thing.

And so someone comes up to ask him, "When it comes right down to it what really matters? Of all the laws and the prophets, of all that is written in the scriptures, what is the most important?" When the rubber hits the road, what are we really after here, Jesus?

Jesus gives us those two great commandments. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” And the second is like it. “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Now, I’d venture to guess you’ve probably heard that one before, right?  
Well, so had the crowd around Jesus. He’s not making this up.

Jesus is drawing from the ancient wisdom of the Torah, what they would have called the Books of Moses. He’s quoting Deuteronomy 6 and Leviticus 19.

And Jesus wasn’t the only one quoting those exact passages in his day. There was a whole school of Rabbis that Jesus was identifying with when he quotes this.

In other words, Jesus is affirming the wisdom of his day. When it comes right down to it, everything starts with loving God with mind, heart, soul, and strength.

\*\*\*\*\*

And this first great commandment is giving us some hints, I think, about how this journey of transformation happens.

Love, desire of God, has to encompass the whole thing, from beginning to end. The longings you feel, the restlessness in your heart, your desires and love, have to be oriented to God. If you don’t desire God, nothing else you do will matter. It really all becomes a kind of rote legalism. Love is the only engine that will drive the journey. That engine needs to be at work in 3 different vehicles within us.

That love needs to engage our minds, hearts, and body...  
and together, they encompass the whole of your life, your soul.

Jesus is inviting us to let love drive your mind,  
the place of deep thinking about God, and intellect, and imagination.  
Let love drive your heart,  
the place of our feelings, emotions, and passions.  
Let love drive your strength,  
the power of your body, your 5 senses and your actions.

In fact, when you look at some of the wisest Christians in history,  
those people who were clearly in the journey of becoming like Jesus... what you find is a collective wisdom that invites us to engage our minds, our hearts, and our bodies.

Not only that, but you Enneagram lovers out there will remember that human beings are composed of three centers of intelligence:  
thinking, feeling, and doing: another way of saying: mind, heart, and body.

And you science nerds out there probably know that neuro-scientists have discovered that human beings are really 3-brained creatures.<sup>1</sup> We have three separate, but interrelated, parts of our brains...  
The brain stem that controls the body, and its automatic responses,  
the limbic system that shapes the emotions, or what we often call the heart,

---

<sup>1</sup> A Term coined by G. I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson: All and Everything, First Series*, Rev. ed. (Penguin, 2006). For a neuro-science exploration of the three parts of our brains, see Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

and the cortex, which is the place of reason and higher level thinking.

In other words, the ancient wisdom of the saints,  
that is rooted in Jesus' wisdom about the greatest commandments,  
that is rooted in the deep history and wisdom of the Jewish people...

which, by the way, is also found in the wisdom traditions across the globe, is deeply  
connected to what it means to being a human being.

Love the Lord your God with all your mind,  
and with all your heart,  
and with all your strength/body.

It is a framework for our spiritual formation...

This is how we become like Christ. If we want to become like Jesus, it's going to require us to  
engage our minds, hearts, and bodies.

Paul says something very similar by the time he's writing Romans, decades after Jesus. "Offer  
your bodies as living sacrifices, which is your spiritual worship (an engagement of the heart)... Be  
transformed by the renewing of your minds."

Being transformed... is going to require us to engage our bodies, hearts, and minds. Not just one  
or the other. They all work together... to form who we are and who we are becoming.

\*\*\*\*\*

And so, when you begin to explore the spiritual formation practices of our faith, you start to  
realize that they are all engaging these three centers of our humanity; our minds, our hearts, and/or our  
bodies.

Think about all those spiritual practices for a minute:

Reading and studying the scriptures.  
Walking the labyrinth,  
Music, singing,  
Worshiping together.  
Serving and caring for other people.  
Receiving communion.  
Sharing meals together.  
Play and laughter.  
Silence and solitude.  
Running, or hiking in the woods...

And the list could go on and on... But all of them are about engaging the mind, the heart, and the  
body in coming to know and to love God more deeply.

All of them... are like ***ocean waves gradually molding our mind, our hearts, and our bodies***, to  
become more like Christ: at one with God, enlivened by the Spirit, enacting shalom.

\*\*\*\*\*

And so this is where I want your help.

What moments or practices have opened you up to God... maybe gradually, like the slow work  
of an ocean weave, or maybe suddenly, like an earthquake in your soul? I want to ask you to think back  
to what practices have been meaningful to you. What has helped you along the way?

And I want you to write them down for me on that insert.

Try to discern if it was more about engaging the mind, or the heart, or the body... Chances are, it was engaging all of them at different levels, but if you had to determine what was most engaged, put it under that column for me.

And I want to invite you also to be creative here.

I'm hoping you'll put down some very standard things we do in the church...

But I'm also hoping you'll put down some things that maybe you haven't connected to your faith before, but they were engaging your mind, your heart, and your body in a life-giving way... maybe in a transformational way.

Do your best to write something down in each category, as many as you can think of, as long as they have been meaningful for you.

Got that?

Then one more thing. I also want to hear your questions and feedback about this sermon series. So there's a space for that.

Maybe there's something you don't quite get,  
or something you want to push back on,  
or something you want clarity on.

Write it down for me. That would be a significant gift.

I know that's asking a lot, but remember, you're writing my dissertation for me. So go ahead and give it a few extra minutes. We're going to have some Taizé music on in the background.

Know that you are doing me a huge favor and hopefully shaping things to come for us as a church.