



Theme: Simply Irresistible!

"Irresistible Life"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber on...

October 16-17, 2021

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5:17-20a

Weekly Memory Verse:

¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun. –2

Corinthians 5:17

VIDEO Sermon Bumper

SLIDE *Irresistible Life*

Today we embark on a three-week series of sermons asking ourselves a very important question. What do we find so irresistible that we can't help but follow it? As followers of Jesus, we are meant to see the life, ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection of Jesus as something so compelling it becomes irresistible to us and to others. In the first century, as we read the Gospels, crowds always follow Jesus and found him irresistible. What was called "The Way," the followers of Jesus, was so compelling in the first five centuries that it overwhelms the Roman world

and when Rome eventually fell it was the Christian movement which took its place in the Western world. Today, around one third of the world's population calls themselves a follower of Jesus, yet the reality of today's world in North America is that fewer and fewer people find the Christian faith irresistible. As a matter of fact, I couldn't find Jesus on any of the top 10 list of people who are followed on any social media that is popular today!

I found myself wondering who it is that we do follow and so I did a little bit of research this week and found out that the top people followed on Instagram were: (Have these lists fly in.)

SLIDE Most followed on Instagram

- 1. Cristiano Ronaldo with 272 million followers**
- 2. Ariana Grande with 228 million followers**
- 3. Duane "The Rock" Johnson with 225 million followers**

SLIDE Most followed on Twitter

- 1. Barack Obama with 130 million followers**
- 2. Justin Bieber with 114 million followers**
- 3. Katy Perry with 109 million followers**

Cristiano Ronaldo was only 5th with 92 million followers and YouTube the channel was 10th with 73 million followers. In case you're wondering, Ronaldo is a soccer player. Who knew?

SLIDE Most followed on Facebook

- 1. Cristiano Ronaldo**
- 2. Shakira**
- 3. Vin Diesel**

Michael Jackson even on this list and number 9. But if you really want to know who is popular among the younger generations you have to go to Tik-Tok, which is basically short videos with everything from dancing silly stunts too many inappropriate actions that only happen in Vegas.

SLIDE Most followers on Tik-Tok

- 1. Charli D-Amelio with 128 million followers**
- 2. Khaby Lame with 115 million followers**
- 3. Addison Roe with 85 million followers**

Charli and Addison make dance videos and Khaby simply takes other people's video and narrates them in hilarious fashion. If you have anyone in your house under the age of 20, they probably know exactly who each one of these persons are and has invited them into their brain in some way, shape or form. You can simply ignore it and hope it goes away, but that's probably not happening anytime soon, at least before the second coming of Jesus.

How do we choose who we follow? What does it take for us to follow someone or to unfollow them, or to block them, or to unsubscribe to their feed? In the first century, they had no social media, yet people would follow Jesus by the thousands because there was something irresistible and compelling about his life, ministry, and teaching. People found his mission mesmerizing and it drew people to him. People didn't click a button to follow, but literally change their lives as they picked themselves up physically and followed after, often sacrificing everything they owned. This was especially true for people who were outside the religious institutions of Jesus' day. They had spiritual questions and wanderings and often felt excluded and yet there is something about the movement of Jesus which drew them in and gave them a place.

There are more than 50 verses in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, which comprise the first four books of the New Testament in your Bible, which describe large crowds following Jesus. That doesn't even account for the other times when it was clear a crowd was present but not named. Jesus performed miracles in front of the masses and taught large groups of people. He often healed and care for people in the middle of a

crowd. The crowds were constantly pressing in upon them as he did everyday life. Everywhere Jesus went, there were crowds who found him irresistible.

One of the powerful stories about Jesus was crowds is in Luke 8, where Jesus is being followed by crowds. Let's listen to this story.

BIBLE

⁴⁰ On the other side of the lake the crowds welcomed Jesus, because they had been waiting for him. ⁴¹ Then a man named Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come home with him. ⁴² His only daughter, who was about twelve years old, was dying.

As Jesus went with him, he was surrounded by the crowds. ⁴³ A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding, and she could find no cure. ⁴⁴ Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵ "Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

Everyone denied it, and Peter said, "Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you."

⁴⁶ But Jesus said, "Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me." ⁴⁷ When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. ⁴⁸ "Daughter," he said to her, "your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

I love the story for several reasons. There are many layers to it. First, notice that Jesus makes a powerful and important person wait before

attending his needs. Jairus is the leader of the synagogue, and while Jesus eventually comes to his house and heals his daughter, he also recognizes the crowds and in particular notices a woman who has been bleeding for years and spent every penny she had to find healing. Nothing has worked in her desperation she crawled through this crowd and touches the hem of the garment of Jesus of Nazareth. The powerful part of this story is a recognition that Jesus invites us to initiate a relationship with him because that is what will bring peace and wholeness. This is something I have learned over the years, and I find the hardest to do. We have to lead ourselves first.

SLIDE Lead Myself First

It's interesting that immediately after this story, Jesus spends time by himself and then gathers the 12 disciples and sends them out to do what he has been doing, meeting with crowds, teaching, and healing. His main point to them is simple, and critical if we to are experience this irresistible life. We see it in the story as the woman who has been bleeding comes to Jesus and receive it as Jesus sends out those who want to follow him. We must lead ourselves first if we are to experience irresistible life that others can see. I think one of the main reasons the Christian faith is not irresistible and often repulsive is because we who follow Christ have forgotten to lead ourselves.

What's interesting to me is that while more and more people begin following things on Instagram, Twitter, Snap-Chat, Facebook, Tik Tok, and whatever will come next, even more of these followers are choosing not to follow Jesus. The latest research has found that almost one in four Americans do not have a religious preference. The fastest growing religious group in North America are these "nones." Before we can worry about reaching them or leading them, we must lead ourselves first and experience this irresistible life for ourselves, just like those early followers of Jesus.

Jesus says several things about this life that I think give us clues to how we might experience this and all of them are challenging and will require us to do some deep thinking. The first clue to this irresistible life is found in the middle of the story as this woman, and her desperation, reaches out for Jesus, recognizing he has something that she needs.

GRAPHIC Magdala Chapel

One of my favorite places to visit when we were in the holy land two years ago was on the edge of the Sea of Galilee at a town called Magdala, named after Mary Magdalena. We don't know if she was the person in this story but she is mentioned just before it in Luke's gospel so some make that assumption. This beautiful painting is found in the Magdala Chapel which is dedicated to her story and the story of this woman with the issue of blood. I love that there is a place in his face to come and remember and I can remember sitting and simply looking at this mural on the wall spending time thinking about what it must've been like to touch the hem of the Savior's garment. I believe this point to the first way we must lead ourselves and that is to lead ourselves to Jesus.

SLIDE Relax and Rest in Jesus

If we don't do this, there is no way for us to experience this irresistible life and certainly no way for us to share this with others. I think of one of the images Jesus used talk about himself in John's Gospel, where he often talks about what it means to find this irresistible life. As he is talking to the crowds and his followers in John 10, he says these words as he talks about being the Good Shepherd.

BIBLE

1 "I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! ² But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him,

and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

BIBLE

¹⁰ The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

There is this idea that the voice of Jesus can change us, and the challenge is that we often listen to other voices and follow other thing in our lives if we are honest. Jesus will go on to use the image of the vine and the branches and how we are to remain in Christ. He will invite all of us who are weary and heavy laden to come to him and he will bring us rest and peace.

One of the reasons I tell you almost every weekend that you were made by God to be loved by God is because most voices that we hear during the week tell us the opposite and that we belong to the world. We are encouraged to follow people on Instagram and Facebook and other social media platforms, and we are reminded constantly that we don't measure up because we don't have as many followers, or we are not as popular. I was reading this last week the stories of several people who, because they have lost followers and were not as popular, have taken their own lives. This is the thief which comes to steal and kill and destroy and the only way to fight that to relax and rest and listen for the shepherd's voice.

So, let me ask you question. Would you be willing this week to stop and rest and relax in Jesus? Can you find some time to simply stop and listen to the voice that longs to bring you life that is irresistible? I'm not talking about doing the devotion because it's what we should do. I'm

talking about simply stopping and knowing we are worth it in loved and valued by Jesus. The woman who reached out and touched the hem of his garment was a nobody and not even notice by others, but Jesus saw her as she reached out. Jesus sees us when we reach out and rest and relax in him and I think this is the first step in leading ourselves.

Jesus hence at the next thing we must do to lead ourselves in these next words talking about what it means to be the good Shepherd.

BIBLE

¹¹ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

There is this idea that Jesus talks about which is critical to the irresistible life, and that is recognizing that life is not something to cling to desperately. There is this paradox that Jesus speaks about and shortly after the woman reaches out to touch his garment and is healed in Luke’s gospel, Jesus says these words. He says something like them in several places and it’s interesting because often after he speaks these words, the crowds begin to scatter because it may not be what they signed up for. Here is what we read Jesus saying in Luke 9.

BIBLE

²³ Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. ²⁴ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁵ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?

SLIDE Detach

This one is hard for us, but what I’ve learned from myself is that I never can experience life that is irresistible if I’m constantly worried about

the results of everything I do. When I am holding onto life, longing for it to be just what I wanted to be, and never seems to work out. I was visiting with one of our members with terminal cancer a few years ago and I will never forget them smiling at me a few weeks before they died. I could tell they were not doing well not having a good day, yet they were smiling. They told me about a vision they had a Jesus sitting in the chair next to them holding their hand and he was telling them to let go because it would be okay. There was a contentment and even joy about them through the end of their journey with cancer in this life.

That leads me to the last way in which we can lead ourselves to experience irresistible life that might lead others to seeing how it is they might experience this irresistible life, and that is listening to Jesus.

BIBLE LISTEN to Jesus in prayer

I know that when I go to God in prayer most of the time, I typically giving God a laundry list of things I hope God will accomplish for me because God needs my help when it comes to prioritizing! Does anyone else have a prayer life like that? The most challenging thing for me is to pause and rest and relax and detach myself from the results and then simply listen for what is Jesus might want to. It's hard because I have my plans and I expect God to follow them.

There is this story in John's Gospel where Jesus talks about this irresistible life at the end of the story. The beginning of the story is Jesus being begged to come and heal his friend Lazarus. Mary and Martha are the sisters of Lazarus, and their plan is for Jesus to come and get there in time and keep their brother from dying. They even tell him that he messed up their plan because he didn't show up in time and now, he was dead. Jesus enters into their sadness and weeps with them and then invites them to listen to these powerful words in John 11.

BIBLE

²⁵ Jesus told her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying. ²⁶ Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never ever die. Do you believe this, Martha?”

I was part of the funeral this week where we remember these words and we say them together and I think Jesus is wondering if we believe them and are really listening to his voice. He even asks the question directly this text and I think it is meant to echo into our ears today as we think about this irresistible life. What voice are we listening to? Do we believe there is an irresistible life waiting for us? Do we believe that we deserve it? Do we think we have to earn it? Am I willing to stop and listen for the voice of Jesus in the midst of the competing voices in this world asking me to follow them? Are we listening to the voice of the crucified Jesus or the Americanized Jesus?

The apostle Paul, in his second letter to the people of Corinth, reminds those early followers of Jesus, and us today, how important it is to realize that Jesus that we follow is one that can bring us to a life is rich and full and meaningful. Listen these words from 2 Corinthians 5:17-20a.

BIBLE

¹⁶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!

BIBLE (memory verse)

¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

BIBLE

¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people

to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. ²⁰ So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us.

We are ambassadors of Jesus which means we must lead ourselves first and remembering to rest and relax in Jesus, detach from the world's expectations of us and listen to the voice of Jesus who offers us this irresistible life. We are invited into this new life and is then we can become a witness the world.

Today we launch an opportunity for each of us to be a part of this irresistible life with Operation Christmas Child. I want to share with you the story of a pastor who had plans and dreams for a church that he was planting and how that changed because of these shoeboxes that we will put together in the next month. Let's take a listen.

VIDEO Pastor's Story

I love that powerful witness of not wanting a car or something else that we think is needed but recognizing the power of a simple shoebox and how it can lead to irresistible life. So, here's how I would like to invite you to think about this opportunity for shoebox. If you're willing, I hope you will take at least one per person today and feel free to take 10 if you feel called. But I don't want you simply to fill the box bring them back. I want to invite you this year to take each box and sit with it for at least 10 minutes, resting and relaxing in the presence of Jesus before you worry about the work of filling the box.

Prayerfully consider each item you put in the box and then, when you filled it, remind yourself that this box does not belong to you because it all belongs to God. Let go of any expectations and give that God so that God can receive the glory and not ourselves.

Finally, be quiet and listen for how God might want to speak to you

through this box. What is God's message for you so you might not just deliver irresistible life but you might experience it and lead yourself into that time with Jesus. While it is good to fill the box and it will have a powerful effect on those who receive it, God wants to start here in our hearts with each of us so that we are changing along with those who receive this gift.

Let's pray.

SLIDE **Prayer**

Jesus, thank you for your gifted irresistible life. Give us the wisdom and the courage to lead ourselves towards that life by resting in you and relaxing in your presence. May we detach ourselves from expectations which are unrealistic and often keep us from realizing that we only gain irresistible life if we are willing to let go. Yes, you still invite us to work and build up your kingdom, but to do so from a place of love and being loved. Mostly God, help us to listen to you and the voice of the good Shepherd, Jesus longs to bring us life that is full. Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. May we believe that and feel that and shared that irresistible life. In your holy name...Amen

October 16-17 Order

1. Ely Welcomes people and says, **“Today we are going to talk about the how we might experience and share life that is irresistible, meaningful and powerful.”**
2. One Song, followed by prayer
3. Welcome and invite people to wave and be seated.
4. Announcements by Jeff (Check News Section on Website)
 - Glow with God Family Event
 - Children’s Shoeboxes
5. Invite congregation to prepare their hearts for the message.
6. Video bumper plays.
7. Sermon
8. Prayer after sermon
9. Offering SLIDE and Focus
10. 2 Songs of Worship
11. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
12. Meditation Moments reminder by Jeff
13. Care Ministers (If any are present)
14. Closing Prayer