



***Theme: Simply Irresistible!***

***“Irresistible Love”***

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber on...

October 30-31, 2021

**Scripture: Luke 4:17-21 and John 13:34-35**

**Weekly Memory Verse:**

***<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.”***

—Luke 4:18

**VIDEO      Sermon Bumper**

**SLIDE      *Irresistible Love***

The first place I served in full-time ministry was as an intern at the Methodist campus ministry at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. The first year I was there we led an alternative spring break trip to Washington DC, and we took 20 college students who live in shelters and work in soup kitchens nation’s capital. One of the places we went to serve was called Christ House. People who lived on the streets could get a warm meal and spend the night when necessary. It was quite a shock for most of our

students who grew up in rural Iowa to experience the extreme poverty on the streets of DC, often having to step over people sleeping on grates in the sidewalks. One of the powerful things we saw was the statute in front of Christ House.

### **GRAPHIC The Servant Christ**

It is a bronze sculpture called, “The Servant Christ.” It is a compelling piece of art that is irresistible to those who live on the streets. We often saw clients at the shelter interacting and sometimes talking with Jesus. I snapped this photo in one of those moments as we visited with Julio. I remember how powerful it was to hear him talk about how we believe Jesus cared for him and came for him and those living at Christ House.

### **GRAPHIC The Servant Christ and Homeless Man**

### **GRAPHIC The Servant Christ and Homeless Man Close Up**

I love this image of Jesus, bending down to serve, and also holding Julio in his arms, intently looking and seeing one of his children. Today we conclude a series of sermons in which we have been 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.

I found myself thinking about this experience in Washington DC because of the very first sermon that Jesus preached in his hometown of

Nazareth. That message set the tone for the life and ministry and teaching and death and resurrection of Jesus which was irresistible to people in the first century and made them want to follow him. Jesus' life, his called to community, which Ely preached about last week, and his love were irresistible even though it could mean death to follow him.

The public ministry of Jesus drew crowds from the moment it began. It begins in his hometown of Nazareth when he is 30 years old, after he has been baptized in the Jordan River and spent 40 days in the Judean wilderness and desert being tempted. Jesus goes to worship in the synagogue in which she may have grown up. When it came time for the reading of Scripture, Jesus volunteers and stands up and reads from the scroll which would've been the custom in any Jewish worship service. We read what happens next in Luke 4.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>17</sup> The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:**

**<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,  
that the blind will see,  
that the oppressed will be set free,  
<sup>19</sup> and that the time of the Lord's favor has come."**

**<sup>20</sup> He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently.**

Now that was just Scripture, not the sermon. Jesus then goes on to preach what may have been the best sermon on record because it was just one sentence. It was the shortest sermon in human history, a sermon length that I will describe to at some point in my preaching history, but not today! As everyone is looking at him intently, here is what happens

next.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>21</sup> Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”**

Jesus says to all who are gathered for worship that day, and to anyone who will follow him, he is going to fulfill this Scripture and be the embodiment of bringing good news, healing, and salvation of body, mind, and soul. God had begun the story of human history with creation in a garden and Jesus was coming to fulfill the promise that paradise will be restored. This Scripture and this sermon are the initiation of the public ministry of Jesus. This will define a life of love which will be irresistible to anyone paying attention. Jesus will live out the Scripture in continual acts of love and compassion and service to all that he meets and to all who follow. As Jesus travels throughout the Galilee for the next three years he will live out the Scripture to those who are the least, the last, the loss, the poor and the brokenhearted. He would redeem tax collectors and notorious sinners and Roman soldiers and religious leaders. Jesus says it plainly towards the end of Luke’s gospel, just before his arrest and crucifixion, as he is eating with Zacchaeus, a tax collector in Luke 19. The people were displeased that Jesus was eating with a notorious sinner and they grumbled about it. No doubt that the response of Jesus ticked them off.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”**

Jesus was irresistible because of the way he loved and the radical sense in which he reached those who felt abandoned by God and everyone else in the world. People were drawn to Jesus to be fed, to be healed, to be seen, to be included, to find what they were looking for. There also were people drawn to Jesus because they were uncomfortable

with the grace he offered. It made them nervous the way Jesus, a rabbi, served others and love everybody, always. These were mostly the religious leaders of that first century who were drawn to Jesus in order to challenge him and question his authority. They were uneasy with his irresistible life and love and the community that he brought together. They were uncomfortable with his compassion and there was attention then within the crowds that followed Jesus. We see it played out throughout the Gospels, like in Matthew 9 where we find Jesus, dining with tax collectors and notorious sinners. The religious leaders find Jesus enjoying find food with not so fine company and the challenge him. Jesus has a simple response and uses a metaphor they all could understand.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>12</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.” <sup>13</sup> Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”**

Jesus publicly defined his ministry is one of mercy and compassion and love which is irresistible. The religious leaders struggled with this definition because it meant that being special was not about religious education or religious knowledge or religious actions. Jesus came and hung out with those who didn’t know all the religious rules or all the Scriptures or follow all the laws. Jesus came for the unclean and the unrighteous and the irreverent. They had a name in the first century which we have learned before.

**SLIDE      *Am ha'aretz* = “the people of the land”**

The word literally means, “bumpkin, ignoramus, uneducated, vulgar, less than human.” They were seen as the opposite of people of faith. Jesus chose these people who were seen as ritually unclean to eat with, to heal,

and to restore. Jesus is clear about what it means to desire mercy and not sacrifice for all people because he came to call not the righteous but those who know they are broken and need redemption. The crowds continue to flock to him and follow his irresistible love for them, at the same time the questions kept coming from the religious leaders even when Jesus would eat with them. There is no more dramatic example of this then later in Luke's gospel, chapter 7, where he is in the home of a pastor having an intimate meal.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>37</sup> When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. <sup>38</sup> Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.**

**<sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"**

This woman is the epitome of the Am ha'aretz. She is unclean, uneducated, vulgar, and less than human. She is not a person of faith but is in their territory uninvited. Not only that, she weeps and uses her tears to wash the feet of Jesus, opening up a bottle of perfume that probably was being saved for her wedding day, but she may have felt was no use to her because she had been forced into prostitution or sexual slavery. This is a sort of scene that when you see it in person or on the screen in a movie, you feel like turning away because it is so awkward. This feels like a train wreck in slow motion and the intrigue is palpable. The religious leaders use this moment to question Jesus once more and accuse him because he is allowing a woman, who was a sinner and most likely a prostitute, to touch him in public. Next because we get to fill in the blank.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>40</sup> Then Jesus answered his thoughts.**

Here is what I imagine Jesus is thinking. “Simon, how did this woman who is a notorious sinner and prostitute know where everything is in your home?” He doesn’t actually say that, but it’s kind of implied! What he actually says is this.

## **BIBLE**

**“Simon,” he said to the Pharisee, “I have something to say to you.”**

**“Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied.**

**<sup>41</sup> Then Jesus told him this story: “A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. <sup>42</sup> But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?”**

**<sup>43</sup> Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.”**

**“That’s right,” Jesus said. <sup>44</sup> Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.**

**<sup>47</sup> “I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.” <sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”**

**<sup>49</sup> The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?”**

**<sup>50</sup> And Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”**

These are the same words Jesus said to the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and reached out and touched him. It is not her religious knowledge or following the rules which saves her. It is her faith and her willingness to simply sit at the feet of Jesus and receive his gift of irresistible love. The idea of peace that Jesus offers is wholeness and being made right again. Jesus acknowledges that the woman does have much brokenness, and that no amount of brokenness can keep him from her. Jesus comes to serve us and set us free and the whole world gets to see this woman’s faith which saves her. The faith of this woman is rooted in her action to get down and wash the feet of Jesus, something Jesus would later do for his own followers. This anointing is what makes Jesus King of kings and Lord of lords, the Savior of the world. Every King in the first century would be anointed with oil on the head as a sign of being set apart, but Jesus experiences being set apart and anointed not by a religious leader or ruler, but by a broken woman who anoints not his head but his feet. This image is meant to stick with us and give us a picture of the irresistible love of Christ, Christos, “the anointed one.”

**SLIDE      Christ, Christos, Messiah, Mashiach = “the Anointed One.”**

Remember that Christ is not the last name of Jesus but a title which points to his identity. Who he is, as the Christ, is irresistible because of the mercy and grace he offers. The faith of this woman caused her to risk everything to come to Jesus. She was willing to walk into the presence of her enemies in the story is meant to remind us of a Psalm which most of us know and which Jesus and this woman would have known. This scene is meant to draw us towards the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd...”



## **BIBLE**

**<sup>5</sup> You prepare a feast for me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.  
My cup overflows with blessings.**

**<sup>6</sup> Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the house of the Lord  
forever.**

This woman has faith which took her into the presence of her enemies where there was a feast happening. She brought the oil for anointing in her cup was filled to overflowing when she experienced forgiveness and healing. She experienced goodness and unfailing, irresistible love, which would pursue her for her entire life so one day she would live in the house of the Lord, the Christ and Messiah, forever. She is the embodiment of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. She is also the embodiment of the irresistible love and life of Jesus Christ, who would go wherever hurting and broken and outcast people were living. He sought to serve and love and bless even enemies, and this love was irresistible.

Jesus then asked those who followed to respond by living out this irresistible love in the same way he did. He says it time and again with teaching and stories and in the way he interacted with others, including his closest friends, the disciples. I love the story in Mark 10 where the disciples were fighting over who was the most important and who would sit at the left and right of Jesus when he came into his glory.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>42</sup> So Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers  
in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their**

**authority over those under them. <sup>43</sup> But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”**

This is why remind you as your pastor as we go through this time of pandemic and people are worked up about masks and vaccines and many other issues that we are at our best as followers of Jesus when we are giving ourselves away and not demanding our way. This is who Jesus was and what made him irresistible. One of the things that makes us very resistible as followers of Jesus in today's world is because we are constantly demanding that others do things the way we want instead of being willing to take a humble position and serve, following in the footsteps of the irresistible love of Jesus. Jesus came to serve and give away his power so that we might do the very same thing and in so doing change the world, and our community, into the Kingdom of God when there is irresistible life, irresistible community, and irresistible love bathing everyone and everything in the light of Christ. God's desire is for us to be that irresistible love in today's world, bringing the Kingdom on earth just as it is in heaven.

Jesus puts it this way in John 13.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>34</sup> So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. <sup>35</sup> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”**

This irresistible love is a commandment from Christ. It is not optional and it is not our knowledge of Scripture or theology or stance on social issues which will prove to the world we are disciples of Jesus Christ. It is

our willingness to love others with a sacrificial and servant love which changes us and changes the world. We don't do this on our own because we don't have the strength, but instead we lean on the power of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul speaks about this in his letter to the Romans as he writes to those early Christians about how they can be a witness at the center of the Roman world which is about selfishness and greed and the powerful being the strong and taking what they want, always demanding their way.

## **BIBLE**

**<sup>9</sup> Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good.**

**<sup>10</sup> Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.**

**<sup>13</sup> When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.**

**<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. <sup>15</sup> Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!**

**<sup>17</sup> Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. <sup>18</sup> Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.**

**<sup>19</sup> Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,**

**"I will take revenge;  
I will pay them back,"  
says the Lord.**

**<sup>20</sup> Instead,**

**“If your enemies are hungry, feed them.**

**If they are thirsty, give them something to drink.**

**In doing this, you will heap**

**burning coals of shame on their heads.”**

**<sup>21</sup> Don’t let evil conquer you but conquer evil by doing good.**

If we are to embody and live out this irresistible love of Jesus that our faith must push us into uncomfortable places. Does our faith reflect this woman who anoints the feet of Jesus? Does our faith push us into places where we are surrounded by people who are different from ourselves? Does our faith push us past our comfort zones, maybe even in the presence of what we might consider our enemies? The irresistible love of Jesus is meant to take us into places where we need Jesus to even survive, knowing it is there in which we find life and community and grace and mercy.

The first step toward this can be simple, such as making an operation Christmas Child shoebox but not just sending it off. Instead, take some time to look on the Internet or read a book or do something in which you can expose yourself to those who are different. I think of the students who went to Washington DC and whose lives were changed forever by that experience. I think of those of you who are heading to Africa or Guatemala this next year when we are finally able to take mission teams. I think of opportunities here locally to go volunteer at the soup kitchen or at the shelter. You can even volunteer at purple Cliffs for those who live outdoors and who can share with you what life is like. We can all start together by hearing the story of Daphne who received a shoebox last year and how the contents were just a small part of the story. Let’s take a listen as she describes how this irresistible love of Jesus affected her and changed her.

## **VIDEO     Daphne's Story (Jeff may read the sub-titles)**

I found myself thinking of the woman who anointed the feet of Jesus as I watched Daphne share her story, with tears in her eyes. There is something powerful and irresistible about a Lord, Messiah, Christos, Savior, who knows our name and has given the ultimate gift so we might be changed from the inside out. This was the irresistible love of Jesus that we are called to receive, live out in community, and live into in our daily lives. It's a free gift that should bring us to tears of joy on this All Saints weekend. It was part of the mission of the Saints that we remember this weekend and it should be part of our mission as well, as we seek to follow this Jesus. I invite you to say out loud our scripture memory verse together as it is the scripture Jesus used in his very first sermon and one that lays the foundation of his irresistible love.

## **BIBLE**

***18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor."***

Let's pray.

## **SLIDE             Prayer**

*Jesus, thank you for your gift of irresistible love. Thanks you for the saints who have gone before us and been that irresistible love in our lives. We pause for a moment and name them in our hearts before you...*

*May we remember you made us to love us. May that knowledge fill us and give us strength to share that irresistible love, doing your work in our daily lives, becoming the saints you believe we can be. Give us courage to go to difficult places, even into the presence of our enemies, so we might be the presence of Christ in your world. Help us find our identity in you and your irresistible life, we might live in irresistible community, and become your irresistible love in the world. In your holy name...Amen*

## October 30-31 Order

1. Jenny welcomes people and says, **“Today we are going to talk about the how we might live out the love of Jesus in the world so that it is irresistible.”**
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)
  - Drinks with the Pastor
  - Youth Retreat
  - All Saints weekend
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