

Application

A. Jesus had to go through Samaria. The passion I'm talking about today is not something we work up. It's something God plants in us that's so strong we have to follow it. Call it an urge, a compulsion, a force or a feeling, but it is from God. Our challenge is to learn to follow God's urging, nudging and compulsion.

B. Three Sunday's ago I challenged you to pray a prayer for two weeks, asking God to give you an opportunity to share the message of Jesus with someone. Have you done something about it? Have you cared for someone, loved on someone, spoken to someone about Jesus? Your answer may be one test of your passion. It just might tell you if you feel the urgency of Jesus or not.

C. There is a stream of theology that suggests I don't need to talk about things like this to the church. It suggests that God will take care of who gets into heaven and who doesn't. God already knows and it's not up to us to change people's minds. My theology is different. I agree that God knows, but my understanding is that God has chosen to use us. We may be sinners, hypocrites and even pharisaical at times, but God has just one plan for getting the message out and we are it; we are his plan.

Someone pointed out that if you lined up all the unbelievers in world they would form a line that circles the earth 25 times, and it's growing by 20 miles a day. Those people need to hear the message of Jesus – the Good News! Some news is just too good not to share and that is the good news that Jesus saves. God help us feel the urgency!

D. I personally don't feel any urgency in being a purpose driven church, a cell-based church, a seeker sensitive church, or an emerging church. What gets me fired up is the soul-winning church, the gospel preaching church, the mission minded church, the praying for revival church. Beth Moore says on a current DVD that fishermen have a saying that goes like this: "If men aren't fishing they're fighting." Let's fish, not fight.

E. If you don't know Jesus as your Savior and Lord please feel the urgency and open your heart to Jesus Christ today!

If you claim to be a Christian but are walking with the world please feel the urgency and come crawling, running or something back to Jesus today.

If you think you have a lot of time to figure this all out and do your own thing and hope you've been good enough please feel the urgency now. If you need to repent of your sins, do it today, now! The Time is Short, The time is now!

Series: iServe Like Jesus
"Feeling the Urgency of Jesus"
John 4:1-4

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RMBC
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Introduction

A. Some Christians visited a Muslim country and were invited to a student's apartment to show the *Jesus Film*. At the point where soldiers nail Jesus to the cross several students were so moved they cried out, "He didn't do anything wrong! He didn't deserve to die!" The guests had to stop the movie and explain the reason for Jesus' death – he died for our sins. There were strong feelings in that room.

B. I realize it's risky to use the word "feeling" in my sermon title. Our feelings are that part of our make up that are the most volatile. Feelings come and go. Feelings are most affected by our surroundings and circumstances and people.

To be sure, faith cannot be based on feelings. Faith based on feelings rarely lasts, but that does not mean we have to deny our feelings. God made you with feelings and emotions. Will you allow him to be the master of your feelings and direct your emotions so that he can direct your path?

C. So let me ask: When was the last time you felt moved emotionally by the love of God? Has the love of Jesus gripped you lately? Has your love for God moved you in any way? When I think of who Jesus is, I feel myself drawn to him more and more:

Had no servants, yet they called him Master

Had no degree, yet they called him Teacher

Had no medicines yet they called him Healer

Had no army yet kings feared him

Won no military battles, yet he conquered the world

Committed no crime, yet they crucified him

Was buried in a tomb, yet he lives today! That's my Jesus!

D. What does Jesus mean to you? Does his life and death impact your life and future death? If we really do want to "serve like Jesus" I doubt that we will serve long until we feel deeply. We'll soon give up unless we feel the urgency Jesus felt for lost people. Here's what happened one day on the way from Judea to Galilee (read John 4:1-4)

Feeling the Pressure vs. 1-2

A. The opening phrase tells us a lot about the human condition. "The Pharisees heard . . ." Nothing fuels our feelings like hearing only part of the story. I'm sure you've experienced it: Someone tells you something about someone and it sounds just awful – until you hear the rest of the story and then it looks quite different.

B. In Proverbs 18:13 and 17 we read:

“He who answers before listening – that is his folly and his shame. . . The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.”

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John and felt jealous. Turns out that the whole truth, the accurate truth, was that it was not Jesus doing the baptizing.

C. I point this out to remind us that when we feel passionate about something, let’s make sure we have all the facts. Remember who the Pharisees were. They were the keepers of the law. The word Pharisee means “to separate” and they were willing to be separate from others for the sake of being purists in the law. I admire their commitment; I really am impressed by their zeal.

The problem is, they were zealously wrong. Heresies are started by sincere believers who happen to be sincerely wrong. The Pharisees started out as keepers of the law and ended up being keepers of tradition. Oh may God help us and spare us from conflicts over the wrong issues when we feel strongly!

Following the Spirit vs. 3

A. When Jesus learned about this tension and the jealousy that his success was creating in the religious community he did a rather strange thing. According to vs. 3 Jesus left the area. Judea was in the south and its center was Jerusalem. Galilee was in the north and the distance from Jerusalem seemed to ease the pressure from those who were constantly suspicious of Jesus and his ministry.

B. Here’s another example of the importance of not relying solely on our feelings. If we watch the ministry of Jesus closely we learn that he had a great sense of the Father’s timing for him. He knew why he had come to earth, he knew that a plan was being worked out for him to fulfill, and he kept those things in mind. On another day his feelings would surface as he cleansed the temple. Today was not that day. Today the right thing to do was to move on to Galilee. What’s your Galilee? Do you listen in your spirit to the Spirit?

C. I read that in pre-civil rights days there was an African American community that would rent voting equipment during the election and go through the process of voting. Their votes didn’t count and they knew it, but they voted anyway. When asked why they went to the trouble their answer was, “Just practicing. We’re just practicing.”

D. Their feelings of being rejected could have driven them to apathy or anarchy, but instead they acted on the faith that one day things would be different. “Just practicing.” Jesus knew another day was coming and until then he kept practicing the Father’s will.

Feeling the Urgency vs. 4

A. I want to be careful not to put too much weight on one word, but the idea that Jesus “had” to go through Samaria is so telling. Many of you know what I’m about to say so I’ll be brief:

It was about one day’s journey to walk from Judea to Galilee (the destination of Jesus, see vs. 3). But faithful Jews of that day, especially Pharisees, would take an extra day to walk around Samaria which sat right between Judea and Galilee. Jews viewed Samaritans as foreigners, ceremonially unclean, and unwelcome neighbors.

B. But Jesus had an appointment with a certain Samaritan woman on this particular day so he had to go through Samaria. The kind of feelings I’m talking about this morning may not result in some outward display of emotion. The kind of feelings I see in Jesus may be a quiet fire in your spirit. These feelings may come from seeing a form of injustice, a people suffering, or a vision of a soul lost for eternity without Jesus. It’s the feelings that drive you to act on what you believe in your heart is the will of God.

Jeremiah felt it: “But if I say, ‘I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name,’ his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.” Jeremiah 20:9

Paul felt it: “Yet when I preach the gospel I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.” I Corinthians. 9:16

Paul had to do it. He wrote later, “Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade men . . . for Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, therefore all died. II Corinthians 5:11,14

C. Would it help you feel what I’m feeling this morning if I changed words for a moment and talked about “passion?” To serve like Jesus requires us to feel the urgency of Jesus, and that urgency is born out of passion. Here are a few thoughts I gathered about passion:

In his book *The Alexander Principle*, Michael Meyer writes that what distinguishes empire builders is their passion. They devote their lives to an idea that becomes an ideal. All of them set out to change the world. That takes passion.

And consider this: Passionate people don’t work for money. That’s not to say they don’t get paid for what they do, but they set out to fulfill an inner longing that would make a difference in the world (they feel the urgency). Shakespeare, Edison, Disney, Walton, Gates and even Estee Lauder all became wealthy. But that’s not what they set out to do. They did what they did because it was their life. They felt the urgency.