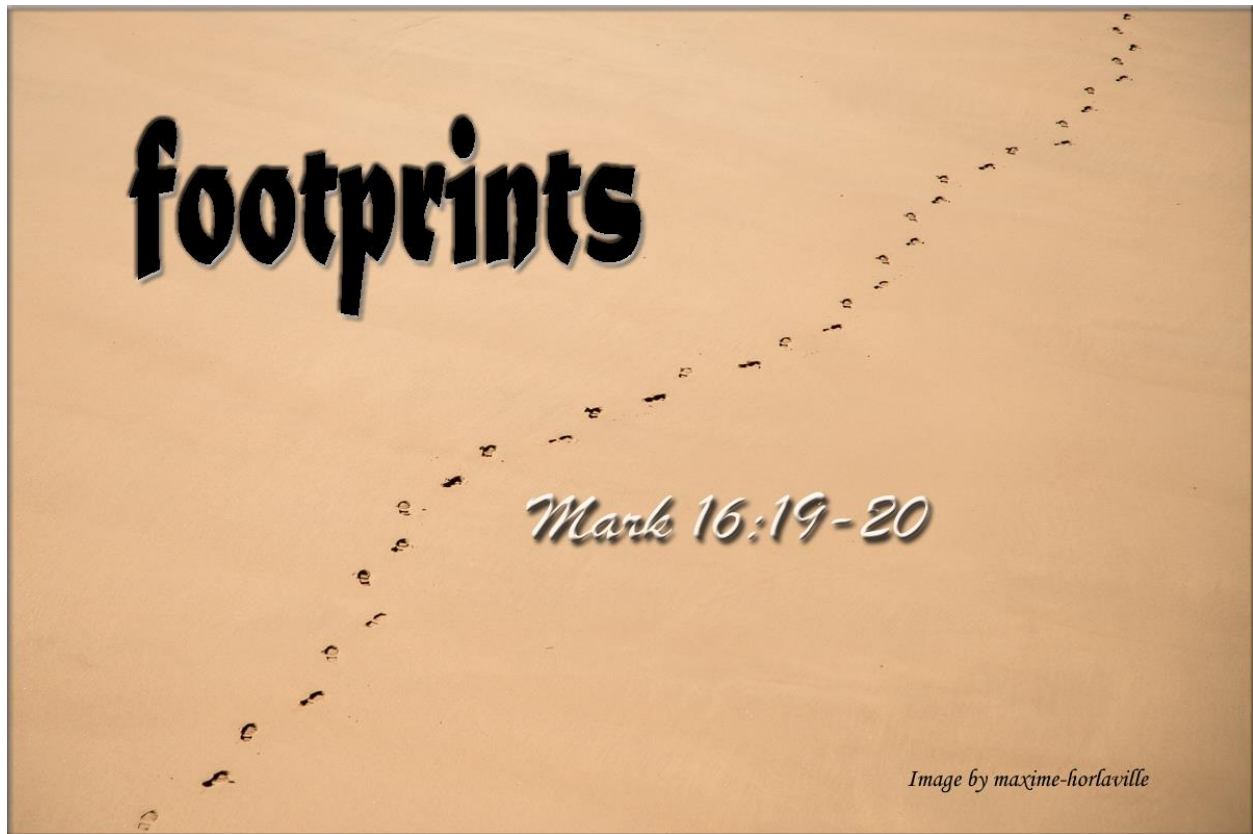


April 25, 2021

“Footprints”



Mark 16:19-20

19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

Special Music: “They’ll Know We Are Christians by our Love” John JP Patterson

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_m4ZhFEGf4

LIFE'S QUILT

Our lives are like quilts
Sewn with patches and thread
Stitches and hems
Borders and fringe
Dreams fulfilled
Embossed and twilled
Gathered together
Laid out on a bed

Some patches are light
While others are dark
Some spotted and stained
Remembered with pain
While others employ
Emotions of Joy
Each year a patch
And each patch a mark

When viewed as whole
We see where we've been
Family and friends
Pieces and stems
Our jobs and our joys
Our pain and our noise
Every frown, every crown,
Every laugh, every grin

**Each patch is sewn
By the thread of God's peace
Each stitched with care
And guided by prayer
Bordered by grace
No moment displaced
And the quilt of our life
Is laid at God's feet.**

**Look back on each moment
To see where you've been
Each life that you've touched
Each moment you've clutched
Each soul that you've lifted
Each person you've gifted
Your life bringing warmth
From Christ Jesus within**

Rev Walt

At one point in my life, I had the opportunity to spend a couple of days on the Google campus, which was located in Mountain View, California, just outside of San Jose. The campus was a tad overwhelming, even back there. There were bicycles and helmets available to get people from one building to another. There were over 7 restaurants on campus with every kind of food imaginable. There were day care facilities and laundromats. Realizing that there wasn't enough parking for all the employees, they would send limousines and busses to pick up them up and then take them home again at the end of their shift. It was strange to see such an employee centric working environment. But one of the most awesome things on the campus was in the main building. In the atrium was a huge rotating globe of the earth. The globe was tricked out with LED lights and integrated into their network systems. Every time a user would do a Google search, a light would pop up at their location on the globe. 24 hours a day, seven days a week, this globe could tell you when and where every Google search was taking place. It was an awesome thing to witness. It was also somewhat disturbing when you ponder the privacy considerations. You just can't hide from Googly eyes.

As a scout in my youth, I learned to read tracks. There was a merit badge for that and I got pretty good at it. The tracks revealed a story. After all, tracks don't just happen. There needs to be some movement and interaction to make the story interesting. But the main thing that tracks do is create a visual history, even if it is only a shadow of the events that occurred at the time the tracks were made.

They say that history is written by the victors. I suppose in many cases that that is probably the case. Even historians attempt to write in such a way as to make us look better than we actually are, often leaving out details about events that might lead people to believe that we aren't really the giants that they are holding us up to be.

Truth is truth and we are what we are. Who we are today has been shaped by the decisions that we have made and are making, good or bad. I'd like to believe that each decision is accompanied by a lesson that we learn but that isn't always the case and sometimes we make the same mistake over and over and again until we get it right. And yes, sometimes we never get it right.

There are many people that believe that God is the great scorekeeper, that He weighs the good and the bad in us. They also believe that our goal in life should be to do enough good that it offsets the bad that we inevitably do. This creates a constant moral struggle as people think that they have been extra good this week so they can balance things out a little bit by doing something bad on the weekend. You know how it is. We eat something that we know we shouldn't so we adjust our medicines accordingly to balance it all out. We want that to be the case because it gives us a feeling of control, that we are responsible for our own salvation by ensuring the scales always tip to the good side. For the good things

that we do, we receive brownie point and for the bad things we do, we get demerits.

The problem with this view of life is that it completely takes God off of the judgement seat and turns Him into an accountant checking to see if everything balances out. But that simply is not how the system works and it certainly doesn't embrace the grace of God. It isn't up to us to decide if that is the way things should work. If we decide that we don't like the way God does things, so we just put His systems to the side, then we are removing His Godhood in our lives and replacing Him with an idol that we can control.

Consider this comparison. Imagine getting caught speeding on the freeway. The officer gives us a ticket and for this particular citation we need to appear in court. When the judge asks us how we plead, innocent or guilty, we answer truthfully, "Yes, your honor, I was speeding, and I feel bad about it. But you aren't taking into account that I picked up trash in the park on Saturday." The judge politely informs us that it was most gracious of us to take time to help clean the city park, but that has nothing to do with the citation. That will be \$200 plus court costs.

We don't get to make the rules in either traffic court or the court of life. We don't get to decide what is fair and what is not fair when it comes to our souls. The

truth is that we can never do enough good in life to get into heaven. It simply isn't possible. Everyone has to eventually face the judge.

Jesus has done something that no one thought to be possible. We know that He died. Many of us even come to understand that He rose from the dead. But the real miracle was something that no one could see. He did all so that so that He could go into the judge's chamber and pay for our citation, clear our account. Make us perfect and whole.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He gave instructions to His disciples. Mark 16:15-18 occur right before today's scripture:

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

There is a lot of controversy in these verses and that controversy distracts us from the intent of the passage. The intent behind the passage is to emphasize

that Christians who share and teach the gospel of Jesus Christ, will leave tracks where they have been. People will be able to look at those tracks and see a pattern of grace, love, and mercy, even when many believe that grace, love and mercy should never have been granted.

How often do we fall into the trap of forcing God out of the courtroom so that we can sit in judgement of the people around us? Don't be ambivalent to the fact that people can and will hear our words and will act on them. All too often we quote the Bible passages in an attempt to prove that we are more competent than God to sit on the judge's bench. We take verses out of context to prove our competence.

"You reap what you sow. They did this to themselves and therefore do not deserve our help."

"We know that God does not listen to sinners, so nothing you have to say is worthy of my attention."

"The love of money is the root of all evil, and since you are rich there is no hope for you."

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Since you appear to be so righteous, believing yourself to be better than us, God will turn His face from you, you hypocrite."

“That story of Jesus not condemning the adulteress is such a good story, but those townspeople were right. She broke the law and deserved to die.”

We are all guilty of thinking these thoughts at some point as we displace God in His own courtroom. It is easier for us to do that than face ourselves in the mirror and see where the real problem lies. It is how we deflect attention away from us by getting people to focus on the faults, hardships and poor choices of others. Many politicians use this in a strategic way to create focus or attention on some other matter hoping that their own problems will diminish and hopefully disappear.

I know all that may sound harsh, and yes, even somewhat judgmental in its own way. But if we want to do better, we need to adopt an attitude of humility, repentance and gratitude, accepting the fact that we are, by nature, imperfect and given to sin, and that only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross allows us to become clean. How can we get clean if we cannot even acknowledge that we are dirty?

20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

(repeat)

and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

God works with us. God works through us. God gives us the authority and the skillsets that we need to lift his children in their times of need. And then He reads the tracks. He can see where we have been by the words that we spoke and actions that we took. He confirms the change in us by looking into the people around us and seeing how lives are changed, spirits are lifted, and fruit is distributed. There is a ripple effect created when we allow God to use us as He provides grace, truth and mercy through us to others.

If we are not making a difference in the lives around us, if we are not leaving tracks that tell our story of how Jesus has changed us, made us whole, gifted us with His spirit, then we need to reflect on our understanding of the relationship we claim to have embraced. If God is working through us, there will be evidence. Sometimes evidence that only He can see.

We all leave footprints that tell where we have been and what we have done. The question that we all face, is whether those footprints tell a story of us walking our path alone, or whether we are allowing Jesus to walk beside us.

There is no greater joy in the world than the realization that God is using us to make the world a better place for His children. That joy can also bring us peace. Can we see the fruit of others around us? Can we see our own fruit and how it has enriched the people we encounter? Are the footprints of our lives telling the story about what God had done for us and continues to do through us?

I ask you to ponder those questions throughout this week because next week we begin a new series entitled “How Does Your Garden Grow?” We will be exploring how we need to examine our lives so that we are able to grow fruit to feed the people around us.

May the footprints we leave mark the presence and grace of Jesus in our lives.

AMEN

Copyright © 2021 Rev. Walt Wellborn

Scripture references provided under copyright by:

**THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973,
1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved
worldwide.**