

Fifth Sunday of Easter
April 29, 2018

Text: 1 John 4:1-11
Theme: "The Jesus Test"

This past week the kids at CCA took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. So the routine was a little different. Actually, the kids usually like testing week. It is a schedule that includes lots of breaks and with the breaks snacks and games. The preschoolers saw some of the older children watching a video while they (the preschoolers) were in the cafeteria eating their lunch. They told me it was unfair that they weren't getting to watch the video. I told them it was because they were taking those hard test like the older kids. So they were ready for me to ask them some hard questions.

Yes, lots of tests. They are tests for authentication. There is the famous litmus test, the actual one where you use litmus strips to see if a liquid is a base or an acid. It's the blue or red test and I don't remember which is which. But the concept of litmus test, that is focusing in on one quality, has extended to many areas. One may have many good qualities, but the lacking of one, or even the presence of one could disqualify in the opinion of the testers. A potential candidate for teaching German may be well organized, have good classroom management skills, a good communicator with parents and students alike, but if they person doesn't speak German, that's a big drawback.

The litmus test is a bit like the shoe test, if the shoe fits you are the one, you get to marry the prince. Of course feet come in different sizes and need a matching size shoe. Cindy's foot (I've known Cinderella for a lot of years) is this size. Now those infamous stepsisters had a different size feet. Trying to fit this bigger one, or this still bigger one just was not working at all. These two failed the litmus test for princessliness.

John today calls for us to do some testing, even some litmus testing of our own. He tells us to test the spirits to see if they are from God. There are a lot of false prophets out there operating on faulty spirits. This spirits are not of God, not from God, not of the truth; no, there are of the deceiver. Such is the spirit of the antichrist. John tells us to test, but not only does he tells us to do so, tells us how, give us the test strip. It is connected to shoe size.

But before we go to John's testing procedure, let's consider a little the Jesus we would project through our living. Is he a big Jesus or a little Jesus? What is the size of his footprint in our lives? For some Jesus is quite small, seems to be only a word to spit out when something disrupts or causes inconvenience. Obviously this is not the Jesus we see in Scripture. He calls us to hear His voice. We hear His Word proclaimed here, but if we are not hear how will we hear that proclamation? We hear His voice also as we read and meditate on His word. We take time to consider and go beyond trying to sound byte His Word on T-shirts and cups. He calls us to call upon Him often, always, to call in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks. It's a constant interchange of calling and

hearing. He's the One who guides it with His speaking in His Word. This is a big footprint Jesus.

How big, again, is that footprint in our lives? How's the harvest? If I came from a different background, heterodox, I might ask, "How many people have you led to Christ?" Now this is more correctly expressed with, "To how many people have you spoken the truth of Christ so the Holy Spirit has been given opportunity to bring them to Christ?" It is a legitimate question. It's what our Lord wants. But let's not start there. It's pretty high hanging fruit.

Let's start with that which is more assessable, more low lying in a way, the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus tells us that whoever abides in Him bears much fruit (John 15:5). Transformed character is part of that fruit, the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul tells us in Ephesians 5 to walk as children of the light, the fruit of the light being all that is good, right, and true (vss 8, 9). Such is the fruit of the Spirit as brothers and sisters loving one another.

This all shows, all matters, matters with our brothers and sisters, and matters to those outside of faith. This is the nature of those transformed, not conformed. We are being little Christs to those around us. It is the footprint of Jesus, a big one. It is not a showy faith, but a faith that shows. Is this how big others would suppose Jesus to be as they interact with us? Or would they see him more pocket sized and usually being stored away in that pocket? Is he small enough to be safely tucked away?

Such is not the Jesus John tells us of. John is warning against those, these false prophets, who proclaimed a much smaller Christ. He was a lot thinner, even disappearing into thin air. No shoes were needed. John says the every spirit who does not confess Jesus in the flesh is not from God, actually, such a wrong confession is the spirit of the antichrist John says (vs 3). When we see antichrist the first thought that may come into our heads is that of the man of lawlessness Paul writes of in 2 Thessalonians or the second beast of Revelation 13, that 666 character. John is speaking of something broader. Focus on the “anti” part, “against Christ,” those opposed to the true Christ. The devil is the ultimate antichrist, the source of all other antichrist teaching.

The teachings of these false prophets was antichrist. They were proclaiming a different Christ. This Christ, their Jesus, was not an in shoes, in the flesh kind of Christ. Flesh, physical existence, was not needed, not even to be desired. Yes, this was a really thin Jesus, even a waft of a Jesus. It is thought what these false prophets were teaching was some form of Gnosticism. Matter didn't matter, actually matter was evil, only spirit was good. If such were the case then maybe it didn't matter what you did in your flesh, continue sinning if you like, if matter doesn't really matter what does it matter? And if you did not help your brother or sister, what's the big deal, only speaking of matters of matter, goods of this life?

Such was a different Christ than the One John was proclaiming, the One John has seen with his eyes, heard with his ears, and touched with his hands. The assessment of this other Christ is the same as Paul's speaking

of another Gospel in Galatians 1. There is no other gospel. There is no other Christ.

The true Christ passes the shoe test. The true Christ wore shoes (sandals), real feet in that leather. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:1, 14). John says every spirit that confesses this, the spirit of every prophet that confess this is from God (vs 2), waffling on or denying this, then not from God, antichrist.

This in the flesh Christ, God in the flesh, is the perfect fit for us, perfect fit for those who were totally unfit. This God-man is for us who were without God, even supposed, in a sense, we were god, that it was all about us, for us to determine right or wrong or even declare no right or wrong, just opinions, and no god, just fantasies. This is the rotten fruit life. Paul gives us a whole list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21: “sexual immortality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissension, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.” We could think in terms of antifruit of the Spirit: hate, grumpiness, strive, shortness, meanness, rottenness, harshness, unreliability, and out of control. All such things are evident in those not loving one another, those not fit to be in God’s presence.

But we are refit in Jesus. He comes in our size while remaining God sized. “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.” (Hebrews 2:14

ESV) He is the atoning sacrifice, the totally atoning sacrifice, atoning for all our wrongs, all our guilt. All our lack is covered over by His fullness.

He walked in our shoes no matter the size. It makes no difference if we are short or tall, male or female, slave or free, good looking or not. His sacrifice is for all and His righteousness is for all. We were baptized into Him and raised with Him in baptism. His complete redemption is tailor made for each one who trusts in Him.

He came in the flesh, for real. He comes in His body and blood now, for real. He comes again as Judge of the living and the dead, this now raised and reigning Jesus, in the flesh. The exalted Lord returns in His glorious body.

His love is a tested love and it leaves a big footprint even a fruity one. Our deeds and our words demonstrate trust in this Tested One. In good times we don't look to the goods, but to God. In sad times we don't despair. We help one another, bear one another's burdens, hold one another accountable. We work to build up one another. We consider what it is like to walk in the sister's or brother's shoes. Such consideration will , shape our deeds, temper our words, even tame our tempers.

Jesus is for all our life, not just part. His footprint is life changing. We now leave a big footprint around us. I know there is much talk about reducing the size of your footprint, that is when it comes to environmental damage. Yes, it good to take care of the world in which God has made us stewards. I'm speaking of a big fruit footprint, a life of service to our Lord. The motivation is not a, "hey, look big, great, wonderful me!" Jesus tells us

in our Gospel lesson, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.” (John 15:8) This is how we love one another. Such fruit bearing is noticed, even appreciated, gives opportunity to speak of the higher hanging fruit, to speak of Jesus.

God the Son has come in person, in the flesh in Jesus. He is the tested Messiah, has fulfilled all righteousness for us, paid the penalty for all sin perfectly. He has aced the righteousness test and we get His score. Don't believe everything you hear, or read, or stream. Test to see if the Christ being proclaimed is that One of Scripture. We, brother and sister, bear fruit as those now fitted for His service. The body is built up and the message of the tested One continues to go out. For His sake. Amen