

Series: Real Life, Real Faith
Title: Dusty Shoes
Text: Luke 14:23; Jeremiah 6:16; I Peter 3:15; Joshua 1:9; Galatians 2:20
Proposition: Everyone should get their shoes dusty for the following biblical reasons.
Key Word: Reasons

On November 25, 1982, I flew to upstate New York to work for an organization that has certainly gotten their shoes dusty. William and Catherine Booth founded the Salvation Army with three primary values, compassion, courage, and caring. Beginning in the late 1800's what began in British slums has now spread into 111 countries, reaching out to the neediest among us with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Booths served wife beaters, cheats and bullies, prostitutes, boys who had stolen the family food money, unfaithful husbands, burglars, and teamsters who had been cruel to their horses. They took their eight children and God's Good News of salvation into places that were neither clean nor comfortable. In those early days, they were often assaulted by stones, dirt, rotten food, and other debris as they entered and served in high-risk areas where the Gospel was needed but not welcomed.

But nothing would keep the Booths from getting their shoes dusty in the streets of the world's greatest cities. William would always say, "Go for souls and go for the worst!"

At the time I didn't know the history behind the Salvation Army. All I knew was that they were employing college students to stand outside, next to the familiar red kettle, ringing one of those little bells, and collecting cash to fund their ministry with the poor.

Once we were settled in to our quarters late that afternoon, we drove to the Salvation Army Center. As we walked into the building I noticed that the floor was dirty from melted snow mixed with dirt. I saw folks lined up to receive services. They were clothed with weathered, soiled garments. There was a distinct odor in the lobby area. Faces looked sad, worn out, and empty. I then realized the true reason why God had sent this middle-class, college student to serve the poor. Then I ask myself, “Am I willing to stand out in the cold of a New York winter so that those who have no hope can receive hope? Now I ask, Am I willing to get my own shoes dusty and soiled on the streets of this world in order to make the love of Jesus Christ available to those who do not know Him?” If I am hungry to be like my Savior, the answer can only be yes. There is no other way to have real life, real faith.

So why should we hunger for such real life, real faith? Why should we desire to be like our Savior? Let me offer some biblical reasons. **First, God desires His house to be full.** In Jesus’ day, people wore sandals and had dusty, dirty feet. Once they would leave their homes and walk a few feet on the dirt road, through the fields, or on a mountain trail, their feet would gather the dust of this earth. Even though we usually don’t wear sandals, this image stills serves us well as the kind of life worthy of our Savior and Leader, Jesus Christ. In ancient times, it was only those who left the cleanliness, comfort, and safety of their homes who got their feet dusty. They had to leave home. Church if we are going to fulfill our vision of developing radiant followers of Jesus Christ, we are going to have to leave the comfort, cleanliness, and safety of our

home. While telling the story about a great banquet, Jesus said, “*Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.’*” (LK 14:23)

Certainly, The Son of God left home and got his feet dusty—and His body broken—in the service of His Father’s Kingdom. He was a homeless man, living and serving in the highways and byways of this world among people whom the religious elite of that day would have nothing to do with. He lived his life among them. He went to them; He didn’t force them to come to Him. Then in his parting words to his followers he said, “*As the Father has sent me, I also send you.*” (John 20:21) Jesus lived His obedient life with dusty feet because He knew that His Father desired heaven to be full. So take a look at your shoes. How dusty are they? If we had to polish our shoes today, then it seems to me that they were covered with dust from our streets.

Another reason for desiring a real life, real faith is because God will give rest to our souls when we walk in His ways. Some people believe that a person’s walk or gait can tell us something about their personality or their attitude at the time, or if they have some type of physical disorder. I had a friend in college who said that when she saw this young man walk across the court yard she knew that he was the one for her. She saw in his gait that he walked with a clear focus on his destination and with a quiet ease. She wanted a husband who was focused on his destination and at ease with His God. A couple years later she married that man. Our walk can give us away.

Christ-followers walk worthy of their Lord, 24/7, morning, noon, and night. Someone is always watching. Whenever the Bible mentions walking it refers to our daily behavior. The Bible tells us that Enoch walked with God. The Lord told Abraham, *“Walk before me and be blameless.”* Paul instructs us to *“walk by faith...walk in love...walk as children of the light.”*

John, one of Jesus’ followers wrote, *“I rejoice greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received the commandment from the Father...This is love that we walk according to His commandments.”* God desires us to live an obedient life. So have we spoken the truth lately or surrendered to the lure of a white lie? Have we said something in an angry tone or hurt someone else with our words? Have we contributed to an unhealthy division? Have we worried about our finances? Have we associated with a humble person? Have we given our tithe to the Lord this week? Have we witnessed for Christ this week? If you’re walking with the Lord, keep your eyes on Him and your head focused on that straight and narrow way. If you’re not walking with the Lord, adjust your stride, walk in the gait of Jesus. Remember Jeremiah’s words, *“Ask for old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.”* (Jeremiah 6:16)

Third, God wants us to offer hope to the world. About two weeks ago I had the privilege of hearing Ohio State Buckeye coach Jim Tressel speak at Troy’s Hobart Arena. He spoke on the theme of “Hope for the 21st century.” Weaving his faith in Christ and stories of OSU football players, Coach Tressel inspired us with his vision of

hope. Jim Tressel is a man who is comfortable with whom he is in Christ. He is always prepared to speak, verbally and nonverbally, in a way that encourages others to consider how knowing Christ could give their life hope. Afterward I started thinking about how every Christ-follower has a message of hope to tell their world. Yes, my friends you can be the keynote speaker for hope in the 21st century!

You might be thinking, “Me, a keynote speaker. I can’t get my kids or grandkids to listen to me, how can I get others to listen to what I have to say about hope?” Friends, I know how you feel. I feel that way every week. Yet, God says, “Chris, you’re the man. You have a divine appointment!” And so do you my friends! God says I will give you a voice of hope. God will not set us up for an appointment that we with His help, cannot keep! That includes being his voice of hope in the 21st century. So, friends, “*set aside the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is within you, with meekness and fear.*” (1Peter 3:15) Living real life with real faith offers hope to our world.

Another reason for desiring real life with real faith is that God is present wherever we are. I confess that I fail to remember this from time to time. Throughout my years of following Christ, I have not always been mindful of leaving a witness for Christ wherever I go. I have had conversations with long time friends and acquaintances that were empty of God’s love in Jesus Christ. I have had many occasions when I failed to ask one of life’s greatest questions: “What do you think about

Jesus Christ?” Sometimes it’s easier to stand before you and proclaim Christ, than it is to talk to my neighbor about the Good News of Jesus.

Recently, though the Lord has reminded me, “Chris, you are not doing right. *This day is a day of good news, and yet you remain silent.*” So, I am prompted to pray, “Lord, refresh me with the Wind of your Spirit. Empower and control my thoughts, release my voice to speak Good News with those whom I meet this day. Give me Your compassion for the least, the last, and the lost. Engrave in my mind your Word, so that my heart and mind can remain pure and that Your Word will offer hope and peace. Remind me that with You I am strong and of good courage. I need not be afraid, nor dismayed, for You my God are with me wherever I go.”

Finally, if I desire real life then I hunger for a life of faith. I am convinced that the most colorful sport in America is NASCAR. The paint schemes of every car is different. Someone once said, “These cars are really 200 mph paintings.” Not only that they are moving billboards. When a company sponsors a NASCAR vehicle, it’s investing \$ 15 to \$ 20 million, and in return they want advertising. The drivers are also walking billboards. The pit crew too.

Think about this for a moment. If God has painted your life with blessings what would others see? What would they read?

I hope they would see that we are painted by the master Artist himself. Our life, our personality, our gifts are crafted by the Creator of the universe. He has made each of us perfectly fitted for what He intends us to be and to do. He has made us by his

power and redeemed us by the blood of His Son, Jesus. He gave each of us the skills, abilities, characteristics, and traits that we need to fulfill His plan for our lives.

Some of us may long for qualities we don't possess. I sometimes long for the ability to sing like Josh Groban. But God has not wired me that way. Others may wish they had a more outgoing personality or a beautiful face. But friend, you are the only you. You are wonderfully and fearfully made for God's purposes.

We're also given a high octane fuel called love. Paul wrote to the Romans, "*God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.*"

(Romans 5:5) When I was serving as a pastor of a small church in northwest Ohio, the Lord brought into my life some Extra Grace Required folk. Their critical spirit would create divisions in the church. They would be resistant to change. They would gossip about others. One day I was sharing my frustration with an older, wiser, colleague, Claude Chivington. The words that he spoke that day were I believe, the very words of God. He said, "Chris, you are not here because you love these people. God sent you here so that He could love them through you." That day I claimed Paul's words. "*I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me.*" (Galatians 2:20) God fueled me with His high octane love. Friends, you may have some difficult people in your life: family, acquaintances, co-workers, employers, or neighbors. God wants to love them through you. There are no better reasons to get our shoes dusty.

