

Title: **What Are You Looking at?! (Part 1)**
Text: **Acts 6:8-15**
Date: **April 14, 2024**

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Big Idea

One way we can know we've truly been walking with Jesus is we'll start to look like more and more like him. We'll look like the one we've been looking at. We'll become like the one we've been beholding. As we spend time with Jesus, we're renewed into the image of Jesus.

We know we're on the right track in following Jesus when we actually start to look like him. Our lives should bear a striking resemblance to his, not just externally, but internally as well. And if they don't, something's wrong. I don't care how many Bible verses I've memorized. I don't care how perfect my church attendance is. I don't care how many Sunday Serve Teams I'm a part of. I don't care if I can or can't speak in tongues, or prophesy, or whatever. I just want to know: Does my life look like Jesus . . . through and through? Do you look at me and see him? Is the overall shape of my life cruciform? Have I been marked by the cross to such a degree that I'm no longer merely talking about it, I'm starting to look like it? As Paul says at the end of his letter to the Galatians: "I bear on my body the marks of Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). Can you read the gospel off of my thoughts and feelings, words and deeds? Do I look like Jesus? Do you?

1. In the Way He Serves

It seems to me, we should pursue and pray for the miracle. But, you know, we don't just pray and then go our way. We roll up our sleeves and get busy helping as well. We don't just say: "Be warm and be filled, I'm praying for you." We wrap the blanket around the person. We deliver the bowl of soup. It's both! We ask God to come in power, and sometimes he does. But, even if he doesn't do the miracle in the more extraordinary way, we recognize sometimes he wants to do the miracle through more "ordinary" means—through people who, because of Jesus, now no longer care just for themselves and their agendas, their desires, their comforts, but they care for others. That's

no less a miracle. In fact, Paul, if I'm following his logic in 1 Cor. 12-14, it seems he would say, that's the greater miracle. Love. But, whatever the case, in it all, we serve, and, in that, we look like Jesus.

2. In the Way He Suffers

In our day, there are some professed Christians who like to let themselves off the hook in all this by claiming that surely Jesus suffered the way he did so that we don't have to. "He gets the death, I get the life. Isn't that the gospel?" And, the tricky thing is, in one sense, of course, this is true and accurate and good. Jesus suffered on that cross, under the wrath of God, for our sin, in our place, in our stead. He died in that way so that I don't have to. Yes and amen! But in another sense, we could say, he suffered the way he did precisely so I *could* and *would* suffer in a like manner. Here now I'm not talking about suffering under the wrath of God, suffering for sin—he's taken that once and for all for me. No, now we're talking about suffering in love, for Jesus and others. It's quite a profound and mysterious truth that one of the ways you know you're truly alive in Jesus is you're ready to die in love for him and others. You'll take up your cross and follow him (cf. Luke 9:23; 14:27). So, in one sense, we say, then: "He died so I don't have to." But, in another sense, we say: "He died so that I can too!"

But How?!

Where does such a thing come from for Stephen? How can we ever hope to see something like this in our own lives? What enables Stephen to look like Jesus the way that he does? Well, to put simply: He's looking like Jesus . . . because he's looking at him (cf. Acts 7:55-56)!



Reflection Questions

- In what ways would you say you've been looking like Jesus lately? In what ways have you not? Why do you think?
- What are you looking at?! Has the gaze of your heart lately been set upon Jesus or something else? How has this shaped you for better or for worse? What can you do this week to set your focus more on him than anything else? What might shift in your heart and life as a result?

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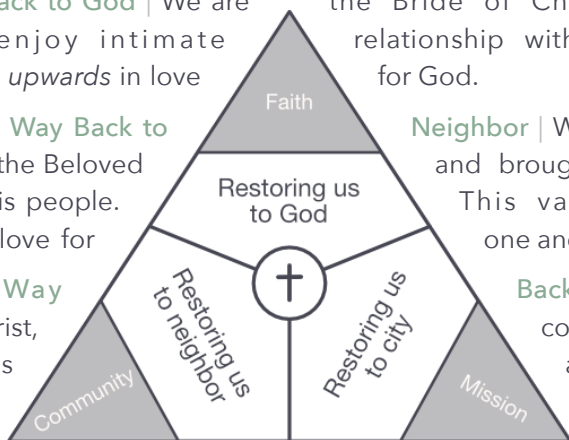
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

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Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Short-Term Missions Trip to Nicaragua - APPLY TODAY!

As a church, we are passionate about joining God in his work of restoring the world around us. That's why we've partnered with Arms of Love, a Christian ministry in Nicaragua and the Philippines, to support their mission through prayer, financial assistance, and hands-on service.

Are you ready to make a meaningful impact in the lives of orphans and vulnerable children? Arms of Love provides a loving family environment for 74 children aged 6 to 17, along with 15 young adults. During our time in Nicaragua, we will have the opportunity to support the staff and children at the Arms of Love children's home through various activities. From assisting with kids' programs and serving in the community, to providing staff training and engaging in prayer ministry, there's something for everyone to contribute!

If you have any questions or feel led to go, please reach out to Bob and Becky Durstenfeld via email (beckydurstenfeld@gmail.com). They will help you along your way and can even get you an application!

Allen @ Steinbeck Garden - Volunteers Needed!

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