



Text: Romans 13:7-14¹
Series: Right Living – The Letter to the Romans
Title: Living Echoes of Jesus
Place: First Baptist Church, Olds, AB
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This morning I want to talk with you about being echoes, living echoes of Jesus.

Mountains are great places to listen for echoes. When we call out, the sound bounces back to us from the sides of the mountain. The delay caused the distance and the speed of sound creates that wonderful illusion that someone, sounding just like us, is calling back to us.

People can be echoes, too. Sometimes when we listen to someone speak, we can hear the echoes of their parents in their voices. When I was in my teens we would get calls at home from my dad's place of work. When I answered the phone his co-workers would regularly launch into some question about work, thinking that I was my dad. Invariably they would say, "You sound just like your father!"

When people watch our mannerisms, they can sometimes see echoes of our parents in the way we comb our hair (or the lack thereof), the way we walk or the attitudes we demonstrate. It only makes sense that our lives will reflect the people who gave us life and raised us during the early, formative years. For good or for ill, we're often echoes of our parents.

This morning I want to read a short passage from Paul's Letter to the Romans and I want you to listen for echoes, echoes of Jesus. I'm going to read Romans chapter 13, verses 7 to 14. Paul wrote...

⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

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¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Did you hear any echoes in those words? I heard four – four echoes of Jesus in the words of Paul – let me point them out to you this morning.

Paul wrote...

“Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” Romans 13:7

The first echo of Jesus that I heard was...

The echo of Jesus’ life of respect for others

Jesus said something almost identical to what Paul wrote. Last week we looked at Jesus’ teaching about paying taxes and we heard from him...

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Mark 12:17

There are different words in the Greek language that Paul could have used to direct the Romans to pay their taxes but the word he chose to use is exactly the same one that Jesus used. Jesus’ “render” and Paul’s “pay” are the same word. It’s a word that means to “surrender what is owed; to give someone what is their due.”

Last week we looked at our responsibilities toward those in government. This week I want to broaden our application of the truth that Paul teaches here. Notice that Paul doesn’t only refer to “taxes” and “revenue” being owed, but also to “respect” and “honor.”

Paul challenges us to live with respect toward others; Jesus lived that way. As I mentioned last week, there is a serious problem with a lack of respect for others in our culture. A little over ten years ago (June 24, 1995) the Lethbridge Herald reported on the rising problem of disrespect in the city’s schools.² The school board had created a behavior and discipline committee to study the problem.

² “Bad Behaviour On The Rise In City School’s,” *The Lethbridge Herald*, June 24, 1995



The good news was that students were not bringing guns or knives to school on a regular basis. But the bad news, as the committee found was that...

“Incidents of disruptive, downright rude behaviour in class are on the rise and teachers are seeing it from younger students every year.”

As I mentioned last week, the tone of political discourse in North America has been “downright rude” and even vicious. Rick Warren and Barack Obama both commented on the need to model for America the ability to “disagree without being disagreeable.” This week, in the *Globe & Mail*, an article appeared entitled, “Vicious political discourse – that’s so 2008.”³ The author applauded Obama & Warren’s desire to encourage tolerance for those with differing views and suggested that “the economic crisis is so severe that vicious political baiting will soon be a dangerous luxury.” We’ll see. I doubt that decades of incivility will disappear over night, economic crisis notwithstanding.

Our question as Christians is: Are we going to echo Jesus or the world around us? Regardless of the political or economic climate of the times, are we going to take our lead from society or from our Saviour?

Jesus showed great respect for people. The Son of God, the Creator come in human form, showed “respect” for His creation.

For example, in Luke chapter 2 it tells us a wonderful story about Jesus visiting Jerusalem as a 12-year old boy with his parents, Mary and Joseph. He became separated from them and it was some time, three days in fact, before his parents found him. Jesus had been caught up, discussing theology and Bible with the teachers in the temple in Jerusalem. Luke tells us...

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.” Luke 2:46-47

What is the first thing Luke tells us that Jesus was doing? Listening! The Son of God was “listening to them and asking them questions.” One of the best ways to show respect for someone is to care about what they have to say. Jesus, “the Word of God,” listened to these teachers of the Bible. Jesus was obviously also asked questions by the teachers because his answers were amazing! But first, he listened. I’m sure there were things the teachers said in his hearing that needed correction, but Jesus listened first, and then taught them the truth.

Then Luke tells us that Jesus’ parents took him back home to Nazareth in Galilee...

³ Judith Timson, “Vicious Political Discourse – that’s so 2008,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 13, 2009. (www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20090113.wl)



**“And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.”
Luke 2:51-52**

The word that is translated “submissive” here in Luke is the one that Paul used in Romans 13, verse 5, to tell us that we need to be “in subjection” to the governing authorities. Jesus showed respect for the teachers in the temple and for his parents in his home.

Jesus showed great respect toward children. In Mark chapter 10 we’re told that little children kept coming to him and that the disciples tried to fend them off so that Jesus wouldn’t be bothered. But Jesus said...

“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” Mark 10:14

And he blessed them. They were worth his time. They were owed “respect.”

And Jesus demonstrated respect for the authorities, even when they were turned against him. Even though he was treated with disrespect, slandered, struck and beaten, he never responded to their disrespect in kind. Peter tells us...

“Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.” 1 Peter 2:21-23

So again I ask: will we echo Jesus or the world around us? Living with respect toward others is an echo of Jesus in our lives. We need to teach our children to treat others with respect, both other children and other adults. We need to model that respect for them in our relationships with children and with adults. We need to be living echoes of Jesus in the respect we show to others.

The **second** echo I heard in Paul’s words was...

The echo of Jesus’ life of love

Paul wrote...

“For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Romans 13:9



Jesus was asked one day, “Which is the great commandment in the Law?”
Jesus replied...

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [Deuteronomy 6:5] This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. [Leviticus 19:18] On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:37-40

One of Jesus’ most quoted teachings is the importance of loving our neighbors. Even in our “post-Christian” world, it is still frequently quoted as a reason to care for those in need. And one of the stories of Jesus’ that is most quoted also teaches the need to love our neighbors. Jesus told the story in response to another question. He was asked, “Who is my neighbor?” to which he replied by telling the story that has come to be called “The Good Samaritan.” This is how it goes...

A Jewish man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho and was beaten up by some thieves and left for dead along the side of the road. A Jewish priest from the temple passed by, saw the man but didn’t stop to help him. A Jewish teacher of the Old Testament law approached and saw the man but also passed by.

Finally, a traveler from the region of Samaria, a people who were historic enemies of the Jews, approached, saw the man and took pity on him. He stopped, bandaged the man’s wounds, put the man on his donkey and took him to an inn and cared for him. When he needed to move on, he paid the innkeeper to continue to care for him, promising to reimburse him for any additional expense when he returned.

Jesus turned to the man who asked him the question and asked...

“Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” Luke 10:36

The questioner replied...

“The one who showed him mercy.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You go, and do likewise.” Luke 10:37

The neighbour is the one who shows mercy to anyone in need. Our neighbour is anyone. Neighbour isn’t defined by faith or geography, but by need. And the true neighbour is the one who, seeing the need of another, meets that need. Paul understood Jesus’ lesson at a profound level. The obligation is not on the needy one to be the neighbour but on the one who sees the need to be neighbourly. Paul wrote...



“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8

The word translated “another” is literally “the other.” The person’s identify has been left intentionally undefined because the obligation, the duty, the debt to love rests on the giver and not on the receiver. And please be clear, Paul’s point is that our love debt will never be paid in full! We will always be called on to love more. There will never be a day when “paid in full” is stamped on our love account with “the other.”

Paul knew how to show mercy to “neighbors” even at great expense to himself.

The church in Jerusalem was in great need. Persecution had driven them to poverty and Paul took up a collection among the churches he visited to take to the needy in Jerusalem. But while Paul was travelling to Jerusalem, a prophet named Agabus told Paul that he would be bound by the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. (Acts 21:10f) Paul’s friends pleaded with him not to go and to preserve his life. But Paul refused, saying that he was committed to his ministry and would follow God’s call even to the point of death.

Jesus’ willingness to give himself for us, the needy, the broken and the bleeding, is echoed in Paul’s willingness to give his life for the needy in Jerusalem and for the cause of the Gospel.

Jesus wants us to live lives of loving care for others. Who is the neighbor in your life? Who is “the other” in your life who has a need you can meet in the name of Christ?

The **third** echo I heard in Paul’s words was...

The echo of Jesus’ life of expectancy

Paul wrote...

**“Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.”
Romans 13:11**

Jesus lived a life looking to tomorrow. He knew that something was coming. Today was moving forward to the completion of God’s great plan and Jesus lived and ministered in the anticipation of that great fulfillment. He lived a life of expectancy.



Jesus taught his disciples that he was going away but would return to them one day. They asked him how they would know when he was about to return to them. Jesus gave them a series of indicators of the nearness of his return and then he said to them...

“Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.” Mark 13:35-37

At another time, teaching them about the signs of his return, Jesus said to them...

“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Luke 21:28

Be alert, Christ is coming! Expectancy and purpose go together.

If you expect an exam, you study harder! If you expect a performance review, you work more diligently. God has entrusted us with gifts and talents to use for His glory. One day, Jesus will return to examine what we’ve done with the gifts and opportunities he gave us.

Jesus told his disciples a parable that was intended to brand his life of expectancy deep into their hearts and minds and work itself out in the diligent, intentional service of their lives.

A man was going on a journey so he called his servants together and entrusted to them his property. To one servant he gave five shares,⁴ to another two and to another, one share, “each according to his ability. Then he went away.” (Matthew 25:15)

The one who was given five shares went and traded with them and doubled his money. The one with two shares did the same and also doubled his money. The servant with the one share, however, simply went and buried his money in the ground so that he wouldn’t lose it. When the master returned from his trip he settled accounts with his servants. The two servants who had doubled their shares were commended by the master in exactly the same terms...

“Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.” Matthew 25:21,

23

⁴ The Bible term is “talent” but for point of the parable is not altered by calling them “shares” since the comparison is between the efforts of the servants and not the final amount each gained. A talent was a huge cash amount, roughly equivalent to 20 years wages.



Notice this: the amount of what the servants produced was not what the master rewarded. It was their faithfulness “over a little.” Some people are given “five” shares, others are given “two” shares and others “one” share. The Lord does not reward us on the basis of the greatness of our gifts or the product of our ministry. The Lord rewards us for our faithfulness in service, whether our gift or opportunity be great or small.

When the third servant is evaluated, things don’t go well. He had hid his share “in the ground.” “You wicked and slothful servant,” the master calls him. “You should have at least invested my share with the bankers.” So his single share is taken from him, and the master orders that he be cast “into the outer darkness.” (v.30)

Jesus doesn’t tell us exactly when he will return, but he expects to find us busy using what He’s given us when He does.

- Knowing that Jesus is coming back;
- Knowing that it will be sudden;
- Knowing that he will examine our work and reward us accordingly...

How should we be living? What should we be doing with the lives, with the gifts and abilities and opportunities he’s given us? Paul has literally given us a “wake up call.”

Are we living with Jesus’ sense of expectancy?

Finally, the **fourth** echo I heard in Paul’s words was...

The echo of Jesus’ life of purity

Paul wrote...

“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime...” Romans 13:12-13

Jesus said...

“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” John 3:19-21



There seems to be an almost universal association around the world between darkness and evil on the one hand, and light and goodness on the other. It's a reality of social planning that one of the best ways to reduce crime in an area is simply to improve the lighting. Jesus declaration that "people loved the darkness ... because their works were evil" is both a moral and a sociological fact.

Jesus calls us to live in "the light." We're to live in the light because Jesus is "the light of world." (John 8:12) Paul, in one of his other letters, calls Christians "children of light, children of the day." (1 Thessalonians 5:5)

Let's be direct: we are to live morally pure, ethically good and spiritually righteous lives because we follow Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God. Paul calls us to reject evil behaviour and "walk properly." He lists three groups of activities we are to "cast off" as behaviour that is unfitting for "children of light."

First, he condemns...

"orgies and drunkenness" (v.13)

This is what we might call today, "partying," where the whole reason for getting together with other people is to get drunk. I was leading my youth group on a canoe trip one year when we stumbled into one of these orgies of booze. We landed our canoes on a beach at night, intending to camp there and leave in the morning for home. What we found was a beach party with dozens of people wandering through the bush drinking, puking and passing out. We had intended to camp there – we didn't. We packed up, drove to town and spent a very uncomfortable night sleeping in our vans in the parking lot of a Walmart. What we observed on the beach that night were people engaged in what Paul calls "works of darkness." Christians don't live like that.

Second, Paul condemns...

"sexual immorality and sensuality" (v.13)

The word that is translated as "sexual immorality" is a word that literally means "beds." Paul is describing what we call "sleeping around." It's common in our world just like it was in Paul's world, but Christians don't live like that.

Third, Paul condemns...

"quarreling and jealousy" (v.13)

What Paul is describing is a life of constant conflict where a person pushes himself or herself ahead at the expense of others. It's a life of competitive self-promotion where words are weapons and there is always blood on the floor. Christians don't live like that.



What is the alternative life to which Paul calls us? It's Jesus' life. Jesus' life lived in us and through us as we live in Spirit-empowered obedience to God's Word.

“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” Romans 13:14

Augustine, a great Christian leader of the early church, had lived a very immoral life as a young man. He'd lived all the dark ways that Paul describes here but one day, as he heard a sermon on these very verses, his life was changed forever. He “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Soon after that his mistress saw him walking in the street. She called out to him, “Augustine! Augustine!” He kept walking as if he didn't hear her. She called again, “Augustine! Augustine! It is I!” He turned to her and said, “Yes, but it is no longer ‘Augustine.’” Augustine had “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and he could say of himself what Paul declared of his own life...

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

When Paul calls us to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” he isn't asking us to impersonate Jesus. He's calling us to a new and different life where Jesus actually lives in us and through us by faith. If you want the echo of Jesus to sound through your life there are three things that need to happen.

First, in order to “put on Christ” **we need a faith transformation.**

Paul told the Galatians that...

“in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Galatians 3:26-27

The moment we come to faith in Jesus we “put on Christ.” That's a “once-for-all” clothing with Jesus – it isn't something that ever needs to be repeated again. Have you put your faith in Jesus Christ? Do you believe that he is the Son of God? Do you believe that he died on the cross to take your punishment for sin? Have you given the control of your life over to him? Is he your “Lord Jesus Christ”? If you want Jesus' life inside you, you need to “put on Christ” by faith. I would love to talk with you and pray with after the service if you would like to do that today. If you haven't put your faith in Jesus and have some questions about what it means to follow him, let me invite you to join me on Tuesday night starting this week for *Christianity Explored*. We study the Gospel of Mark together asking three questions: who is Jesus? Why did he come? What does it mean to follow him?



If you want to “put on Christ” there is a **second** thing we need...**we need a mental and spiritual renovation.**

In his Letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote...

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Colossians 3:9-10

When we come to faith in Christ we begin a new life with him. But our “old” mind and heart need to be re-educated. We need to learn to think the way Jesus thinks; we need to learn to care about the things Jesus cares about. As we read God’s Word and spend time in prayer with Jesus, our minds and hearts are transformed to be more and more like Jesus.

Finally, if we want to “put on Christ” there is a **third** thing we need ... **we need a determined resolution.**

Paul tells us...

**“let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”
Romans 13:12**

We need to make a daily choice to live the life of Jesus. Every time a dark work presents itself to us, we need to turn our backs on it and turn to Jesus Christ. We “put on Christ” by faith once-for-all when we first turn to him, but we also need to “put on Christ” every day of our lives as we choose to live for him.

Do you want your life to be an echo of Jesus? Do you want your life to be marked by Jesus’ respect for others, by his love for people, by his expectancy and by his purity?

Have you “put on Christ” by faith in him?
Are you being renewed in your mind and heart by God’s Word?
Are you choosing daily to live for him?

- **Invitation to prayer ministry – [call Prayer Team forward]**
- **Final Song: I Will Glory In My Redeemer**
- **Benediction**