

Sermon
1 July 2018
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Reading: 1 John 1:5-2:2

1 John is very much like a manual provided for the faithful followers of Jesus to guide their lives, and around which to formulate their faith communities.

And the very first thing John states in this letter, is that we should walk in the light of God. We should dance to beat of his heart.

Did you notice what happened now when we sang our last hymn? Some people tapped their fingers or their feet, just ever so slightly, and this is because music brings us into action. We move to the beat of the drums.

And this whole idea of people moving gracefully to the beat of the music, in the spotlight – of course made me think of *Strictly Come Dancing!*

A competition where the best of the best show the world their moves on the dance floor. With so much passion and elegance, a couple who have been well trained and who practised a lot, can turn dancing into an art form that thousands of people all over the world can look at and enjoy.

Elegantly, gracefully, they move over the floor, beaming, not putting a foot out of place, they become one with each other and the music.

And then, when the music stops, the judges decide how well they did – and they give them a score out of 10.

These judges are very critical and they make note of every tiny wee mistake, and because they are professionals, they often pick up on things that we don't even notice.

So although it's very enjoyable to watch the dancers compete, I think to *be* a participant is extremely stressful, because your every move is scrutinised, and the bright spotlights shining on you help the judges to not miss anything.

But still people do it – because the pleasure of competing in such a high-level competition obviously outweighs the stresses that go hand in hand with it.



And you know, I think all of this apply to our lives as Christians as well.

Life is very much like a dance. There are certain things you need to do, certain steps you need to take, in order to make a success of your life.

There are rules to live by, and if you follow these, you will stay out of trouble.

The problem is just that there are so many temptations in the world – things we know we shouldn't say or do, but for some reason, we are attracted to it.

But to give in to temptation is not a good move, because that can result in us hurting not only ourselves, but others too.

And that is where being a Christian makes a difference, because we should live our lives according to the rules God set out for us in the Bible, not according to rules of the world.

It's like performing a specific dance. There are steps we have to take, things we have to do, and then there are things we shouldn't do.

The more we practice, the easier the dance will become, until eventually we will be taking the right steps, making the right moves, without even thinking about what we are doing – it will just come naturally; it will become *who we are*, and not only what we do.

Now I know that this might sound a bit daunting – comparing life with a complicated dance – but it isn't, really, because God sent us the perfect dance instructor – Jesus Christ.

He came to earth to show us the moves himself, he explained every single thing he did, and all this is recorded for us in the Bible. So if we ever forget what to do at a certain point, or we are unsure about our next move, all we have to do is to go look it up.

Jesus actually made things really simple for us. Where in Old Testament times the people of God had to follow millions of rules, where rules were made about *how to follow* the rules, Jesus came to earth to teach us that there really is only one rule – and that is “love”.

If we let our every step be guided by love – we *will* be following the rules, every single one of them.

Because if we act in love, we won't want to hurt others, we will think before we speak, we won't gossip, we'll stay faithful, always tell the truth, walk the extra mile, reach out to those in need, we will never benefit ourselves at the expense of others, we will forgive and forget...

If we live in love, we will be dancing to the beat of God's heart.

The closer we are to God, the easier it will be for us to feel the beat of his heart, and to live our lives accordingly. If we have a good relationship with God, we won't *want* to take a step back, we will *want* to get our every move right, and so the temptation to be more like the world won't exist in our lives any more.

I just love the expression to “dance to beat of God's heart”.

André's cousin was born deaf, and although she can't hear the music, you should see her dance! Because she can *feel* the rhythm. And then, of course, if she gives herself over to her dance partner and allow him to do all the leading – it is beautiful to watch, you will never guess that she actually has a hearing impairment.

In other words, to dance to the beat of God's heart, means living so close to him that we allow Him to guide us, instead of trying to find our way ourselves, to allow him to steer us in the right direction, and to *feel* what he wants us to do and what not.

And then, if we DO make a mistake, if we take a wrong step, he will forgive us straight away; and if we fall, we are in his arms already, so catching us won't be hard.

God also scrutinises our every move, but not to judge us. He doesn't even notice our mistakes – in Jesus he forgave us for all our sins, so no matter WHAT we do – He always gives us a 10.

He keeps a close eye on us to make sure that we are okay. Not to take note of our missteps.

We read in 1 John that God is light, that there is no darkness in him at all.

And that is truly amazing, because in our lives we know that within every 24 hours there is light for a certain number of hours, but then there is darkness too for a certain number of hours.

And I think that during this amazing spell of good weather, this passage is actually very easy to understand – because we are all loving the sunshine and the late, light nights.

Nobody enjoys the long, dark, cold winter's nights that seem to last forever.

But a life in Christ, is a life that is always filled with light. Because if we live close to him, the light will always guide us. So even when it is dark in our lives, if we just stay close to Christ, it will always be light around us.

It's impossible to dance in the dark. Trying to do that is a recipe for disaster – because if you can't see where you are going, you will most certainly fall, and you could potentially hurt yourself, and those close to you too.

But if we dance to beat of God's heart, we will ALWAYS be close to him, and thus "in the light".

So whether your life is a waltz or a tango, whether you prefer rock-and-roll or ceilidh dancing, whether you like to take it slow or love to pick up the pace – just remember – if you dance to the beat of God's heart – you will have a good life, even in the times when the steps are tricky.

Amen