

Youth Sunday: The “Be Like Jesus” Awards
April 29, 2018
Sami Tierney (Messiah Youth Director) and Messiah Youth

Sami:

This really is the bread and butter of the show, isn't it, folks? The part where we *actually* present the awards – which are taking the form of Balloon Animals because that was part of the Sunday School lesson a couple weeks ago – no joke... we're doing Noah's Ark!

I hope this part feels familiar to you Awards Show enthusiasts – we've got a presenter, who will share about the film that's been nominated for the award, you'll see a clip from the film, and then somebody gets an award and makes beautiful and profound statements through an acceptance speech. That's why you must listen closely or you'll miss it. Instead of presenting today's message through a traditional sermon, we're working with different mediums, story, and song to get our point across.

The youth chose four categories for today's awards: Be A Friend, Be Light, Be Authentic, and Be Spirit-filled – which will be represented in films of different genres and styles. As you'll hear from our presenters and award recipients, understanding these things in our daily living help us truly *be more like Jesus*.

Without further adieu, I'd like to welcome our next presenter, Lauren Loeffler

Lauren:

Thank you, thank you.

Who doesn't love a good underdog story? This year's nominee for the “Be a Friend” category shares the story of a rag-tag broomball team, the Owl Rats, and their journey together, growing as athletes, but more importantly growing as friends. It may not be the Herb Brooks' Miracle on Ice, but their dedication to the sport is second only to their dedication to each other and their coach, who is always sure to remind them of the Truth they need to hear.

VIDEO: BE A FRIEND

<https://bit.ly/2jijtw8>

Scripture: John 15:12-17

And the Be a Friend Award goes to...(open envelope) Sofie Stern and Riley Dowell

Sofie: It's simple, you know what I'm always saying, “Be a friend.”

Riley: Thank you so much for this. I really think that the message of Coach – which are the words of Jesus – really just ring true today – the greatest example of love is laying down your life, or your pride, or your comfort – for the sake of your friends. Taking the time to build relationships and understand what it looks like to love one another. I have learned that from being part of this project, and hope that you, too, see the truth in that sentiment.

Lauren:

The quirky coming-of-age story is a tale as old as time – at its core, it reminds us that the light came first, the light always returns, and the light remains within us all. Truly, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. A message that is as needed today as ever, a call to “be light” in the world, to live as children of the light.

VIDEO: BE LIGHT

<https://bit.ly/2radQU2>

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-2, John 1:1-4, Matthew 5:16

And the Be Light Award goes to Jackson VanScoyk

Jackson:

Thank you, thank you. I...I'm so honored to receive this award. I think often, we ask the question of ourselves...of the universe...What do I have to offer? What do I bring to the world? And being part of this reminded me that there is a light always within us – the light that has been there from the beginning lives *in me* – and I have the power to shine that light into the world.

Miah:

This unique film takes us back to an earlier age. Shot in black and white, the simplicity of the cinematography serves as punctuation for the message. Adapted from a sermon by Art Azurida, modern-day professor, pastor, and theologian, the message comes through clearly, though perhaps unconventionally, as poetry and challenges the audience with the question, “What is authentic faith?”

VIDEO: BE AUTHENTIC

<https://bit.ly/2raDvfz>

What is authentic faith?

The cultivation of an optimistic outlook on life with a kind of spirituality attached to it?

A holy hoping for the best?

Is this how you think of faith?

Authentic faith is the confident assurance in events not yet seen

Faith is not a call to believe in things when common sense tells you not to

Faith is not a mindless stab in the dark

It is not a crossing of the fingers and hoping for the best

It is not a leap into apparent nothingness

It's a word that speaks of reasoned, careful, deliberate, intentional thought

Thought upon what? God and his promises

If you are absolutely gripped by the coming realities that have been promised to you by God, then how you live your life in the present will be radically different than if you did not possess that certainty

This is what faith is, my friends! Positive certainty expressed in action

Authentic faith is not merely believing in God. It is believing God

Taking God at his word, living in obedience to his revelation whatever the cost because you know down deep in your bones that God will always do what he says, that his speaking is his doing

It is an abiding assurance in God and his promises that animates you to persevere in your obedience to Him

Do you wish to be a more consistently obedient, steadily persevering Christian?

A stronger Christian?

A more courageous and outspoken Christian?

Then you need to strengthen your faith!

Your faith instinctively strengthens in direct proportion to the expansion of the object of your faith!

You expand your understanding of the object of your faith and faith itself will obediently follow

The object of your faith--if indeed you are a Christian--is Jesus Christ and all of his promises

Is your faith weak?

It is owing to the fact that you don't know the object of your faith well enough

But when Jesus Christ becomes progressively bigger, or better yet, your understanding of who he is progressively conforms to reality, your faith will become increasingly stronger

But how does that happen?

By immersing yourself in the faith-arousing Word of God

Read of Jesus Christ!

The same powerful Word that long ago brought the universe to life is the same Word that can bring you to life and furnish you with a faith that is truly and authentically Christian

And the Be Authentic Award goes to Luke Nelson

Luke:

I am so honored to be here. This is really unbelievable. I just want to say thank you for the opportunity to be part of this and receive this award.

This was a powerful and challenging piece to be part of, and really forced me to examine the question in my life, "What is authentic faith?" I think that I learned authentic faith looks like paying attention to the teachings of Jesus and actually doing what he's told us to do: love God, love others.

Miah:

The stunning visual effects of this nominee are second-to-none in quality and message. Though some may consider it a film for children, its message is universal: Be joyful. Be Loving. Be Peaceful. Be Patient. Be Kind. Be Good. Be Faithful. Be Gentle. Practice Self-Control. These simple principals remind us how to both engage with others and how to care for ourselves. In a world that seems focused on success, egomania, disregard for others, may this simple message remind you of a better way:

VIDEO: BE SPIRIT FILLED

<https://bit.ly/2HAGnwZ>

Song: *The Fruit of the Spirit* by Uncle Charlie

And the Be Spirit-filled Award goes to...Sebastian Hultgren

Sebastian:

You like me! You really like me!

And that's in no small part to the fruits of the spirit working in and through me! By being part of this, I've come to so greatly understand how the holy spirit is at work in my life – and how living by the fruits of the spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – really make the world a better place.

Makes you take a real look at things, doesn't it? What does it mean to *be a friend*? To go out of your way and step outside of yourself to be available and care for another person? What does being part of a team help you understand about yourself and your leader?

The youth wanted to include "be light" because "Pastor Steve is always talking about that" ... we studied the text from Genesis 1 and John 1 in both Sunday School and Confirmation the past couple months – but what does it mean to follow the light? To let our light shine so that others may see God working through us?

And how do we do that authentically? How do we live into the work God is doing in our lives and in the world?

The evidence of that is in our actions – in the fruits of the spirit seen at work in us and in our lives.

It all ties together, really, because we are like Jesus when we love others well and when we let the Holy Spirit work in and through us. That's what we celebrate today. The Holy Spirit at work in the life of Messiah Church and Messiah Youth.

Will you pray with me? Father God, you sent your son, Jesus, to be an example for us, you sent your spirit to guide us, continue to lead us as we grow closer to you and each other, surrounded by those who make us shine brighter, so that we can bring you all the honor and glory and praise. We pray in your son's precious and holy name, Amen.

Grow, Pray, Study for Week of April 29, 2018

Weekly Prayer: Loving God, send light to us that we might meet one another in this light. Your light breaks forth like the dawn, drawing us into relationship with one another so that we can trust with steady hearts and serve with deep, authentic compassion. Make us be the salt of the earth and the glow of your light to shine the love of Jesus into the world. Amen.

Monday, April 30

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-4

When God began to create the heavens and the earth— the earth was without shape or form, it was dark over the deep sea, and God's wind swept over the waters— God said, "Let there be

light.” And so light appeared. God saw how good the light was. God separated the light from the darkness.

Observation: This is the start of the first of two creation stories found in Genesis. The writer wrote poetically, and Hebrew priests may well have used the story in worship. Many of Israel’s neighbors in the ancient Near-Eastern world had their own creation stories, but the Jewish account was the only one that saw creation as fundamentally good. Later that goodness was lost through bad human choices, but the world came spotless from God’s hand, good from its origin.

Application: While Genesis 1 raises many unanswered questions about how God created the heaven and the earth, it provides many answers to questions about who did the creating. How does it shape your perception of your life’s meaning to believe that God created all that is rather than that the universe “just happened” as a cosmic coincidence?

Prayer: Dear God, before anything else existed, Genesis said, you were there. You set it all in motion. Thank you for still creating, for being the God of new beginnings and fresh starts in my life. Amen.

Tuesday, May 1

Scripture: John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through the Word, and without the Word nothing came into being. What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light.

Observation: This passage has become famous because it’s often read at Christmas Eve candlelight services—though it isn’t just about the birth of Jesus, but about the full meaning of everything he was, and is, and did.... ‘In the beginning’—no Bible reader could see that phrase and not think at once of the start of Genesis: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’.... This book is about the creator God acting in a new way within his much-loved creation. It is about the way in which the long story which began in Genesis reached the climax the creator had always intended. And it will do this through ‘the Word.’

Application: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light” wasn’t just poetry. As we see every Christmas Eve, even a large room full of darkness cannot hide or put out the light when the one small Christ candle comes into the room. When have you felt that darkness was trying to put out God’s light in your life? What spiritual choices help keep you close to God, so that God’s light keeps shining in you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for shining the life-giving light of your love and grace into my life. Amen.

Wednesday, May 2

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-16

“You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how will it become salty again? It’s good for nothing except to be thrown away and trampled under people’s feet. You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can’t be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it

under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven.

Observation: This was the keynote of Jesus' call to citizens of "the kingdom of God." He didn't specify that those who follow him should "go" to a certain place. He called them to live in a certain way for God. In Pennsylvania, the Tri-County Church gave their members T-shirts. On the front, they read, "I don't go to church," and on the back, they said, "I AM the church." That reflected Jesus' message. As we let God's light shine through us, we truly ARE the church.

Application: Have you ever flown over a city at night? Or driven along a highway from the dark countryside into the light of a city? Think about what it felt like to go from darkness to light. What are the dark corners of your neighborhood, city, and world that need to experience God's light? What can you do to help shine God's light into these dark corners?

Prayer: Lord God, if I forget, remind me that "we the people" ARE the church. By your Spirit, help me to live as your salt and light, your physical presence, right here in my hometown. Amen.

Thursday, May 3

Scripture: 1 John 4:7-13, 18-21

Dear friends, let's love each other, because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God. The person who doesn't love does not know God, because God is love. This is how the love of God is revealed to us: God has sent his only Son into the world so that we can live through him. This is love: it is not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son as the sacrifice that deals with our sins.

Dear friends, if God loved us this way, we also ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God remains in us and his love is made perfect in us. This is how we know we remain in him and he remains in us, because he has given us a measure of his Spirit.

There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear expects punishment. The person who is afraid has not been made perfect in love. We love because God first loved us. If anyone says, I love God, and hates a brother or sister, he is a liar, because the person who doesn't love a brother or sister who can be seen can't love God, who can't be seen. This commandment we have from him: Those who claim to love God ought to love their brother and sister also.

Observation: "We can find salvation, Hindus believe, in spiritual knowledge that sets us free. That knowledge leads us to good works.... The fourth path by which to gain knowledge is pursuit of good deeds toward others." Christians, too, believe in the importance of love toward others. In the Christian view, loving one another grows out of our understanding of the heart of the God of the universe. God loves us, John wrote—and that is the reason that we can love God and one another.

Application: Most of us know the words: "God is love." Do you have memories or inner messages that make it hard for you to rely on God's love? In what ways do you perceive and experience God as loving? Which people do you find it hardest to love as God loves them? In what ways has God's love, and the love of other people, helped you to keep living the good life even at times of trouble, confusion, harassment or feeling knocked down by life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, let the people with whom I come in contact—yes, even the bored store clerk or the annoying neighbor—see you and your love in me. Amen.

Friday, May 4

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Observation: To the churches in Galatia, the apostle Paul listed key qualities God offers to grow in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Who wouldn't want those qualities in a spouse, a date, a friend or a co-worker? Paul gave the Holy Spirit center stage, emphasizing how God's relationship with us infuses and directs all parts of our life.

Application: Reflect on the qualities Paul called "the fruit of the Spirit" in verses 22-23. Which of them most appeal to you, and seem to come most naturally? Which of them do you find that you struggle with the most? How do you believe the qualities with which you struggle would deepen and enrich your closest relationships?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, plant your fruit in my heart, and teach me how to be good soil in which that fruit can flourish. Let me be a person who gifts others with love, joy and peace. Amen.

Saturday, May 5

Scripture: Matthew 7:1-5, 12

Don't judge, so that you won't be judged. You'll receive the same judgment you give. Whatever you deal out will be dealt out to you. Why do you see the splinter that's in your brother's or sister's eye, but don't notice the log in your own eye? How can you say to your brother or sister, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' when there's a log in your eye? You deceive yourself! First take the log out of your eye, and then you'll see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's or sister's eye.

Therefore, you should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you; this is the Law and the Prophets.

Observation: Jesus challenged our tendency to judge others, while overlooking or excusing any tendency on our part to do similar (or even worse) things. That is destructive and hurtful enough in families or workplaces. Then Jesus added the positive side of the command with what we call the Golden Rule: "You should treat people in the same way that you want people to treat you."

Application: At times Christians act as if the Golden Rule just means "Be 'nice'" or "Minnesota nice" in surface-y, social ways. Not so—sometimes treating others as we would wish to be treated challenges us deeply. What people or conditions make it hardest for you to treat others as you'd wish to be treated? Jesus linked the Rule to words from Leviticus 19:18: "you must love your neighbor as yourself." How can you discern how best to live the Rule in ways that bless others while retaining healthy boundaries and self-care?

Prayer: Lord, you lived your earthly life in the unforced rhythms of grace, never imposing yourself on others, yet always seeking to draw even your enemies. Teach me today how to live more and more that way. Amen.