

# Jude - Living for Jesus

by Mariano Di Gangi

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*Mariano Di Gangi's sermon on Jude emphasizes living for Jesus through understanding our identity, calling, and the assurance of God's love and protection.*

**Duration:** 31:31

**Scripture:** Jude 1:1

**Topics:** "Godly Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses two lesser-known portions of the Bible: the Song of Solomon and the letter of Jude. He acknowledges that the Song of Solomon deals with the mystery and wonder of human love, but also highlights the analogy between human and divine love. The preacher then focuses on the letter of Jude, specifically the first two verses. He emphasizes that believers are called, loved, and kept by God, and encourages them to live for Jesus. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the need for God's mercy and a reference to the Heidelberg Catechism's teaching on the believer's consolation in belonging to Christ.

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## Transcript

During these summer Sundays between now and Labor Day, I'll be dealing with two of the lesser known and less expounded portions of Holy Scripture. In the evening, selected verses from the Song of Solomon, which some have considered to be of such a nature that it ought not to be expounded in mixed company because frankly it deals with the mystery and wonder of human love. But since there is an analogy between love that is human and divine, there are lessons that we can learn for our earthly and spiritual life from a consideration of that book of the Bible.

In the morning, we'll be taking a look at the little but powerful letter of Jude, tucked away just before the book of the Revelation in our New Testaments. This morning, we come to a consideration of the first two verses of the letter of Jude. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.

To those who have been called, who are loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ, mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance. The preface is brief, but the lessons would take a long time to expound in all the fullness that they deserve. And if we are to give a caption to this particular passage, it would be, living for Jesus.

For Jude is a servant of Jesus Christ who knows what it is to live for Jesus. And those to whom he addresses his letter have been called of God, have been loved by God, have been kept by God, and ought to be servants of God. Consider what the author says about himself.

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James. The matter of identity is always important. Who is this Jude, also known as Judas? Well, it's obvious that he is not Judas Iscariot, who for thirty pieces of silver betrayed the Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory, into the hands of miserable and malicious men.

Nor is he the Apostle Jude, also known as Thaddeus, who carries on a dialogue with Jesus in the 14th chapter of the Gospel according to John, where Jesus had been speaking about coming down and taking up residence in the human heart. And Jude, also known as Thaddeus, one of the Apostles, asked him more about the meaning of the divine indwelling in a human personality. No, this Jude is not Iscariot.

This Jude is not the Apostle also known as Thaddeus. He is Jude, a brother of James. But having said that, which James? There are several of them in the New Testament.

One of these is an Apostle, a former fisherman, a brother of another Apostle named John. Together with his brother, that James was nicknamed Boanerges, a son of thunder, because he was always rumbling about something, and he had a fiery, tempestuous temper that sometimes wanted to call down fire from heaven to singe and burn to a crisp those who had not been too hospitable to Jesus. That James became the first martyr of the church after the death of Stephen.

He was the first of the Apostles beheaded by Herod. This James is the brother of Jesus. If Jude is the brother of James and James is the brother of Jesus, then the Jude who wrote this letter is numbered among the brothers of our Lord Jesus.

The brothers of our Lord Jesus are mentioned, for example, in the Gospel according to Mark, in the sixth chapter, where James and Jude and Joses and several women, their sisters, are mentioned as being part of the earthly family of Jesus. If the evidence which is scanty means anything, Jude, like his brother James, did not believe in his brother Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God, till after the resurrection. And this Jude, along with his brother James, is found with other members of the family of Jesus, including Mary, their mother, praying in Jerusalem, waiting for the descent of the Holy Spirit that came upon Pentecost.

This Jude is the brother of that James who presided over the Jerusalem Council, which was of such crucial importance to the life of the church. This Jude is the brother of that James who was reckoned as a pillar of the church. But his great distinction is not that he is the brother of James who presided over the Jerusalem Assembly, nor that he can claim physical kinship as a brother of Jesus.

His distinctive mark is this. He is not merely the brother of James. That's an earthly relationship.

He is a servant of Jesus Christ, and that is an everlasting relationship. In times past, I used to maintain albums of used postage stamps. Then, as life became more complicated, I simply cut away the corner or ripped off the corner and put these things into a drawer, hoping that eventually, when I would get to the ripe age of retirement, I'd be able to soak all these things, separate them from their envelopes, let them dry, put them with hinges, and then fix them to the book.

And I remember that at one particular time, it was quite frequent to see envelopes that were postmarked with OHMS, On His Majesty's Service. That's the way it was with the life of this Jude. Over his life, you

could stamp those letters OHMS, On His Majesty's Service, for he is a servant of Jesus Christ.

He has learned the truth of what his brother and Savior and Lord once said, that no man can serve two masters. A divided loyalty is unworthy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jude is a servant of Jesus Christ, has pledged to him his wholehearted devotion, his unbroken loyalty.

He lives as one who day by day, whatever his activity, is on his master's service. And it's from the Lord whom he serves that he has derived the perfect pattern of service. Remember the words of the Apostle Paul writing to the Philippian Christians, who were not troubled by doctrinal error, but were ruined by pride? Let this mind, let this attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who though he had every right to claim the highest prerogatives in earth and heaven, since he was and is equal with God, yet for the sake of others, made himself of no reputation, and became a man, and became a servant, and stooped and washed the feet of his followers, and poured out his energies for their benefit, and at the last, gave up his very life, being obedient unto the death of the cross.

That mind which was in Christ Jesus, the super-servant, provides the pattern of perfection in service for Jude. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ. Why should Jude serve Jesus Christ? Well, for one thing, Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, and not merely the child of Mary.

And being a sovereign, he is entitled to the service of men and women. But there's more than the authority of Jesus involved. There is the affection of Jesus.

You see, Jude recognized that truth, which has been inscribed by the Holy Spirit later on in one of the letters of Paul, where he says, you are not your own. You have been bought with a price. You have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Since he paid the price of your redemption, since he paid the price of your release, now with your newfound freedom, serve him gratefully all the days of all your years. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and not only a brother of James. Now if this is what he says about himself as the writer of the epistle, what does he say about those who are the readers of the epistle? Well, he says that they have been called, they are loved, and they are kept.

And each of those verbs is filled with significance, and it's important for us to understand what he was saying to them and what the Holy Spirit through this scripture wants to say to us today. You have been loved. Loved by God the Father.

You know, God the Father is the forgotten person of the Holy Trinity. We rightly make a great deal of Jesus Christ. We are increasingly on the right track in making much of the Holy Spirit, but we are in the process, in the danger of letting the Father become the forgotten person of the Holy Trinity.

For it is the Father who so loved that he gave, and what he gave was the gift of his own Son. It was God the Father who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. It is God the Father who demonstrated his love for us, commending it to us conclusively at Calvary, in that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners.

Those to whom Jude writes are men and women who have been loved by God. Do you know yourself to have been loved by God? It's not that he will love you at some future date. It's not that he loves you in terms of words and sentiments that evaporate.

It's that he has loved you and he has demonstrated it concretely in the flesh and blood reality of a sacrifice at a place called Calvary. And nothing that will ever happen can ever change that. I have been loved, and I know that I have been loved.

Every time that I break bread, every time that I partake of the chalice, every time that I hear the word of the gospel, I am reminded that I have been loved. And we need that reminder that we are loved by God the Father, else why would he have not spared his own son but delivered him up for our offenses? Loved by God the Father and called. Because we have been loved, we have also been called.

And this matter of calling is something that is stressed far more in the New Testament scriptures than it is in the preaching and teaching of the church. I mean we need to recover a biblical doctrine of vocation that we have been called of God. And this means not merely called to the mission field.

This means not only called to the ministry of the word and sacraments. This is the call that comes from the mouth of Almighty God and is heard by the ear of all who have genuine faith. Every Christian should be aware of having been called of God.

I often use alliteration and I trust it is not artificially imposed on Scripture but is consonant with what Scripture teaches because alliteration may help us to remember the truths of the Bible. And here's a bit of alliteration related to this matter of our being called. First of all, our calling is described in Scripture as a high calling.

In Philippians 3 the Apostle Paul says that he presses onward and upward for the prize of being with Christ and like Christ in keeping with God's high calling. Our calling is a high calling. It comes from a God who is Almighty.

It comes from him who is the sovereign of heaven and earth. It comes from him who is the Lord and potentate of time. It comes from him who is the highest of the high.

Our calling is a high calling. It comes to us on earth but it comes to us from him who is on high in heavenly majesty robed in splendor. He has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

It's not only a high calling, it is a holy calling. Centuries ago a man named Celsus criticized Christianity. He says you tell people that God forgives, you tell people that God cancels sin, you tell people that grace is greater than sin, you're creating nothing but a haven for wicked people to keep on living as they have always lived by advocating grace, forgiveness, and so forth.

And an early church father by the name of Origen replied to the criticism of Celsus and he said no, we are not creating a haven for wicked people so that they may indulge themselves under the gaze of an overindulgent grandfather in the sky. Christianity said Origen is a hospital where sinners come to be cured. Christianity is a school where Christians come to learn about how they may live a disciplined life of godliness.

Our calling is not only a high calling coming from a God in sovereign majesty, it is a holy calling for we are called to holiness of life. Isn't that the way the Apostle Paul put it when he wrote to the Romans? He said to you at Rome who are called to be saints, who are called to be consecrated to the Lord, who are called to be completely committed to his cause. In 2nd Timothy 1:9 the Apostle puts it this way, that we have been called with a holy calling.

The destiny that God has in mind for us is that we should be conformed to the likeness of the image of his beloved Son, conformed to him in holiness. We are called with a high calling and a holy calling. And in 1st Thessalonians 2 verse 12 the Apostle states it this way, that God has called us to his kingdom and to his glory, meaning that you and I are heirs of a heavenly calling.

And since we are destined for heaven, what business do we have living our life according to the standards of this world? We have a destiny beyond this world and our standard and our motivation and our goal come to us from heaven and draw us upward to heaven. And so you must, you and I must live worthy of our calling, a high calling that we dare not despise coming from the King of heaven, a holy calling that demands discipline of life, a heavenly calling that looks beyond the troubles and trials and temptations and tears of this present life to the glory that shall yet be revealed in his everlasting kingdom. Loved and because loved, called and kept by Jesus Christ.

I'm a firm believer in the sovereignty of God. I'm what has been nicknamed a Calvinist, but I do not have an ironclad determinism that ignores the fact that the God who has predestined the end also predestines the means. And there are things that happen because people pray that would never have happened if they had not prayed.

Somebody must have been praying for our family while we were on vacation in Central Europe. For on a Sunday afternoon, the 9th of July to be exact, we had had morning worship, we'd had a lovely meal together with my son and his wife and their three daughters, and we were making our way back up a narrow hillside road to Budapest, when suddenly we heard before we could see a car screeching out of control, and suddenly it came round a curve into view, hurtling down the hill, going this way and that way, and coming directly toward us all within the twinkling of an eye. And with nothing more than the thickness of the paint between that careening car and the van we were driving, he went past us to the bottom of the hill and spun around several times more.

We thank God for having kept us from physical injury and possibly death, and I thank God for those who remembered to pray for us while we were away, being out of sight but not out of mind. But I thought to myself ever since, suppose we had been struck right on, suppose there had been multiple injuries, suppose there had been sudden death, what then would become of the statement that we are kept by Jesus Christ? And I thought of the statement of Job, who was not spared losses and pain, and he said, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand again upon the earth at the latter day. And though I am subject to death and worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God.

I will not depend on the secondhand report of another, but I for myself with my own eyes shall behold him. You see, the framers of the Heidelberg Catechism four hundred years ago knew what Scripture taught, and they stated it beautifully in words that can be paraphrased like this. My consolation, my great consolation, my only consolation in life and in death, is that body and soul I belong to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that without his will not even one hair can ever fall from my head, that he is my Lord and God to protect and preserve me in this life and in the life to come.

Isn't that the teaching of Jesus? I give to my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish. I hold them in the hollow of my hand and no one shall ever pluck them from my hand. I commit them into the care of my Father so that they are doubly guarded by me and by him and they shall never perish.

Isn't this what the Apostle Paul came to understand when he asked, who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? Know in all

these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us, for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I live, I live in his care and keeping and if I die the means by which I die is only a door through which I pass into his nearer presence and I am never out of the hollow of his hand. Kept by the power of God through faith unto his salvation ready to be revealed.

He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Waking or sleeping in life and in death we belong to him and are inseparably bound by him and to him and preserved by his omnipotent hand. The text concludes with a wish, a wish that is a prayer for blessing.

Mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance. Mercy and mercy in abundance. Isn't that what we need? As long as we are in this world and as long as we are tempted of Satan and as long as the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, we will be frail and we will be fallible and we will need the mercy of the Lord.

And like the prodigal returning from the far country, like the publican standing in the shadows and beating upon his breast, we will have need of looking to him and asking for mercy and mercy he will grant abundantly. In a world of strife, in a world of stress, in a world of strain, you and I will need the peace which God alone can give and that peace is wished by Jude for those to whom he writes. Serenity of soul, calm of conscience, knowing that our sin account with God is settled and that we are in the hollow of his hand, that is the secret of real contentment.

And love, love may it be ours in abundance. Love to God that we might love him with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. Love to neighbor that we might love neighbor as ourselves.

Love for the word, love for the church, love for the Lord's people, love for the unlovely who may be our enemies. Mercy, peace, and love. Love that will enable us to live for Jesus and be servants of God.

Let us pray. Spirit of the Living God, as you have inspired the sacred text, so with your own finger be pleased to inscribe its lessons on the fleshly tables of our hearts. Send us forth from this place to face whatever we must encounter in the coming days as men and women who know that we are loved by God, that we have been called of God, that we are being kept and guarded of God, that when we seek you with the whole heart we shall receive mercy, that when we ask we shall receive peace, that when we knock we shall experience your gift of love.

So help us to live for Jesus and to serve one another to your honor and glory. Amen.

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