

Call to Obedience #334
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The Christ of the Gospels

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It is very easy with all of our intensive Bible studies and exegesis of Holy Writ to lose sight of the OVERALL. Scholarship must view the forest before it studies the trees. One cause of division in theological circles today is that: man is lost in a forest of jots and tittles. Indeed, it is this lostness which also plagued the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day. They lacked the OVERALL view of the Galilean because they lacked the OVERALL view of the Old Testament. Contemporary scholarship, especially "higher scholarship," also lends itself to this problem. The uneducated masses' perception of Christ was much more accurate, not cluttered and confused with thousands of pieces of scriptural detail. They looked at Jesus without prejudice and came closest to recognizing His high calling.

In this article I shall attempt to view the Christ of the Gospels as the fishermen saw Him but with today's misconceptions in mind.

Jesus was a Man of Humble Modesty

Jesus was the divine Son, yet he used extreme caution in his declarations about his office. Most of the time he was silent about his Sonship, and when he identified himself, he did it in such a humble way that it always glorified the Father and never the Son. He seldom used his office as a platform of authority, but he preferred to let his character and the truth he proclaimed make his claim. Jesus presented himself as a servant, and his actions proved that he was a servant at heart. Simple mundane things were always part of his life. He was never too dignified to associate with the undesirables of society, but rather, his dignity was in seeking the friendship of all the humble in heart.

Jesus never made exaggerated claims such as: "We are going to have a great meeting," or "The Holy Ghost is going to do great things," or "God is going to heal and sanctify many in this meeting," etc. He did not play psychological tricks with people. He did not stir up their expectations. He was satisfied to find just one man whose need he could meet, be it a man in a tree, at the roadside begging, or at a pool waiting for the stirring of the waters.

Jesus did Good without Seeking Profit

He never required anything from people He had helped, He only challenged them to be all for God. He never helped anybody to increase his support group. He did not look for profitability. He healed them all. He helped them all. He never gave to receive something in return. He never did anything just to boost statistics, or to impress superiors.

He healed and helped because he loved. He never considered it a waste of time to give his energy to strangers whom he would never see again. He did not build an organization. He simply loved, healed, called men to truth and went from village to village, leaving the rest to divine providence. Today's religious organizations ought to blush at

this in their constant expectation for the minister not to waste his time with people who show no promise of profitability.

Jesus' Definition of Success was Doing the Will of God

To Jesus, success was not big rallies. In fact, He never planned any rally. When the multitudes came, he taught them, but He made no human effort to have them come. People came by the thousands because they saw hope, love and wisdom in Him and not because they were told to be there. In fact, at least once, he sent the multitude away because he felt it was more important to pray than to preach (Ma. 14:23).

To Him, success was not in numbers. He never counted how many were saved or healed or in attendance. Others did, but not Jesus (you can't find any record in any epistles of how many people were in any one church!). Jesus refused the numbers game lest He would make it a measure of success, for success to him was nothing but **DOING THE WILL OF THE FATHER**. If we go after numbers, we miss God's will: we become prejudiced, judgmental, envious, jealous, hard-driving, demanding, coercive, conceited and proud; we become depressed with the up and down swings of statistics, and we miss those who sit begging by the wayside. Had Jesus gone by numbers, he would have had every reason to be depressed. First, He lost the multitude, then the seventy, then the twelve. When he died, he had nothing left but the consolation of having done the will of God every second of his life. Yet, therein lay his success.

Jesus was Aloof from Financial Affairs

There was aloofness in His attitude towards certain things, and aloofness is not the same as indifference. For example, consider that Jesus did not appoint a super-accountant such as Matthew to hold the purse, but rather assigned that office to a thief and traitor. I say this not to promote dishonesty in treasurers, but to suggest that we get deliverance from our obsession with financial affairs. It certainly promotes the idea that faith in God, instead of money, is the thing which ought to direct our lives.

A sloppy treasurer, sloppy bookkeeping, and sloppy spending was of less concern to Jesus than **SLOPPY GIVING**. Almost His entire attention was on the giving end. Man must give, he preached, and man must give sacrificially. The point of the story of the widow's mite (Mk.12:43) was not that she gave to a dead institution—but that she gave her all. Your obedience in sacrificial giving is much more important than the cause to which you give.

This is why Jesus was concerned about the meager giving of the wealthy. Jesus taught that we need to give because *"the love of money is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10)."* Man's attachment to money shows man's attachment to the world. If you can't find an institution worthy of your giving, than find a poor beggar. To be spiritual, we cannot live without giving, we will die from the inside out. Furthermore, our Lord never hinted that "if the money does not come in, this ministry is going to go under." Money did not bring his ministry into existence, and the lack of it could not shut it down.

Jesus did not Pamper People

He said to one of his choice disciples, *"Get thee behind me Satan"* (Mt. 16:23). He told all of his disciples that their hearts were hardened and that they were of little faith (Mt. 16:8). He told the Pharisees that they were whited sepulchers (Mt. 23:17). He told a precious Syrophenician woman that she was a dog (Mt. 15:26). He called Herod a fox (Lk. 13:32). He condemned Capernaum to hell (Mt. 11:21-23). He called people to fol-

low him, and if they would not, he left them behind and sought those who would. In a parable, He implied that he was angry at man's excuses (Lk. 14:2 1). Jesus never presented a compromise plan. It was all or nothing—now or never. He never lowered the standards “so as not to lose or offend people.” He never procrastinated in telling what needed to be told, nor could He ever be accused of lukewarm preaching. He never told the people what they wanted to hear, but always what they needed to hear. He spoke what the Father told him, He went where the Father sent him, and He did what the Father told him to do. He did not flinch at the expressions on people's faces nor pander to their preferences. Jesus taught that the demands of love are greater than the demands of law.

Jesus was a Friend to Solitude

Our Lord's greatest entertainment was solitude. Between assignments He withdrew. During assignments He spoke; between them, He listened. When do you listen to the one who wants to give you your mission? If it takes hours to minister, does it not take hours to prepare for ministry?

There is no greater, no cheaper, and no better entertainment than solitude. The man who goes from mission to mission will eventually cease to have a mission. He becomes a mission field requiring sympathy from dear ones. Misdirected zeal and spinning wheels deserve no admiration. As the poor are always with us, so are the lost, the sick, and the lonely. Jesus knew that God needed him more than all of them needed him. So he withdrew himself, seeking solitude. Only solitude with God gives us the right to be with men.

Jesus Craved No Earthly Goods

It is inconceivable that Jesus ever uttered the phrase, “I wish I could have...” He sought no material goods. His meat was to do the will of the Father. He was as content sleeping in the Garden as in Lazarus' home. He was as content with corn plucked in a field as with a feast in the home of the tax collector. People were his goods. Helping them, loving them, challenging them, rebuking them, drawing them into his will, teaching them, and living and dying for them was His life.

He never asked anyone for anything but to do the will of God. HE IS INDEED OUR SUPREME EXAMPLE. He said, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (Jo. 20:21).

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