

93. True marks of a Christian

September 10, 2017

You name it, we have it. From necklaces, earrings, bumper stickers, baseball caps, computer mouse pads, coffee mugs, T-Shirts, tattoos, music CDs, home decorations, just about anything you can think of, and much more than we can imagine right now, we see them and we even have them.

I am talking about Christian emblems, symbols, images, or whatever you want to call them. There is absolutely nothing wrong with having those things to identify yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ.

But do Christian stuff make a person be a true follower of Christ? Can an unbeliever, or an atheist, for that matter, wear all the Christian stuff and be considered as a Christian without making a commitment to the Lord Jesus? No.

When Madonna, a raunchy pop singer was asked if she was a Christian since she wore a crucifix necklace. She replied, "I am wearing it, because it has a sexy naked man on it."

The true marks of a Christian are not about what we can wear, have or even tell others, rather they are what we DO. What are the true marks of Christianity? I see three things:

- 1) **Glorifying God with our lives**
- 2) **Loving God and loving others as He loves us**
- 3) **Having loyalty to our one true God**

We will cover the first two today.

This morning, Jesus is going to teach us how to have the true marks of a Christian. Is it easy to have them? NOPE. But are they worth it? Absolutely. Because they will please our Father in heaven. It all boils down to that, don't you think?

A. GLORIFYING THE FATHER THROUGH HIS DEATH

John 13:31-32 So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him. 32 If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.

The moment Judas was gone, the atmosphere was cleared, and Jesus began to instruct His disciples and prepare them for His crucifixion and His ultimate return to heaven through His resurrection.

Have you ever had an experience when you felt oppression by a boisterous person's presence who was against our God and against what you believe? But as soon as that person left where you were, you could feel peace in your heart? Of course, you have. I am sure that was happening here. The demonic presence was out of the upper room where they were having their last supper with the Lord Jesus.

It was after Judas' departure that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper – a.k.a. Communion, something that Judas as an unbeliever certainly could not share. Judas was out in the night, controlled by the prince of darkness, satan; but Jesus was in the light, sharing love and truth with His beloved disciples. What a contrast!

mandments, and all of this private instruction really put together becomes kind of a final commitment of orders to all disciples of all ages. These words are rich, they're exciting, powerful, informative, motivating, loving, divine, and they're really all the things any disciple of Jesus must know.

To be a committed disciple, if we just took care of John 13:31 to 16:33, we'd have practically every ingredient we needed to really know what discipleship was all about. Apostle Paul, in his 13 Books in the New Testament, simply expounds all of the basics that come right out of this portion of the Gospel of John.

Five times in these two verses, v31 and 32, Jesus used the word 'glorify'. The Greek word for 'glorify' is "doxazo" where we get our English word 'doxology' which means "a hymn or form of words containing an ascription of praise to God." Many of you remember the lyrics of the Doxology:

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

For Jesus, death is not a mournful tragedy, but a magnificent triumph. It is glorious, not gruesome. That is heaven's vantage point. Following Christ should give us this kind of a perspective. All too often we are looking at the immediate situation in our lives, not the ultimate. We're looking at how hard the road is right now instead of considering where that road is ultimately leading, Heaven.

Someone who doesn't understand God's vantage point would ask, "How is the death of Jesus going to glorify the Father in heaven?" On Golgotha Hill, Christ performed the greatest work which had ever occurred in the history of the universe. On the cross, He brought to pass the salvation of condemned sinners.

I see three points:

- 1) Providing the way to reconcile between God and mankind who was disobedient; and making the way of salvation available to all mankind through Jesus Himself
- 2) Taking all the sins away from anyone who believes in Jesus Christ as one's Savior and Lord so that he or she will not have to face the divine judgment and be thrown into eternal hell
- 3) Overcoming evil and death. Satan had and still has a bondage on mankind from the moment of the disobedience by our first parents Adam and Eve. Through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, He was able to pay for the penalty of our sins.

The moment Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord, the curse of death – both spiritual and physical – came upon every single human on this earth. They might be able to escape taxes from the IRS, they cannot escape death without God's help. Through Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, the followers of Jesus will not face spiritual death.

John 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.

B. GLORIFYING GOD WITH OUR LIVES

Jude 25 To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

How can we glorify our God? Do we just sing praise and worship music to glorify Him? Or tell others how wonderful our God is? Or would it be doing a bunch of rituals like some denominations demand? Certainly not.

What is it, then? How do we glorify the Lord? I don't see any other verse in the Bible that gives a better definition and method like these two verses from the Book of Romans:

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

If we transform our lives by the renewing of our mind and by doing what the Bible tells us to do, our lives become the very tool to glorify our Lord. The very purpose for which you and I exist is to give glory to God, that's what it's all about.

If an unbeliever hears this, he would snort and say, "Preacher, you're brainwashed." Then, I would answer him, "You're absolutely right. Jesus washed my brain," and then I would ask, "But, who washed yours? At least I know who washed my brain. Who is washing your brain? Who is putting thoughts into your brain?"

C. BY THE WAY

John 13:33 Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, 'Where I am going, you cannot come,' so now I say to you.

This comment by Jesus must have been like earth shattering words to His disciples. They literally had left everything to follow Jesus, and expected to be high-ranking officials in Jesus' kingdom when He took political control of Israel as Messiah. They had followed Him for over three years, enduring a lot, and now He says, "Sayonara," in Hebrews. To them, that was not cool at all, it was a total bomb.

What Jesus said here caused an enormous problem for the disciples: How would they go on? With their Master gone, what would be their identity? Would they just go back to where they came from with empty hands?

D. LOVING GOD AND LOVING OTHERS AS HE LOVES US

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Anticipating their insecurity, Jesus stabilized His disciples with a heavy-duty command. In these verses, Jesus has not only commanded a new dynamic, He predicted a new impact as well.

One thing we must notice is the word 'new' Jesus used. Its Greek word is "kainos". It is not simply additional or different, but it is 'fresh,' 'unheard.'

"Loving others" itself is not a new commandment, but an old one from Leviticus 19.

Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Why did Jesus say that it is a new command? Please take notice. The old command from Leviticus 19 is "Love your neighbor as yourself." But the new commandment is "Love one another as I have loved you." You see the difference?

It was impossible to love one another as Christ loved us without Him. Jesus is setting a whole new standard of love and gives His disciples and us this new commandment to follow and honor.

Jesus is not speaking here of love to all people, but of love within the community of believers. He has set the example and He expects us to follow in His steps.

The Greek word for 'love' in v35 is "agape" which is unconditional love as many of us already know. This kind of love refuses to respond negatively, refuses to reject, refuses to demand conditions, and refuses to nitpick the lint off someone's soul.

You are wondering, "Are there any Bible verses that can tell us how to do that?" I am glad that you asked.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Now, replace the word "love" with my name and I will read it again: "JK suffers long and is kind... NOT!!!" I am already disqualified. You think that you can do better? Place your name there and read it yourself. None of us can do it.

But with God, all things are possible and we can do all things through Jesus Christ who strengthens us. Jesus gives the Holy Spirit who is God Himself to all the born-again believers and He is the One who empowers us to do it. We learn to be patient, kind, not envy, not puffed up by the Holy Spirit.

If you are not quite convinced, please turn to another verse.

Romans 5:5b the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

So here is the point, if God's love can flow into our hearts, God will make sure that His love can flow out of our hearts to other people, which means no one in our circle of relationships should ever be love starved. He has given us that capacity. Ain't that cool?

What would happen if all the born-again Christians love one another as Christ loves us? The churches around the world cannot have enough seats in their buildings to accommodate unbelievers rushing to churches to see and become one of us.

With that in mind, v35 is a scary verse. Let me explain what I mean when I say it's a scary verse. In effect, Jesus is giving permission to the world to judge us.

John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The world, especially the unbelievers around us will know that we are Christians, the followers of Jesus Christ, not because of what we claim, rather what we do. Anybody can claim to be whatever they want you to believe, only a few can do what they claim to be.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) We need to transform our lives by the renewing of our mind and by doing what the Bible tells us to do, so that our lives become the very tool to glorify our Lord. The very purpose for which you and I exist is to give glory to God, that's what it's all about.

2) If God's love can flow into our hearts, God will make sure that His love can flow out of our hearts to other people, which means no one in our circle of relationships should ever be love starved. He has given us that capacity.

3) The world, especially the unbelievers around us will know that we are Christians, the followers of Jesus Christ, not because of what we claim, rather what we do. Anybody can claim to be whatever they want you to believe, only a few can do what they claim to be.