

**Deut. 6:1-5
Luke 9:57-62**

Dec. 19, 2021

No Fan of The Savior

The Mission

Last week we looked at the mission of the Savior as we considered the various expectations people have and had for a savior. I wondered aloud if many today want a savior who is more accountable to them than they are to Him; a savior who relieves them of responsibility for life's outcome.

Here are Jesus own words concerning his mission: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost*, Luke 19:10. Whether we realize it or not, we are all lost. Without a vital connection to God (our true Father) we are orphans wandering through a sin-corrupted world, a jungle of human passions gone astray. What lost people need most is not a new leaf, but a new life!

The Savior's mission is not to take away our pain, our troubles, or our enemies, but to take away our sins.

***He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities ... and by his wounds we are healed*, Isaiah 53:5.**

Think about that. If the Savior came simply to take away our pain, right every wrong, and impose His peace, we would remain sinners, continuing to inflict pain, doing wrong, and incapable of living in peace. The problems of this world would continue to arise. The true power of the gospel is to create a miracle of conversion inside the human heart.

God had a plan for our Savior when He was born into our world: *...it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer ... For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors*, Isaiah 53:10, 12. God gave his only Son to die on the Cross for our sakes; God gave the very best He had, in order that He might put to death the very worst in us.

Our Greatest Need

Our greatest need today is to accept the mission of our Savior. He came to set this world right, beginning with you and me. Without Him we cannot live as God intends nor can we fulfill our part in His mission to seek and save the lost. That takes supernatural courage and strength. It is the glory of the gospel that God has more grace in His heart than we have sin in our lives. Jesus is a better Savior than we are sinners. In Christ you can rise above your past to live a life that brings great glory to God.

Fan or Follower

There are many dangers to living – there are always risks in life. Yet the greatest danger is resisting the work of God. There are those who outright reject Jesus as any kind of savior. There are many who admire Him, but that’s as far as it goes. Jesus has a lot of fans. A fan is “an enthusiastic admirer,” who sits in the stands and cheers for his team. He’s got all the team stuff ... but he’s never in the game. He knows about the players but he doesn’t know the players. He yells and cheers, but doesn’t break a sweat. And if his team has a string of losing seasons, he may well find another team (unless he’s a Cubs fan).

Jesus’ fans may like some of His words, maybe they know many of the stories about Him - like His birth at Christmas – but when life gets difficult they forget Him. These are fans who sit safely in the stands and cheer, but they know nothing of the sacrifice and pain on the field. Fans of Jesus may know a lot about Him, but they don’t know Him.ⁱ

Jesus, of course, didn’t call for fans – admirers from afar – he called for followers. Jesus calls people to come down from the grandstand and get out on the field with Him to get the job done. It is recorded that Jesus often said to people simply, “Follow me,” (Luke 9:59; 9:61; 14:27; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19; 21:22).

When Jesus invites us to follow Him, he’s inviting us to get in the game with Him. I wonder how many churches in America are more stadium than sanctuary. Are we? Sometimes? In some things? Here’s what the Savior, born in Bethlehem, said, *Whoever serves me must follow me...* John 12:26.

The Only One

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: ‘If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life – he cannot be my disciple. And *anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple*, Luke 14:25-27. Whoa! That sets the bar pretty high!

In some countries today to follow Jesus can mean jail or death. In some cultures, if you become a follower of Jesus you are thought hate your family. For many in America it might mean some in your family will no longer fully trust you, or maybe your work colleagues will look at you as odd, a wimp, or not so intelligent. Jesus asks His followers to seek their meaning and purpose in life through Him, above all others. So, is Jesus your one and only Savior, or is He one among many?

Here’s the nitty-gritty that weeds out the fans from the followers:

1. For what do you sacrifice your money? *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*, Matthew 6:21. The reason Jesus talked about money more than any other subject, is because it so easily becomes the first thing we follow, instead of Him. The human condition believes that satisfaction comes with a price tag: “if I just had enough money I

could have this and this and that, and then I'd find contentment." Jesus spoke on this one pretty starkly: *No one can serve two masters ... You cannot serve both God and money*, Matt. 6:24.

2. When you're hurt where do you go for comfort, healing, and strength? A parent or spouse? The refrigerator is full of "comfort food" right? Do you lose yourself at work? There's nothing wrong with finding comfort, healing and strength from family and friends, that's part of God's plan. But the question is: Do they take the place of Jesus?

To turn to anything or anyone other than Jesus reveals divided loyalties. When's the last time you experienced some pain; lost job; a broken relationship; test results weren't what you hope? And where did you turn?

3. What disappoints or frustrates you the most? Some level of disappointment or frustration is natural – it just comes with life. But excessive dismay – like "it's the end of the world" – over life events or unmet desires, or world affairs, reveals too much trust in something or someone other than Jesus.

4. What do you get really excited about? Just like the things that disappoint us, the things that excite us can get in the way of following Jesus. Tim "Mountain Man" Guraedy, seen on "Duck Dynasty," has penned a book entitled, *Keepin' a Slow Profile*. "The role of faith is something that you always have to keep first out in front. It's like the engine on a train. You have to keep your faith first," he said. "Through my faith I remain strong and I'm ready to keep that train going."

Committed to Follow

Jesus says, *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*, John 3:16. His words are about believing.

Jesus says, *If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me*, Luke 9:23. His words here are about following, and what it takes to follow Him.

In the Bible believing means to follow with your life. Belief and lifestyle are intertwined, inseparable, completely united. Isn't that the way we want it to be? What would we think of the CEO of Toyota proclaiming that his cars are the best on the market, and then he drives off in a Mercedes? If your cars are so great, why aren't you driving one?

So, what about this Savior? He offers us grace for our weakness, and the truth that in Him even our weakness overcomes power. He offers mercy that overcomes guilt, and real life that overcomes the fear of death. I love this little audio clip I often hear on the local radio station – INSERT AUDIO CLIP HERE ["Of course I listen. Why wouldn't I listen?"] Thank you to Alpha Media for providing audio clip. **With what Jesus**

offers? ... of course I'd follow. Why wouldn't I follow? How about you? He said: *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me*, John 10:27.

Did you ever have a coach, a commanding officer, or a supervisor who you'd follow unreservedly? When they spoke you listened. The good ones are the ones who lead by example and make sacrifices for others in order to achieve something greater than all of them. Jesus leads. He doesn't push.

Followers of Jesus become companions with Him on the journey through this imperfect world. *Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me*, John 12:26. Personal desires and ambitions seem paltry in the light of His glory. One of my favorite hymns is "For All The Saints." It has this line, speaking of Jesus, "Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might; thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight..."

Without Jesus as captain, human achievement and accomplishment soon become pride and greed. Without Him, human leadership soon becomes domination and tyranny. Without Him, our good intentions, sour into manipulative self-serving, and rank hypocrisy.

Jesus the Savior brings us into the spiritual dimension of reality and in His company the follower discovers that his ambitions, his drive, his good intentions are transformed into building blocks of God's kingdom, avenues for finding and saving the lost, and a wellspring of joy in the believer. And in this process the follower of Jesus becomes a truly transformative figure in human history.

More Than a Fan

Some people just want to be fans, content with praising the wonderful words and teachings of Jesus. It is always easier and safer to admire from afar, rather than engage in action ... action that really makes a difference in peoples' lives. "Great thoughts speak only to the thoughtful mind, but great actions speak to all mankind," Theodore Roosevelt.

Jesus, the babe born in Bethlehem to be our Savior, still says, "Follow me." Follow me anywhere, whenever. Why not here? Why not now? He promised: *Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*, John 8:12.

This is what Christmas is really all about.

ⁱ Kyle Idleman, *Not A Fan, Becoming a Completely Committed Follower of Jesus*, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI; City on a Hill Studios, 2011), 25.