

† The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

The Praying Savior – John 17

The Lessons from Jesus' Prayer – John 17:1-26

What is a Christian (Part 2)

John 17:6-8

6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

We live in blest times, do we not? Not only do we possess such wonderful and marvelous technology like cars, computers and a multitude of other modern conveniences (microwave ovens; cell phones; mp3 players); but in addition, as Christians, do we not have some incredible “blessings” today? I mean what other nation has as many things “Christian” attached to it as we do? We have Christian businesses; Christian coffee shops; Christian bookstores along with all those Christian T-Shirts. We have Christian support groups, Christian singles, Christian Athletes; Christian music, Christian radio, Christian Bed and Breakfasts. Now are such things blessings? To be sure many have been blessed by such things, but have we become so casual with the term “Christian” that its meaning has been watered down and washed out? Have we made the term “Christian” nothing more than an adjective that goes in front of anything we want to make religious; rather than the title or name of a person (not a thing) that was seen by an unbelieving community as a radical rebel against culture and society?

As we noted last week, the term or title “Christian” was first applied to disciples or followers of Jesus Christ in Acts 11:26 by unbelievers. It was given to those whose lives had been demonstrably changed by the principles and practices of Jesus Christ. At the time the term was first used, there was nothing casual and nothing veiled when one was labeled a Christian. Indeed for the first “Christians” such a title often meant abandonment by family; excommunication from the community; loss of job; even scorn, ridicule, and sometimes torture or death. To be a “Christian” was to be known as one who had rejected the culture’s religious and philosophical views. Such a person would be known as “One of those Christians; you know, the ones that deny the truth of many gods; those who say there is only one God; those who say that their leader, Jesus of Nazareth, died on a cross and yet rose again from the dead; those whose lives and words condemn our own lifestyles; our own words and our behavior.” To be called “Christian” was to be defined instantly by a word as an anti-cultural trouble-maker whose life was focused or conformed to one person, Jesus Christ. How far have we come from such a meaning?

By applying the term “Christian” (as we have) to so many *things*, we have not enhanced, we have not made it more clear, but diminished and muddied the meaning of the word. It has been so watered down and today we find there are too many things, too many conflicting ideas to clearly understand what a Christian is. And so we find it necessary to get back to God’s Word to recover the biblical teaching on what it is to be a Christian. Beloved, have we become so numbed by the world and so content with shallow teaching that both we and even the world around us fail to grasp the reality of who we are in Jesus Christ and how we are to live before Him?

What is a Christian? What standards or measure can be used to biblically define what is a Christian? As we began to see last week, Jesus, here in John 17:6-8 helps us define what is a

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Christian. As He prays to the Father, He speaks as to what are the realities and experiences of those whom are His disciples. We noted three last week from verse 6.

First, we saw that a Christian is one who has had the character of God revealed to Him. If a person is to be a follower of Jesus, God the Father must be manifested or made known to Him by the life and teachings of Jesus. As such teaching is allowed to penetrate our hearts; we are humbled that a part of the character of God is to so love the world so as to send His Son to pay for the sins of all who believe upon Him. We come to see the great mercy and grace of God in Jesus.

Second, we saw that a Christian is one who has been chosen by God, before time began; given to Jesus Christ to save, to redeem and to make His own. As we come to grips with God's choosing us for His glory, we are once again humbled and come to see our utter dependence upon His who saves.

And third, we saw that a Christian is one who is compliant with God's Word. They are those of whom it can be said, **“they have kept Your word.”** A Christian is one whose life is characterized by obedience to the Word. Yes, he will sin; but he is not content in sin and does not desire to remain in sin but will come to confess, according to God's Word and be forgiven and then strives to keep more and more of the Word.

This morning then, we wish to consider the final four markers of what is a Christian. The fourth marker is that a Christian is...

IV. One who finds satisfaction in Christ (7)

Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You.

As we read this, notice the progression from verse 6 into verse 7. As a result of knowing God's Character, of being chosen by Him and given to Jesus for salvation and as those characterized by compliance to God's Word, the inevitable outcome is that a Christian finds his satisfaction in Christ.

Look at verse 7. Jesus prayed, **“Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You.”** What Jesus is saying is this – the disciples had come to see Jesus in such a way that He alone became their ultimate satisfaction. Consider how many people had heard the words of Jesus and had seen the works of Jesus and yet they remained unmoved and unconvinced that Jesus was the Savior of the world; dubious that He was Lord and Master; and skeptical that He was God. But something is different about the Christian. The Christian is one who comes to see everything in light of Jesus. Let me show you this.

Jesus says, **“they have come to know”** – which is just one word in the Greek that speaks of something coming to a head, to a single focal point, of all things coming together in a person's head and heart. A Christian is one who upon hearing the words of Jesus and considering the works of Jesus comes to believe that Jesus was truly God, that everything Jesus did and said was from God. In other words, everything that Jesus is, everything that Jesus does and everything that *holds* comes from the Father. Ultimately Jesus is speaking about not only who He is, but also what He has provided for our salvation. And for the disciples and any believer, the greatest satisfaction, the greatest comfort and peace-giving thought is – knowing Jesus Christ, that He is all and all. Because in knowing Jesus there is knowing God.

Let me ask you something by way of application; with what or in whom do you really seek satisfaction, fulfillment or contentment? Be careful in considering this. The Sunday School answer is “Jesus!” But let ask you this way, “What do you really live for?” What is it that has a hold of your heart, that makes you most happy? I would venture to say that at times you might

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not be able to answer, “Jesus.” Rather, your satisfaction might be placed in a spouse or in your family. And when things are right with your family relationships you are happy; but what happens when things are not going so right? Does your testimony change? Does your countenance change? The Lord has given me a wonderful wife, my favorite lady, my best friend upon this earth in Laura. She is an amazing companion, a fantastic cook, a patient helper. And I hope that many such things would be said by her about me. But she knows that I am not perfect; and I know she is not perfect. We know that we will disappoint and let each other down at times. And so, if either she or I put our satisfaction solely in our relationship, then during any tough times, what is going to happen? I will not be satisfied or content. It is in such a time that I remember that love is choice, that I made a promise to love her for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, in good times and bad times. But the point is, my closest most intimate relationship on earth has the potential for disappointment. So do I want to pin all my hopes for satisfaction on this? Many don't and so they look for satisfaction in a number of other things; it may be in having the right job; it may be having the right or many friends; it may be in having things; it may even be in finding the right or perfect church. But guess what; none of these things ultimately satisfy. And yet we can be so dull and when we are unhappy and restless, we start looking at our relationships, or our jobs or how the children are behaving, and how people are treating us at church, looking for something to satisfy. But may I ask you, when you are down; when you low, are you reminded in your spirit to look to Jesus? Do you remember that the Father has given Him everything, all things and so, if this be true, my first impulse needs to be to move toward Jesus; to read about Him, to plead in prayer for a growing knowledge of Him as Lord and Savior (2 Peter 3:18).

There is an interesting paradox. You and I are accustomed to seeking satisfaction in things that ultimately do not satisfy. We are generally used to moving toward those things that continue to move on or away (like magnets opposed to each other). But the believer, a Christian is one who moves toward Him who is immovable; Him who does not change; Him in whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. I asked you a moment ago, what has your heart and mind? What do you live for? What is it that you think about and pursue over and over thinking it makes you happy? Is it relationships? Is it music? Is it movies? Is it money? What are you addicted to? You know what an addiction is? *An addiction is seeking satisfaction from something or someone that cannot satisfy.* Why do most drug addicts generally start with something like marijuana and then progress on to harder and harder drugs? Because the “tamer” drugs no longer satisfy, and the addict is looking for that better buzz, that better feeling and yet is never satisfied. What are you addicted to? In what or whom are you finding contentment and peace regardless of your circumstances?

Beloved, a Christian is one who finds satisfaction in Jesus no matter what else is going on. A Christian is one whose heart and mind has come to see the reality that nothing and no one can satisfy or fulfill like Jesus. It is as the songwriter has profoundly penned:

If I find in myself desires nothing in this world can satisfy
I can only conclude that I, I was not made for here
If the flesh that I fight is at best only light and momentary
Then of course, I'll feel nude when to where I'm destined I'm compared

The believer is one who comes to know that in Jesus alone is everything needful, everything important. A Christian is one who knows who Jesus is, but also all that Jesus provides

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as we trust in Him. A Christian is, as one preacher has said, like a man who is lost in the desert without any water. As he begins to wander and stumble through the sand, trying to find his way out, it is not long before he really loses this concern. Rather, he becomes consumed only with trying to find water. With each step, he is on a quest for water. His eyes scan for any moisture that will revitalize his life. And if by chance, someone came along and ask if he was interested in having plenty of money, he would quickly decline. If another came and offered him fame and a good reputation, he would not be interested. And if someone approached him with the enticement of sensual pleasures, he wants none of it. What does he want? He longs for water because he knows that nothing else can satisfy him. Therefore nothing else has his affections.

Beloved, this is the Christian, one who knows that the only Person who can fulfill the great need of his heart is Jesus Christ. The Christian sees in Jesus everything that God says satisfies and so nothing else, anything that can only offer temporary enticement or contentment at best, is not nearly as alluring for him as simply longing for Jesus. Is this you? What has your heart today? What do you live for? What are you addicted to? The Christian is one who finds satisfaction in Jesus and such a satisfaction begins with salvation, it begins as one repents of his sins, understands forgiveness of sins and experiences the grace of God as he now longs to live for Jesus, who has granted such a one everything pertaining to live life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called him by His own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3). A Christian is one who finds satisfaction in Jesus, and is especially satisfied with His work on the cross for his salvation. And such a satisfaction is visible and verbal in his life as he wants others to know what brings true satisfaction in life. This brings us then to the fifth marker of a Christian as we look at verse 8. A Christian is...

V. One who finds the sum of truth in Christ (8a)

...for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You...

[Read Text]. Brothers and sisters, what Jesus is saying here is that being a Christian is not about a feeling (you may or may not at times “feel” anything), that being a Christian is not about some kind of emotional experience (you may or may not at times be emotional); but rather, a Christian is someone who has heard “the words which [the Father] gave [Jesus], he has heard the gospel, the good news of Jesus and something has happened. His mind is renewed and transformed. He may not understand everything about the message, but enough has been “received” (a word from our verse) that he understands the sum or the big picture of the truth or words of Jesus Christ. That truth includes that he is a sinner, separate from God who needs to repent, to turn from his sin and receive the blessings and benefits of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Notice what Jesus says here in verse 8, the progression that ought to be the experience of every believer. First, the “**words**” or teachings of Jesus were given to Jesus to give to us. This is a theme of the gospel of John, that Jesus has come to give us the teachings, the words of life, the words of God, the principles and practices by which we draw near to God. In John 3:34, John the Baptist said this about Jesus “**For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God**” (John 3:34). In John 6:63, Jesus informs His hearers of the power of His words in their lives, if they believe, saying “**It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.**” There is a difference between a man-made religion and a life directed by the Spirit of God. Many of those to whom Jesus spoke to in John 6:63 had not received the words of Jesus Christ for life. But here were others who heard the same words, who because they received them, because they listened in order to be changed, heard words of

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Christ and believed. The words of Jesus became to them life, even as Peter confessed saying to Jesus, **“You have the words of eternal life”** (John 6:68).

To receive the words of Christ is to listen to the truths, to the facts, and to the teachings of Jesus. But something else is needed in addition to receiving. For many people hear the words of Jesus yet they do not believe. Why? Because in addition to receiving the words, notice what else Jesus says, the Christian is one who has received the words, but also has **“truly (most assuredly) understood that I came from You.”** A Christian is not one who simply comes to church and hears a sermon. A Christian is not simply one who reads books about Jesus or theology. No, a Christian is one who truly understands the words of Jesus. They become to him not just facts to know or memorize, but life-changing principles that direct his life. To understand the words of Jesus is to say that they have become your light to illuminate your path in this dark world. To understand the words of Jesus is to have His teachings change your heart and mind, that Jesus being your Savior and Lord makes sense to you. Many people hear the gospel hundreds of times before it “clicks” and they come to “get it.” All of sudden, because of the working of the Spirit in his heart, a person wonders at the love of God who sent His Son to save “him” from the penalty of sin and to give him the hope of eternal life rather than the expectation of eternal judgment.

So, what is a Christian? A Christian is one who has heard the words of Jesus and has been captivated by them, understanding them and receiving them as the sum of truth by faith. To a Christian, the gospel, the words of Christ never grow wearisome; he never grows tired of hearing the sweet truths over and over again. Oh that it would not be said by us with drudgery or disdain, “Oh yes, I have heard that before.” We ought to be like the gospel hymn that says,

*I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.*

Are the words of Jesus more wonderfully sweet every time you hear them? But there is a question to be answered, “What is the essence of these words of Jesus?” What does a person need to receive and understand to be a Christian? Let me share a few things that I see the Bible presents as part of the sum of truth needful to be saved. How important is this, with so many who walk and aisle and pray a prayer without truly grasping or understanding the basic truths Jesus presented, I say this is most important. Therefore I would say to you that receiving and understanding the words of Jesus includes in some form or another...

First, a person needs a recognition that God is perfectly holy, completely without any mark or blemish of sin and has given to us His holy perfection as Law or as a standard by which all are measured.

Second, a person must realize that he has failed to meet this divine standard of holiness because he chooses sin rather than God’s standard and therefore deserves the punishment of God’s law, that is eternal death.

Third, a person needs to see that God became in Man in the person of Jesus Christ, that God came to us, to fulfill for us the demands of the Law – to become our sin sacrifice, taking upon Himself all our sin, nailing it to the cross and burying it in the grave; not so that we would be neutral, but that we might also receive the very goodness, the very righteousness, the very things that makes Jesus acceptable to the Father from Jesus. Beloved, the words of Jesus, the gospel is this, that the very worst about you was transferred to Jesus and punished on the cross; and the very best about Jesus was transferred to you, giving you the hope of eternal life.

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Fourth, a person, in light of such a truth as Jesus dying for our sins to make us righteous, a person must by faith, repent of his sins and turn to follow God. That is the sum of the truth of the gospel. Have you received and understood this truth? A Christian is one who finds the sum of truth in Jesus. This naturally leads us to the sixth marker as expressed at the end of verse 8. A Christian is...

VI. One who is sure about Christ (8b)

and they believed that You sent Me.

[Read text]. The inevitable result of receiving and understanding the words of Christ is believing in Him; it is having what the bible speaks of as “faith” – faith is trusting in the person and work of Jesus. It is saying that you can’t save yourself and are dependent upon someone else, namely Jesus, if you have any hope of salvation. Jesus says of these believers for whom He prays that they believed...they had faith...they had trusted, not in themselves, but in God who send Jesus. They had become sure about Christ, they had been convinced of who He was and why He came.

Beloved a Christian is one who recognizes that if the Father had not sent His Son, he would be without hope. A Christian is one who knows that if Jesus had not come to be his Savior, then he would have to trust himself to save himself. He would have to devise a way to make himself pleasing and acceptable to God. On that day when he stands in God’s divine courtroom, condemned as one who violated God’s holy standard, for all have, and worthy of eternal death, what argument would he, would you, use to persuade God that somehow you are exempt, somehow better than others, somehow deserving of something better based upon what...your life...your words? You see, believing in Jesus is ultimately a relinquishing of all self-trust for righteousness and casting yourself upon the mercy of God to give you the righteousness of His Son so that you might live. Are you sure about that? Are you sure that Christ and Christ alone is your only hope for salvation, your only hope of not spending eternity in the torments of hell; and indeed of your only hope to be changed so that you might begin to experience in this life the reality of the presence of God, Christ in you the hope of glory.

The disciples had come to believe that the Father sent the Son; that the Son accomplished the work for their salvation; and that through the Son alone they were justified before God, they could have the hope of being received by God as sons of God. Have you believed as they did? Are you sure about Christ?

As I offer you the last of the markers of what is a Christian, I have purposely intended to bring you back to verse 6. For a Christian is...

VII. One who is separated from the world. (6)

...the men whom You gave Me out of the world...

Hear again the specific words of Jesus there in the middle of verse 6. Jesus says, “**the men who You gave Me out of the world...**” A Christian is one who is separated from the world. There is something distinctive about him. Let us remember that in this context, the word “world” does not speak of planet Earth, but rather speaks of a way of thinking and acting that is not consistent with the purpose and expectations of God. And when Jesus says that men were given Him “**out of the world**” the clear implication is that everyone who has been give to Jesus was at one time part of this world. That is that everyone begins this life contrary to God and His will. No one is neutral in relationship to God. David reminds us that we are conceived in sin, that is, we start this life at enmity, rebellion with God and that for those who have believed in Jesus,

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they are transferred from this dominion, this rule of rebellion and transferred to a kingdom of light in which they become the sons and daughters of God. There is no one neutral with God. You are either a sinner or a saint, you are either dead to God or alive to God; you are either darkness or light. There is no middle ground. Which are you...are you still like the world or are you taken **“out of the world”**?

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses recounts Israel’s receiving of the Law and their call to live according to God’s Law rather than according to the ways of Egypt or the ways of the nations which they were to drive out of the promised land. God had called them out of Egypt, out of that sinful place and its sinful ways of thinking. He called them to be a people for Himself. And in Deuteronomy 6-7, God calls His people to live differently than the nations around them, not to live like the nations, but to be a light to the nations, to show people who God is and what God is like.

Beloved, the Exodus story is a picture of redemption. We, like Israel, were in bondage; not to Pharaoh but to sin. We like Israel were governed by a way of thinking that was contrary to God; but God, in Jesus Christ, snatched us out of the world, out of this anti-God way of thinking and has now placed “in Christ” to be a light to the nations. Therefore we are to be separated from world in our thinking and in our actions. We are certainly living in the world, but we are no longer to be living like those of the world. As so, as I have often said to our teenagers in youth group, there has got to be a difference. If we are not manifesting the supernatural and transformational dimensions of the gospel, we are failing to in being those who are “out of the world.” I love the simplicity of the truth captured by the songwriter:

Do they see Jesus in me?
Do they recognize His face?
Do I communicate Your and Your grace?
Do I reflect how You are,
In the way I choose to be?
Do they see Jesus in me?

Do they see Jesus in you? Do they see you, not just a different, for there are a lot of “different” people in this world, are there not? Rather, do they see you as supernaturally different? How does this happen, how do “Christians” reveal themselves supernaturally different? We will spend a lifetime answering that question, but just a couple of things that we ought to pray for and look for include:

1. Be a person who seeks to bring every thought of his mind under the Lordship of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...

2. Be a person who longs to keep the word of God. Study it, meditate on it!

Psalm 119:17-19

17 Deal bountifully with Your servant, That I may live and keep Your word. 18 Open my eyes, that I may behold Wonderful things from Your law. 19 I am a stranger in the earth; Do not hide Your commandments from me.

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3. Be a person who prays to boldly proclaim the life-transforming power of God in the gospel.

Ephesians 6:18-20

18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, 19 and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Such things are some steps that reveal our separation from this world, our desire to make the only true God and the Son whom He sent known. May we each one then, consider the reality of these markers of what is a Christian in ourselves. Ask yourself, “Am I....”

1. One who knows the character of God
2. One who knows he is chosen by God
3. One who is compliant with the Word of God
4. One who finds satisfaction in Christ
5. One who finds the sum of truth in Christ
6. One who is sure about Christ
7. One who is separated from the world

May such things become increasingly so for each of you as you cry out to the Lord, and all to His glory. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria

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