

8. The Intensity of His Walk (2Q 2008—The Wonder of Jesus)

Biblical material: Matt. 4:4; Luke 2:40; 6:12; John 4:34; John 17; 1 John 2:6.

Quotes

- I believe in person to person. Every person is Christ for me, and since there is only one Jesus, that person is the one person in the world at that moment. *Mother Teresa*
- Jesus Christ was an extremist for love, truth and goodness. *Martin Luther King, Jr*
- Christianity is not a doctrine, not truth as truth, but the knowledge of a Person; it is knowing the Lord Jesus. You cannot be educated into being a Christian. *T. Austin-Sparks*
- There is something so pure and frank and noble about Him that to doubt His sincerity would be like doubting the brightness of the sun. Charles Edward Jefferson
- I have one passion. It is He, only He. *Count Zinzendorf*

Questions

Was Jesus simply *too* intense? How would you see the totality of his commitment? Remember his family's concern that he was getting "too obsessed"? (Mark 3:21) Is the life of Jesus something we should copy—and how? How do we "walk like Jesus did?" What of the claims that religion can lead us to an "unbalanced" life?

Discussion

Matthew 4:4 speaks of our total dependence on God for life itself, as Jesus in his wilderness temptation showed. Luke 2:40 reveals the blessing of God on Jesus as a child. Jesus spent the whole night praying (Luke 6:12)—why? Jesus' only food was to do his Father's will (John 4:34). Jesus prays intensely for his disciples (John 17). Finally, "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did." (1 John 2:6 NIV).

The Jesus of today, as commonly understood, is far from the truth of the real Jesus. Having made Jesus in our own image, Jesus is now safe. Jesus is whatever we want him to be, and above all, "nice." A suitable addition to a comfortable lifestyle, today's Jesus that we endorse is perhaps more a figment of our imagination than anything like the person who lived and walked and talked and made a difference two millennia ago.

For in our niceness and pleasantness, the true Jesus is allowed to say very little. He is transformed into icons and images, greeting cards and statuettes. The picture is what we want, not the disturbing reality of what he said and did, how he lived and died.

The truth is that he lived intensely for God, as God, and showed us who God was in the brief time he had opportunity. Intense? Yes certainly. But it could not have been any other way—for the forces of evil were marshaled against him, and he needed to do all he could in those brief three-and-a-half years of public demonstration as to who God truly is.

The whole of the sermon on the mount is an attack on niceness and formal religion. It cares not for hide-bound tradition, or the pretentious piety that is so often the guise of religion. Don't make it obvious you are fasting, trying to win respect. Don't make your prayers obvious, encouraging people to think how devout you are. Don't make your offerings apparent to others, as if your gifts to God are the measure of your spirituality.

Don't follow the human values system, rather follow the values of God. Reject intolerance, spiritual pretense, material concerns. Watch out for false prophets. Those who call out Lord, Lord do not all qualify for the kingdom. Even miracle-workers and great preachers will be rejected by God. A litany of rejection—that religion in human form is unreliable at best, and anti-God at worst. A radical approach to the Truth—for the One who is Truth Incarnate stands among us.

Comment 1

"I believe that the most important of all our beliefs as Christians is this truth about our God: that He is not as His enemies have made Him out to be—arbitrary, vengeful and severe—but rather, that He is precisely as His Son has shown Him to be.

"When He was here on this earth, He said, 'When you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.' (John 14:9) And the Father is just as gracious and willing to forgive as His Son. Could there be any better news than this? This is the everlasting good news that holds the loyalty of the universe and will make us eternally secure in the hereafter. This is the good news that we need to share with all those who don't realize that they are members of God's family here on this earth. So the ultimate question for our series is: Is God really like that?" A. Graham Maxwell, *Conversations about God*, tape #1.

Comment 2

"If you want to see what God is thinking, look at Jesus Christ. If you want to get an insight into what you might call the dynamic personality of God, look at Jesus Christ... We are saying that Jesus is God's means of communication, and that Jesus is the expression of the thought of God... If you want to see the mind of God, *look at Jesus Christ: here is the mind of God.*" William Barclay, *Discovering Jesus* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), pp.42-3.

Ellen White Comments

The truth of God is for us. The religion of Jesus Christ never degrades the receiver, but makes him pure, that he may see God. It gives him an intensity of desire to be like Jesus Christ, the One altogether lovely, the Chiefest among ten thousand. . . . Why should we not love Him and give Him our undivided service? {UL 143}

Would you not feel that if Christ is praying for you, you can pray for yourself with an intensity of perseverance, and that all inferior aid is just what it is—finite and worthless? With Jesus as your Advocate, and you believing, confessing your sins with contrition of soul, and dying to self, would you not feel assured your suit is indeed gained? Would you not feel the evidence in your own soul that Jesus was amply able to do all things for you, and that the foot of the cross was the only place of safety for you? {1888 868-9}