

Calling the Christ and His Disciples – Sermon for March 8, 2009

By Pastor Vern Oestmann

Who do you say Jesus is? This was the question that Jesus asked his disciples. Who do you say that I am? This is an important question for us to reflect upon. It's important because the answer we give to this question determines our commitment to Jesus.

Let us pray. Heavenly father, as we pause to meditate on this question, "Who is Jesus?", guide us, by your Holy Spirit, to answer it with conviction and give us the courage to make the commitment to follow Him. This we ask in Jesus name. Amen.

It is one thing to say that we believe in Jesus. The word "believe" means to trust completely, without reservation. In order to say that we believe in Jesus means that we know who Jesus is.

We can have knowledge of who He is by reading the Scriptures or other historical records. We can say that the Bible tells of His birth, some of His life, His teachings, His death, and even His resurrection. These are facts that other historical writings support, as well as archeological findings. But, is that really knowing Jesus?

I can know about someone, but that is not the same as knowing someone to whom I would trust them with my life. Now, there are several ways of knowing a person.

First, if someone would say, "Do you know John Smith?" You might respond, "Yes, I know a John Smith." "The John Smith I know lives over on Sycamore St." The person may respond, "That must be another John Smith. The John Smith I know lives in Utah."

Second, if someone would say, "Do you know John Smith?" You might respond, "I know of a John Smith. What does he do?" The person says, "John repairs cars and I'm looking to find where he lives." The only John Smith that I'm aware of lives around the corner on Sycamore St. I don't know if he repairs cars or not."

Third, if someone would say, "Do you know John Smith?" You might respond, "Yes, I know John. Why are you looking for him?" The person says, "I heard he repairs cars." You respond saying, "Yes, John does repair cars. In fact, I had my car repaired by John a couple of weeks ago. He did a great job." The person then responds saying, "Thanks. Where can I find him?" You say, "He lives around the corner on Sycamore St., the third house on the right. Tell him Bill recommended you to him."

Out of those three scenarios, the last one tells us more than just knowledge of John. It tells of a trust that John can do a good job in repairing cars.

If we are asked about Jesus, we might tell someone about Jesus, but do we have such a trust in him to recommend him to the person? That requires more than a general knowledge of who Jesus is. It requires knowing Jesus personally in order to recommend Him to others.

Having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is what we are about, "nurturing in each person an active and growing relationship." This also requires commitment in following Him.

Jesus told His disciples and those who followed Him, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.”

This type of commitment means that Jesus is our Master and we do what He says, not what we “feel” like doing. It means to be in the Word of God and to put into practice what God’s Word says. It means we no longer live to satisfy our desires and wants, but we live now to glorify God and be obedient to His desires and wants. Through this commitment we really learn to live as God intended for us to live, which is beneficial for us and for others. This commitment is really freeing us up to enjoy life rather than become a slave to life.

When we are in a close relationship with Jesus Christ and are committed to Him, life is good. However, we know we fall short of the glory of God because we sin. God still loves us and He sent Jesus into the world to deliver us from the punishment of our sin by taking our sin upon Himself. As Isaiah wrote, “With His stripes we are healed.” We can say boldly who Jesus is – My Savior. We can be committed to Him by following His Word and living to serve Him by loving and serving others. The Call to Christ is relationship and the call to His disciples is commitment. By God’s grace we can respond. Amen.