

Real Christianity Part One

Series: Real Christianity

Text: Matthew 10:1-39

Let's start with a question, what does it mean to be a genuine Christian? In a Pew Research Poll a question was asked "What are the essentials of being a Christian?" Among "mainline evangelical" people, 95% was "believing in God." James 2:19 "You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder (tremble)." You can believe in something and still not be devoted to it. Many people believe in God, yet they are not changed in lifestyle or behavior. The second most answered essential by 78% was "praying." Again, many people pray, lost people pray when troubles come. Some more answers "reading the Bible" was 60%, "attending church services" was 40%, and my personal favorite is "helping in the congregation" was 30% and "resting on the Sabbath" was 22%.

Here you have in a nutshell what is the post-modern church, Americanized Christianity, one that is primarily based off what is good for me and what I can benefit out of it. The result is years of sub par biblical preaching, feel good sermons, weak standards of holiness, circus, theater style worship services, and bouncy ball theology. Furthermore, it is evidenced by the great downgrade towards cultural Christianity that embraces all the whims of a culture that has no foundation for truth, only truth that is held is what they believe to be true. Many of these churches can be summed up like this, "It is about experience over reason, subjectivity over objectivity, spirituality over religion, images over words, outward over inward." So what you experience is better than the reason of the Word of God. Because experience is valued more highly than reason, truth becomes relative.

This opens up all kinds of problems, as this lessens the standard that the Bible contains absolute truth, and even disqualifies biblical truth as being absolute in many cases. If the Bible is not our source for absolute truth, and personal experience is allowed to define and interpret what truth actually is, a saving faith in Jesus Christ is rendered meaningless.

The Twelve Instructed For Service - Matthew 10:1-15

Judas is always listed last. But let's look at these disciples, which means student, and what Jesus gave them authority to do. Peter, Andrew, James and John. These are the most familiar to us. These two sets of brothers are often the "inner circle" of Jesus and all fisherman. Notice also that only Matthew and Simon have an adjective added to them. Matthew was a tax collector, hideous to the Jews, and Simon was a zealot, which was a group determined to overthrow the Roman government. Imagine those two meeting in an alley, likely there would have been bloodshed. But amazing how the gospel dismisses those barriers.

Jesus gave them authority to heal, witness, share and proclaim the gospel. This is not the normal for Christians today, it was a specific gift of the time to promote the gospel of Christ and His power.

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In these passages there is no mention of trouble. And it would seem that if this were all being a Christian were about then why not do it.

The Warning Of Being A Real Genuine Follower Of Jesus - Matthew 10:16-23

It's not as simple as the health and wealth gospel proclaims. Let's look at what Jesus said about being a follower of Christ.

He send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. The imagery is real. Here are some facts about sheep, *"Sheep are so easily scared and panicked, that if a jackrabbit jumps out from behind a piece of brush, it's enough to stampede the whole flock. They're just real edgy animals. And it's a good thing, because when danger comes, they're utterly helpless. The only thing they have to do is to run. They are totally defenseless. They have no weapons at all. All they can do is run, and if you ever looked at a sheep, they're not built for speed. Great big fat bodies and four toothpicks for legs. And yet, all kinds of dangers face sheep."* Yet, Jesus said He is sending His disciples out in this danger. Doesn't sound like a health and wealth proposal to me.

If you lived in the Lord's time you would understand this imagery. We don't today. So let's get the context. Shepherds were charged with guarding the sheep, going out before them, steering them from danger. But Jesus was sending His disciples out in the midst of wolves, not sheep in fear of wolves arriving, but sheep among wolves that have already arrived. Now, that is not exactly the most thrilling call to the ministry I've ever heard.

We know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd, cf. John 10:1-15. But the idea of them being in the middle of or among vicious, destructive, deadly wolves is the Lord's way of making the most graphic illustration of the helplessness and the fearfulness of confronting a Christ-rejecting, God-hating world with the message of the kingdom.

Sometimes the wolves are among us. Acts 20:29 *"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock."* Romans 8:36 *"For your sake we are being put to death all the day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* What was the warning that Jesus gave in Matthew 7:15 *"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* Yet, we must be reminded of John 10, the Good Shepherd goes before us, in a wicked, God-hating world, Jesus in our Good Shepherd.

Behold...vs. 16 begins with this imperative text. It means to be aware and listen. Yes, you have the power of God bestowed upon you, but be aware. Imagine this message for those considering ministry *"You're going to go out and get ripped to pieces. It isn't easy. They're going to cut you up out there. They don't agree with you; they don't believe your message; they don't want to hear your message."* A great General once told his troops, *"Men, all our efforts against superior forces have been unavailing. I have nothing to offer you but hunger and thirst, hardship and death. But I*

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call on all who love their country to join with me." I understand that we may not be facing the persecution that we read about in the Scriptures, yet, but somewhere in the world Christians are suffering in the midst of wolves.

Who are the wolves? In vs. 17 we find the wolves are men, beware of men. I think Ephesians 6:12 defines this perfectly, *"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."* Yes, we battle the forces of satan and spiritual wickedness, but men, used by such forces of evil, have carried out this horrendous persecution and the death of Christ. John MacArthur quotes *"It has been men who crucified, burned at the stake, stoned the saints of God. It has been men who threw them in jail when they preached, men who snuffed their lives out and who still do it even to this day in places behind the Iron Curtain and in Ethiopia and Uganda and other parts of Africa. It is men that are the enemy, men who talk about the milk of human kindness. It is men who are the dupes of Satan."*

Notice some things these men will do (1) turn you over to the courts (2) scourge you in the synagogues. Scourging *"The Jewish method of scourging, was by the use of three thongs of leather, the offender receiving thirteen stripes on the bare breast and thirteen on each shoulder"* (3) They will bring you before governors (civil authority) for Jesus' sake.

The religious leaders had already began to plot against Jesus, in Matthew 9 we see Jesus calling Matthew, the tax collector, and the leaders question Jesus' motives by eating with sinners and tax collectors. They began their plot to persecute Him. Men today plot against those who proclaim the gospel.

There was a wolf in the midst of the twelve. Judas was a betrayer. Judas was evil, yet he had all the outward appearances of a true disciple. He was the one who delivered our Lord to the mob. From the physical human side, he was responsible for murder. This is why the text is imperative **"Beware of men"** because they are evil.

You will be hated by all men. I ask myself a question, why aren't Christians in the USA feeling this type of hatred. I know some are to a degree. But I also want to make sure I am not asking for persecution. In God's sovereign working, He has blessed this nation to carry the message to countries that are closed to the gospel. But in part, it seems that the message of the gospel has been altered by post modern leaders, seeker friendly churches, and a social, feel good gospel that looks much like the world rather than the gospel. Thus, when the truth is altered, there isn't much pushback because it fits in line with the culture.

The world will hate you because it hated the name of Christ (vs. 22).