

WORSHIP

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Lip Service

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Mark 8:31-38

Lip service. We have all been guilty of it. And some of us have mastered it. We say all the right things. We master the lingo. But the truth be told lip service will only carry us so far. Eventually a “rubber meets the road” type situation will present itself and at that moment our words will be put to the test. Lip service will not suffice when it comes to following Christ. I believe God is way more concerned about our actions than he is about our words. That is not say that what we say does not matter. But Church actions always speak louder than words.

Matt 21:28-32 ²⁸“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ ²⁹And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. ³⁰And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.”



Mastering the lingo is not enough. And Peter, church, had experience with this truth, saying the right thing, but faltering in the moment of the test. Peter suffered from lip service. He went from professing Jesus as the Christ to rebuking Jesus for teaching them what he had to go through as the Christ. And Jesus does not take to kindly to this. And so, Jesus gives Peter a harsh rebuke, it appears in front of everyone. **V33** “But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.” Following this rebuke Jesus moves to his teaching poster and speaks these words, **V34** “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” And it is here I want to spend the remainder of my time. Now, I am convinced that this line of scripture is one of a few that provide for us the litmus test for belief. Every believer at some point has wrestled with the question, “how do I know or how can I know that my faith is genuine?” Well, I believe this text provides an answer and it does so in three ways.

First, genuine faith is evidenced by denial of self. That is, a letting go of one’s own interests and to no longer simply pursue what is in one’s best interest. Brothers and Sisters, no self-preservation. This is very hard teaching because self-preservation is our nature and a very hard thing to overcome. This was the case for Peter and this lesson would be a tough lesson for Peter to learn and did not come about until his denial of Christ. True belief not only produces the right words, but also the right actions. We cannot be a people who simply say the right things, but when the rubber meets the road, we falter, we default to self-preservation.

Luke 9:57-62 ⁵⁷ As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.” ⁵⁸ Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” ⁵⁹ He said to another man, “Follow me.” But he replied, “Lord, first let me



go and bury my father.”⁶⁰ Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”⁶¹ Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”⁶² Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

Second, genuine faith is evidenced by one taking up his/her cross. What is to take up one’s cross? It is to make the agenda of the gospel our life’s priority daily, even unto death. This is the extent of the self-denial Jesus calls us to. We must be willing to hold nothing back and endure all things for the sake of the gospel. It beckons the question, “what have we been unwilling to give up or endure for the cause of Christ? Certainly, if there is something, we can’t possibly be willing or ready to give up our lives. And if we aren’t willing to give up our lives, can we faithfully declare we are carrying our cross? I certainly believe Peter ultimately denied Christ (Luke 22 and Matt 26) because of his faulty expectation of Christ, primarily of an earthy rule. And so, when the prospect of losing his life hit him in the face he faltered; self-preservation took hold of him. Are we at risk of the same because of a faulty expectation of Christ? Are we too bound to this world?

Matt 10:37-38 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.”

Finally, true conversion is evidenced by one’s following. To follow Christ is to mimic Christ. To mimic Christ is love like him, serve like him and to give like him and to do so without limits. To be clear, we cannot mimic Christ if we do not know his story. We cannot mimic Christ if we do not study his teaching. The disciple has a teacher to follow. This is what we mean when we say Christlikeness.



John 13:34 “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

John 8:31 “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”

Church lip service will not do. If you are like me after hearing this sermon you need to hear some grace. Let me give you what the Lord gave me in my moment of need. He said to me, he that endures to the end shall be saved Matt 24:13. He said to me, for whom the Lord loves he chastens Heb 12:6. Church he said to me, no one who believes on him will be put to shame Rom 10:11. Thank God for his grace, that grace being his Son, Jesus the Christ. But grace is no excuse for lip service, for lip service just won't do! In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

