

Jesus' Concern For Others (#2)

Joe Slater

Even as Jesus was being led out of Jerusalem to be crucified at Golgotha (place of a skull), He was others-oriented. He spoke to a crowd of women who were lamenting Him: *“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?”* (Luke 23:27-31).

In only a few minutes the Roman soldiers would be driving spikes through His hands and feet. In but a few hours He would be dead. Still, Jesus was concerned for others. He knew that in about 40 years the Roman army would besiege and destroy Jerusalem. Women and children would not be spared; in fact, families would suffer most because they could not move quickly enough to escape. Jesus was enormously grieved at the prospect. He had tried and tried to get the Jews to believe in Him so that he might spare them from this divine judgment. He cried in anguish, *“Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord’”* (Matthew 23:37-39).

If Jesus could care for others even while being tortured and killed, surely we can show concern during the infinitely lesser trials we experience! (More next week.)

BRIDLE OR BRIDAL?

Bridle \brid-l\: the headgear with which is horse is governed and which carries a bit and reins (from Webster's Eleventh Collegiate Dictionary).

Many Christians want to control Christ like they would ride a horse – speeding up here, slowing down there, turning on a whim. They want to get on and get off (i.e. have Christ in their lives) when they want. They worship Him when they want, do His will when they feel like it, allow Him into their lives when nothing better is going on. They only want Christ around when they perceive a need in their lives; otherwise, He is put out to pasture. It is sad, but to people like that Christ is no more than a domesticated animal. Their lives eventually become more and more miserable and worldly.

Bridal \brid-l\: a marriage festival or ceremony (from Webster's Eleventh Collegiate Dictionary).

Some Christians realize that they are subject to Christ as a bride is to her husband (Ephesians 5:22-23). Thus they understand that Christ will lovingly lead them as they are willing to go with Him at all times. They worship when and how Christ wants, they do His will always, they welcome Him into every area of their lives. Their lives are ones of celebrating and joy, of fulfillment and spiritual beauty – like the perfect wedding!

So, Christian, is your relationship with Christ bridle or bridal?

--Edd Sterchi (Campellsville, KY)

Apart from personal holiness there is no genuine growth within the church. If there is no piety, no evidence of the Spirit of God within the believer, then all growth—in attendance, budget, programs—is superficial at best and deceptive at worst. Faithful attendance, increased giving, and successful programs must originate from within the spirit devoted to God.

Jacob Rutledge (via Facebook)

Stronger Teams

Many parents remember fondly the days of youth soccer. We cheered on as what seemed like a single pack of children in different color jerseys chased the ball up and down the field. Each player was focused solely on reaching the ball and driving it toward the goal. Although we enjoyed those years, we realize there was not a lot of teamwork happening on that field.

As children mature and start playing club soccer, they realize having every individual chase the ball is not an effective team strategy. They learn the value of spreading out and passing the ball as well as the value each position on the field brings to the team.

Sometimes as adults we need reminders of these lessons of youth. A church is not stronger when every member is a preacher or teacher. Neither is a church stronger when every member is an extrovert or introvert. However, we sometimes fall into the trap of trying to judge our brethren based on the position we fill on God's team. This is not new; Paul dealt with this same problem within churches of the first century. In particular, the church at Corinth allowed this attitude to cause problems within their church family (1 Corinthians 12:14-26).

Each of us should focus on how we can serve the family using the talents God has given. However, let us all have the awareness to see the vital role members who are not like us play within the church family. If we can do those two things, then we will have a stronger and more united team as a result. Given that strength and unity, God is able to accomplish things through us that we can scarcely imagine.

--Thom Vaught (via Athens, AL)