

“LIKE” JESUS

Everyone “liked” Jesus – didn’t they? I mean wasn’t he a “likeable” person? I tend to think so. After all, He was kind and considerate; loving and serving; smart, but not cocky; popular, but willing to interact with those who weren’t. What’s not to like? So, how about a hundred “likes” for Jesus today? Go to your phone or tablet right now and post “I like Jesus.” Don’t have Facebook? Tweet it or text it. Send an email to everyone on your contact list. I posted it on Facebook already this morning - and let’s see how many “likes” I have so far.

But guess what? *Jesus was not “liked” by everybody.* (Mark 3:20-30) Some people thought He was weird. Others thought He was crazy. At times, even some of his own family thought He’d perhaps been out in the sun too long. Still others thought He was a blasphemer and a servant of the Devil. And believe it or not, some think those same things about Him today. Not everybody “likes” Jesus.

I have shared before that supposedly **Mahatma Gandhi “liked” Jesus.** He didn’t “like” His followers, but he “liked” Him. Gandhi thought Jesus was a good man and a good teacher – but that is about as far as it went. There’s a lot of people in that category today as well. Though they say they “like” Jesus, they reject His claims and have no use whatsoever for His church.

There’s obviously a point or two to be made here. We are not called to “like” Jesus, we’re called to “believe in” Jesus and to believe what He said and taught. And then **we’re called to “be like” Jesus.** At the risk of sounding like a Geico commercial, if you’re a Christian, it’s what you are to do.

To be perfectly honest, I am convinced that if we were “more like” Jesus, “more people would like” His church as well. We would be a lot more attractive to the world than we often are. At least this would be true if we imitate Him as He instructed us to in John 13:34-35. Jesus had just washed the dirty, stinking feet of His followers – even those of Peter who would deny Him and Judas who would betray Him. Then He said: ³⁴ **A new commandment I give you. Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.** ³⁵ **By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

Some have tried to fulfill this with routine foot washing services, but Jesus makes it clear “a ceremony” was not His intention. Listen as He elaborates on the point just a couple chapters later in John 15:9-13: ⁹ **As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.** ¹⁰ **If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love.** ¹¹ **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.** ¹² **My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.** ¹³ **Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**

That's a lot more than an occasional ceremony – no matter how sincere or meaningful it may be. Loving like Jesus is a lifestyle.

So, if we love *"like"* He did, will we be loved in return? Not necessarily. Remember, not everyone *"liked"* Him, so if we truly do imitate Him, we won't always be *"liked"* either. Right after instructing them to love one another, Jesus told His disciples to keep in mind that if the world *"hated"* them, that they *"hated"* Him first. (John 15:18) Why would they *"hate"* His followers?

Because even though people should not have perceived their message to be one of condemnation – any more than Jesus' message was – many did precisely that. They were offended by the very idea that they needed a Savior; unwilling to accept that they were sinners who could not save themselves. As Paul, would later write to the believers in Corinth, the message of the cross was *"foolishness"* to them – if not downright sacrilegious. (1st Corinthians 1:18)

It's also true that some people didn't like Jesus because they considered Him to be judgmental. He made no bones about calling people out who claimed to be righteous but were not. He was particularly direct in His criticism of hypocrites. Now, He warned His followers against judging others, saying they'd be judged in the same manner they judged others. (Matthew 7:1) Later, His apostles would caution believers not to pass judgement on fellow Christians. Both Paul and James are clear about the need to extend mercy even as we've received it, but stressing that we are to make constant personal judgements about right and wrong. (Romans 14 & James 4:11-12; 1st Corinthians 2:15)

Yet, we cannot claim to love people like Jesus did if we don't point out their sinful destructive life styles. Parents who care about their kids don't ignore improper attitudes or behavior. Neither do real friends. The key is to *"speak the truth in love"* – even when it may not be received well – or cause them to no longer *"like"* us. So, if we're consistent in our proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we will likely ruffle some feathers too. Yet, it is undeniable that if we are going to be *"disliked"* – even perhaps *"hated"* – it should be precisely because ***we are imitating and reflecting the image of Christ*** in the world.

I'm afraid that too often we're more interested in *"being liked"* than *"being like"* Jesus. Facebook may encourage us to have as many friends as possible, even to post things that will get us as many *"likes"* as we can, but *"laying down our lives"* isn't about winning popularity contests. It's about imitating Christ in the way we love others. And though that may not always get us as many *"likes"* as we *"like"* we will be more *"like"* Jesus – and isn't that what we're seeking?