



May 20, 2018

Getting Started With Jesus

READ: Matthew 7:24 (Common English Bible)

“Everybody who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise builder who built a house on bedrock.”

REFLECT:

How does a person start to be a Christian? For many in the church, it is a startling question. It is startling because so little thought has been given to the question. Christianity has been reduced to joining a church, worshipping on Sunday morning when convenient, faithfully completing a financial pledge card once a year, and an occasional appearance at a congregational dinner. The notion that there is anything more escapes them. What also escapes such people is any vital relationship with Jesus Christ. And a vital relationship with Jesus will remain absent until behind every conventional practice of faith a person goes directly to Jesus, listens to the teachings of Jesus, and puts those teachings into practice in their own life. A person gets started with being a Christian by endeavoring to live as Christ lived.

Simply, being a Christian is something to be done. Christianity is not consent to a particular theological creed, belonging to a church that self-identifies as Christian, or practicing a set of rituals. Christianity is doing what Christ does. In every account of Jesus calling particular men to be his disciples something is absent; what is absent is a requirement of a theological education, or a seminar on the basics of the faith, or a new member class. The only thing that Jesus asks is, “Will you follow me?” We will never understand everything that the church teaches. And there may be some teachings that we understand but we simply cannot believe. Jesus doesn’t ask for either. Yesterday, and today, Jesus asks one thing: “Will you follow me?”

In the second place, though we begin where we are – with little understanding of Jesus or no understanding of Jesus – we do not remain where we are. Following Jesus is a continuous journey of listening to all that Jesus teaches and appropriating what is understood into the daily practice of life. As this is done, each week, each month, and each year brings clearer insight and a deeper assurance of Christ’s presence and strength for our lives. Faith matures as the season changes from spring, to summer, to fall, to winter, and finally back to spring with all the new growth each new spring brings. As we pay increasing attention to Jesus, learn more from him, and think harder how to walk as Jesus walked, we make progress toward a more confident faith.

Getting started with Jesus is not difficult. Remaining on the walk will be one of the most difficult challenges of life. That is because of all the distractions and temptations to walk a different path, a path that promises quicker satisfactions and pleasures. But what God already knows – and what many of us discover by our own experience – is that every other path ends with disappointment and loss. But strength is available to those who wish to remain on the path of Jesus. That strength is found in the daily reading of the Bible, regular prayer, and the use of helpful devotional material prepared by trusted followers of Jesus Christ. By these resources our confidence in God, in Jesus Christ, and the available help of the Holy Spirit grows upon us.

