



1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitators of Christ

Palm Sunday, April 13, 2014

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1

- A simple verse to consider this Palm Sunday morning...the call to **imitate** (the word literally means “to follow”) Apostolic teaching because it reflects the will of Christ! Greek for “imitate” here is *mimētēs*. Literally, a “mimic.”
- Some use this verse to say, “follow your pastor as he follows Christ,” and there is in fact biblical warrant for this:

Heb 13:7 ESV Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

Heb 13:17 ESV Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.

- However, we must be **careful**. Paul was an apostle, divinely appointed and used by the Holy Spirit to communicate Holy Scripture.
- Yes, by all means, obey and submit to good leaders as they obey and submit to Christ. That is a command of Scripture.
- But, it is much safer, in my opinion, for the church to see the primary interpretation of this verse in the strictest sense: to follow the teachings the Spirit gave the Apostles because those teachings are part of the infallible, inerrant, inspired and sufficient Word of God and they give us great application of the heart of Christ for New Testament Churches.
- More on this momentarily, but I’d be remiss this morning if we didn’t look at the beginnings of our Lord’s *Passion Week* and glean lessons to “imitate” from our ultimate example. Peter wrote:

1Pe 2:19-25 ESV For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. (20) For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. (21) For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. (22) He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. (23) When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. (24) He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (25) For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. [Emphasis mine]

The Triumphal Entry: Some Quick Lessons to Imitate--John 12:12-50

1. First, although He was and is KING, he took a **lowly** posture. (vv12-19)
 - a. Palms were used in antiquity to adorn the pathway of a returning conqueror or King. For Jews to use them spoke of their belief (albeit shallow and temporary for most of them) that Jesus was the Messiah.
 - b. In just a few days, many of those who celebrated Him as “King of Israel” would shout for a murderer (Barabbas) to be released in His place!
 - c. **But this is the call of the Christian...to not think of oneself more highly than we ought, to take the low place, to fight pride and self-aggrandizement, and to be willing to give our lives for Christ sake. To be “on mission” but on a donkey! ☺**

- d. **Let us imitate Christ!**
- 2. Second, our Lord calls us to love God more than our **lives!** (vv20-26)
 - a. Knowing He was going to the cross to die, He nevertheless framed it as being “glorified” and “bearing much fruit.”
 - b. This was the apostles mindset as well, who counted it an honor to suffer for Christ!
 - c. *Act 5:40-42 ESV and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. [Emphasis mine]*
 - d. **Let us imitate Christ!**
- 3. Third, even when our Lord was **distressed**, He knew and obeyed the Father! (vv27-36)
 - a. “Now my soul is troubled.” Wow.
 - b. Yet, Jesus knew His mission and the call of His Father. In Gethsemane (Matt 26:36-46) He would again be troubled...VERY troubled. But then as here, He wanted the Father’s will to be done.
 - c. Despite His feelings, despite His troubles, despite His tears, He wanted the Father’s will to be done.
 - d. **Let us imitate Christ!**
- 4. Fourth, despite all His miracles and the adulation of the crowds on Palm Sunday, Jesus knew they did not truly **believe**. (vv36b-43)
 - a. It is not the pleasing of crowds that should spur us to action, nor should it be man’s affirmation that keeps us in action. It must be the call of God!
 - b. The hearts of men are fickle, including our own. Basing our obedience on men is foolish!
- 5. Lastly, our Lord preached His **Gospel!** (vv44-50)
 - a. We too must call men and women to believe in Christ. We must tell them there is no other way to “see” the Father.
 - b. We must warn them that to NOT believe is to remain in darkness.
 - c. We must tell them that on the last day they will be judged by the Word of God.
 - d. We must speak, not on our own authority, but God’s!
 - e. We must not speak our opinions, but we must speak the Words of God!
 - f. **Let us imitate Christ!**

Back to 1 Corinthians 11:1...some more thoughts on what to imitate

1. If we carefully look at the context of this verse, you might see it reads as a continuation of Paul’s line of thinking in 1 Corinthians 10. So what is the Spirit saying to the churches here?
2. Paul is encouraging the Corinthian church to **follow** apostolic directives; to not argue about what they are being told; to bring themselves under **authority**; to look at the example of the Apostles and do likewise.
3. This of course was not self-exaltation on the part of Paul. He had just spent many words encouraging this church to walk in discipline, self-sacrifice, humility, and without offense to Jew or Greek as much as possible.
4. Lest we misunderstand Paul, remember his words in 1 Corinthians 4?
 - a. *1Co 4:9-17 ESV For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. (10) We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. (11) To the present hour we hunger*

- and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, (12) and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; (13) when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things. (14) I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. (15) For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (16) I urge you, then, be imitators of me. (17) That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.*
- b. The LAST thing he was doing was some kind of power trip. Far from it. This church was in jeopardy of falling. It is evident in his tone throughout his letters to them that Paul was very concerned for them. In 1st and 2nd Corinthians, pretty much every major topic is covered by Paul: from marriage to money, church discipline to worship, leadership to the Resurrection.
 - c. He pleaded with them as their “father” in the faith to conform to apostolic standards but they continued to struggle. How many of you parents ever thought: “Will you just follow me children so all this drama will stop? Just do what I tell you!”
 - d. *Sometimes friends, in the midst of demonic chaos and fleshly distraction the answer is simple obedience.*

Bringing this home for CRCC

1. Our Lord arrived in Jerusalem in honor, but was eventually betrayed and put to death. He marched steadfastly towards His mission as given by His Father, eventually enduring the cross.
2. Paul lived a life marked by persecution, beatings, sufferings, and eventually decapitation because of the call of Christ. Recall, following Christ ain’t easy...

Mar 8:34-38 ESV And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (35) For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. (36) For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? (37) For what can a man give in return for his soul? (38) For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

- Philip: Crucified, Phrygia, A.D. 54
- Matthew: Beheaded, Ethiopia, A.D. 60
- Barnabas: Burned to death, Cyprus, A.D. 64
- Mark: Dragged to death, Cyprus, A.D. 64
- James (the Less): Clubbed to death, Jerusalem, A.D. 66
- Paul: Beheaded, Rome, A.D. 66
- Peter: Crucified, Rome, A.D. 69
- Andrew: Crucified, Achaia, A.D. 70
- Thomas: Speared to death, Calamina, A.D. 70
- Luke: Hanged, Athens, A.D. 93

*--From *God Has a Wonderful Plan for Your Life* by Ray Comfort*

3. Yet both our Lord and those He chose as apostles endured for the sake of the **Gospel** (Mark 8:35; 1 Cor 9:23). We are called to imitate our Lord and His apostles for the same reason!

1Th 1:4-8 ESV For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, (5) because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (6) And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, (7) so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. (8) For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything. [Emphasis mine]

4. **We must be imitators of Christ! His love! His commitment! His gentleness and compassion! His willingness to die!**
5. **We must follow apostolic instructions! The words of the Apostles in the Bible are no less authoritative than any other part: the whole Bible is the Word of the Lord! We must be careful that we do not resist and grieve the Spirit in this matter.**
6. We have decided to be a church that does not cherry pick the Word but instead attempts, by God's grace, to follow it. Some Scriptures we will like. Others we will not. Nevertheless, Christ must be obeyed for His own glory!

CRCC...let us "imitate" or follow Christ by following the Scriptures and being willing to suffer if necessary to do so.

Is there any other way?

Amen.