

Why Do We Follow Jesus?



Gary Wilkerson December 7, 2020

John 6 contains one of the hardest passages for me in all of Scripture because it speaks of followers who end up rejecting Christ and turning away. It is a scene in which people literally left Jesus in droves (see John 6:66).

Jesus had just miraculously fed a crowd of thousands. The people were amazed and thrilled by what he had done, ready to follow this wonder-working Messiah. But when he challenged them about what they were really after, they scoffed and left by the masses.

Underlying this passage is a question for anyone who would follow Christ: “Who is in charge of your life, you or Jesus?” Do we allow God to have total direction of our lives? Or do we try to determine for ourselves what God wants of us?

Every Christian faces this question early in his or her walk with the Lord. From the outset, a battle takes place in us, a clash of two warring cultures. First, there is the outer culture of the world, which constantly urges, “How can you benefit from this?” Then there is the culture of God’s kingdom, which asks, “How can you serve the Lord and your neighbor?”

Jesus had already preached that the kingdom of God was at work in the world: “The kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15, NLT). In other words: “The kingdom of God is present among you.” Most of Christ’s listeners that day had the world’s mindset. They were driven mainly by what they could gain for themselves. When Jesus came along offering blessings, they flocked to him, saying, “Sure, if you’re going to provide me with everything, I’ll follow you. If you’ll heal my sick family members and answer my prayers, yes, absolutely, I’ll be your disciple.”

But what happens to our faith commitment if these things don’t come to pass for us? How committed to Jesus are we when we realize he’s not just our “assistant” in life? The same people in this scene who were quick to follow Christ were just as quick to reject him. Disappointed, they left, giving up on him.

Jesus knew this would happen. That’s why on the heels of performing a great miracle for those multitudes, he confronted them: “I tell you the truth, you want to be with me because I fed you, not because you understood the miraculous signs” (John 6:26, NLT). Is the same true of us today? Do we follow Jesus mainly because of his blessings or because he is Lord?

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