

Imitating Jesus

Acts 11:26

And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. NKJV

It is kind of strange that the name most often used to designate the followers of Jesus is found but three times in the New Testament. But then the term disciple is only found in the gospels and Acts but found 274 times. The descriptive word used for believers (4 times) in the epistles is saint (62 times). Kind of interesting that the words used the most in the New Testament are the words used the least now. And the word used but three times in the New Testament is the one used most often now.

And yet all three of those times it is used by those who did not like Christians. Once here in Acts 11:26 and then again in 26:28 where Agrippa refers to Christians. And even when used by Peter we see from the context that it is a term of derision or persecution. 1 Peter 4:16, Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. NKJV

They probably received this name from the Gentiles for their constant teaching of and following of Jesus Christ. That they told everyone of Him and encouraged others to join them in following this Jesus the Christ. Today the term is not used in America as a term of accusation but a term that loosely collects under one heading everyone who has even the slightest connection to Jesus. As in Europe where if you were baptized as a infant you are considered a Christian even if you have never attended worship since.

But today even very authentic Christians accept the name with a sort of pride in a good way. We accept the shame of the cross and understand the disgrace that is associated with Jesus.

But as a follower of Jesus; as a disciple of His what did He come to do that He expects of us as well. Jesus walked on water but He does not expect us to do that. But many other things that He came to do He does expect us to follow in His footsteps.

- I. He came to tell them of His Father's Kingdom.
 - A. I am proud to be an American and I think it is the best nation on earth, but it is nothing compared to Our Fathers's Kingdom.
 - B. Jesus came to tell people about the kingdom of God.
 1. Mark 1:14-15 Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." NKJV
 2. You see the USA will one day come to an end.
 3. But the kingdom of God is forever and forever.
 - C. What is it that we talk about with people?
 1. The weather, price of corn or land.

2. About our families, the latest TV shows etc.
3. Or do we talk about the most important thing, the kingdom of God.
4. It was the final request of the dying thief, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
5. Jesus offers a real kingdom to those who are not tied down to this one.

II. He came to do the Father's will.

- A. John 4:34-35 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. NKJV
- B. John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. NKJV
- C. If we would do the Father's will then we must:
 1. Know it by His word.
 2. Submit to it in obedience
 3. Cancel out our will when it conflicts with His.

III. He came to seek and to save the lost.

- A. Luke 19:10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. KJV
 1. Jesus understood what it meant to be lost.
 2. It is said that He had compassion on the multitudes.
 - a. Matt 9:36-38 But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. 37 Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." NKJV
 3. He told the great story of the prodigal son and the father's response on his return.
 - a. Luke 15:20 "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. NKJV
- B. We can never follow our Savior without compassion.
 1. Compassion on those less fortunate.
 2. Compassion on those who are ill.
 3. Compassion on those who taken captive by sin and by Satan.

4. Instead of look at those with disdain or condescension Jesus would have compassion on them.

IV. He came to make disciples.

A. Jesus was never satisfied to leave people where He found them.

1. It is true that God loves us despite what we are but He also loves us too much to leave us there.
2. He knew that their only hope was for them to follow Him.
3. So whether they were common fishermen or high society tax collectors He said follow me.
4. Whether they were uneducated or scholars like Paul, their only hope was in following Him.

B. Do we fool ourselves into thinking that everyone is a Christian.

1. Remember that is a term once used by our enemies to describe us.
2. Many Christians are not followers, not disciples of Jesus.
3. Remember according to what Jesus said most of the people you come in contact with will not make it to heaven.
 - a. Matt 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. NKJV
4. Satan's biggest lie is everyone is alright, they are all going to heaven.
5. If that is the case then Jesus did not need to come and die for our sins.

V. He came to establish His church.

A. Matt 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. NKJV

B. Eph 3:20-21 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. NKJV

C. Speaking to the pastors of the church of Ephesus Paul said, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:27 NKJV

D. But yet today no institution is so neglected by those who claim her.

1. This year in Europe, thousands of churches will close for lack of worshipers. Most of those buildings will be bought and turned into Mosques.

- a. Why is it that the great European countries that had been the powerhouse of Christianity now have less than 10% of their people attend any given Sunday?
 - b. And America is following suit.
 - c. Sunday which is the Lord's day has now been turned into fun-day.
2. There is a terrible price for a nation to pay when they reject God.

VI. The three greats

A. The Great Commandment

1. John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." NKJV

B. The Great Golden Rule

1. Matt 7:12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. NKJV

C. The Great Commission

1. Matt 28:18-20 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. NKJV

The story of Alexander the soldier