

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 12/12/93
John 14:22-26 "How to Identify a Real Christian"

Intro: Sometimes it's hard to tell the real thing...

Illust:

Sometimes it's hard to identify a real Christian. In a 1985 Gallup poll, 71% of Americans reported church membership, and 42% of us attend church in a typical week. It could be higher, granted, but that's a lot of people going to church! In 1987, an unprecedented 5 of the 10 most admired men in the world came from religious backgrounds (Morley, 33).

I think Patrick Morley asked the right question in his book, The Man in the Mirror, "If religion is such a big part of our lives, why hasn't it made more of an impact on our society?" (33) He continues, "The sad reality is that claims of religious commitment run high, but impact is at an all-time low. At the very point when Christians have 'come out of the closet,' our culture has sunk into a moral sewer."

Q: How do you explain this inconsistency, this breakdown?

The answer, in part, is that there are 2 categories of people who call themselves Christians (For that matter, there are 2 types of churches). There are Cultural Christians. And there are Biblical Christians. They're hard to tell apart on the surface.

What is "cultural Christianity"? Again I refer to Morley. "Cultural Christianity means to pursue the God we want instead of the God who is. It is the tendency to be shallow in our understanding of God, wanting Him to be more of a gentle grandfather type who spoils us and lets us have our own way. It is sensing a need for God, but on our own terms. It is wanting the God we have underlined in our Bibles without wanting the rest of Him too. It is God relative instead of God absolute." (33)

The presence of "cultural Christianity" makes it tough to determine the real thing. Suppose I had a Cultural Christian and a Biblical Christian right here on the front pew. And suppose I asked them the following questions: "Are you a Christian?" They'd both say, yes. "Do you believe in Jesus?" They'd both say, yes. "Is your faith important to you?" They'd both say, yes. "Are you involved in Christian service?" They'd both say, yes. "Are you planning to go to heaven when you die?" They'd both say, yes.

Both give the same answers. But there's a big difference. One's the real thing, the other is an imitation. One is a cultural Christian, and the other is a biblical Christian.

Q: "How can I tell which I am?" That's an important question for us to ask. How do you identify a real Christian? Jesus tells us how in John 14:22-26. We're going to find out how this morning by examining the answer Jesus gave to a question posed by the disciple Judas.

Proposition: In his words in John 14:22-26, Jesus shows us how to identify a Real Christian.

I. The Confusion (22)

II. The Checklist (23-26)

A. Love--A genuine Christian loves Christ (23).

B. Obedience--A genuine Christian obeys Christ (23-24).

C. Intimacy--A genuine Christian enjoys intimacy with God (23).

D. The Holy Spirit--A genuine Christian experiences the ministry of the Holy Spirit (25-26).

1. The Spirit sanctifies the real Christian.

2. The Spirit teaches the real Christian.

3. The Spirit reminds the real Christian.

I. The Confusion (22)

Jesus and the disciples are in the Upper Room, just hours before the crucifixion. The mood is somber. We've already examined the previous dialogue. Thomas asked a question (5), and Jesus answered it. Philip shared his confusion (8), and Jesus responded to it. Then a third disciple spoke up in v 22, Judas.

V 22 "Judas saith unto Him..."

Who was this Judas? Here's part of the confusion. There are 7 different men named Judas mentioned in the NT! The writer John is careful to distinguish that he was not Judas Iscariot. Remember he'd already left the room to betray Jesus. This was the "other" Judas. Matthew's gospel (10:3) records his name as Thaddaeus (perhaps the name change due to what Judas Iscariot did). Luke tells us his father's name was James (6:15). That's about all we know about Judas.

But the question he asked Jesus reveals something very important about him. He was confused (so were the other disciples), confused about the Kingdom.

V 22 "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not to the world?"

Q: What's Judas asking? We have to backtrack in the conversation to see.

Jesus told the disciples He was leaving them for awhile (13:33). But He also revealed that He would not leave them without Help--14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you...WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE..."

Stop there. Here's what Judas heard Jesus say, "Through My Spirit, I am going to manifest Myself to you, but not to the world."

That didn't make sense to Judas, so he spoke up, "Lord, how are you going to reveal Yourself to us, but not to the world?"

Q: What prompted Judas' question?

This. He was confused about the Kingdom. Judas, along with the other disciples, expected Jesus to set up a kingdom--an visible, mighty kingdom.

When they first met Him, they heard Him say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Mt 4:17)." They couldn't wait. They hated the cruel oppression of

the Romans. They knew the OT said when the Messiah came, He would rule the world with a rod of iron. So for 3 years, the disciples anticipation mounted. At any time they just knew Jesus would stop His "talking" and start swinging His sword. They couldn't wait to see Jesus call for the angelic hosts to come, wipe out the ungodly oppressors, and set up His Messianic Kingdom.

Here's what confused Judas. He couldn't figure out how Jesus could "manifest" Himself to His disciples and not to the world. "Jesus, when You put on Your crown and rule as King, won't everybody see it?!"

What Judas failed to see was that before Jesus could wear the crown, He would have to bear the cross.

Illust:

Tran: There's the Confusion.

Watch how Jesus answered Judas. At first, it doesn't seem like He answered his question. But He did. In fact, He addressed the issue underlying Judas' question.

Q: Who is entitled to see and know Jesus? To whom does the Messiah "manifest" Himself in this Church Age, this Age of the Spirit?

In vv 23-26, Jesus gives us a checklist. There are 4 marks of a genuine disciple of Christ. If you see an animal that has a long neck that reaches the trees, is covered with brown spots, and has split hooves, you know it's a what? A giraffe. How'd do you? Because when you see those traits, you know you've got a giraffe. A zebra can jump up and down all it wants claiming to be a giraffe, and you won't believe its claim, will you? The same principle holds here.

Q: How can we identify a genuine Christian?

II. The Checklist (23-26)

If you want to identify a true Christian, Jesus said these marks will be present...

A. Love--A genuine Christian loves Christ (23).

Judas couldn't envision the Church Age. He didn't realize that before the Messianic Kingdom, there would be a period of time where the King would rule "incognito." Not everyone would see Him. Not everyone would know Him. He would "manifest" Himself only to a special group of people.

Q: What's the first mark of a disciple of Jesus?

V 23 "If a man LOVE ME..."

Love. A genuine Christian loves Christ. In this text, Jesus doesn't explain HOW a person is saved. He simply describes what is true of a person who is saved. First and foremost, a saved person, a true Christian, loves Christ. A genuine disciple has a relationship with the Living Son of God.

Here's Jesus' answer to Judas, "Judas, when I'm gone, the only people who will see Me and know Me will be the ones who love Me. The rest won't know Me."

Let me ask you, "Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you?"

Q: "How can I know if I truly love Christ?" The answer is very practical.

B. Obedience--A genuine Christian obeys Christ (23-24).

V 23 "If a man love Me, He will keep My words."

Obedience. A genuine Christian loves Christ. And obeys Christ. The opposite is also true.

V 24 "He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings."

Obedience is the result of love. If you love Christ, you will obey Him. In 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me."

Q: What's so special about Jesus' words? Why must we obey His words?

A: Because of the Source and Inherent Authority of His words.

V 24b "the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's, who sent Me."

Listen friend. Jesus' words are not a "take it or leave it" matter. Obedience to Jesus' words is not an option.

Warning: If you want to ruffle a few feathers, talk about commitment. Talk about obedience. It's a threatening topic to a cultural Christian. Yet Jesus said emphatically, "He that doesn't love Me, doesn't obey my sayings (24)."

Q: Do you think it's ever healthy to question your salvation? Do you think a Christian should ever stop to evaluate the condition of his soul? If you want to be a biblical Christian, you'd better!

Do you remember what Paul told the members of the church at Corinth to do? II Cor 13:5 "Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith; prove yourselves."

Here's how the LB paraphrases, "Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ's presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when you actually aren't at all?"

Mt 7:21-23 "Not everyone that says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom..."

One of the most tragic thoughts I know is that right now this morning, there are more than a few people sitting in pews in churches across this land, people who have been baptized and catechized, people who've walked isles and signed decision cards, people who've been born into Christian homes and have been members of churches, yet who do not pass the test.

Tran: How can you identify a real Christian? Here's the checklist: Love, Obedience.

C. Intimacy--A genuine Christian enjoys intimacy with God (23).

V 23 "and My Father will come unto Him...and make our MANSION with Him."

Mansion? That's right. The word "abode" in v 23 is the same greek word translated "mansion" in v 2. There Jesus said He was leaving to prepare a "dwelling place" for His people. But get this. During this time He's gone, what did He say He would do?

"we will come unto Him and make our abode with him."

Ponder this. God actually makes His dwelling within the true believer. He wants us to enjoy intimacy with Him.

Notice the plural. Jesus said, "WE will come." He already told us the Holy Spirit indwells us (17). Now He elaborates and says that He along with God the Father indwell the believer. We enjoy the whole Trinity!

Q: What does it mean to experience intimacy with God? Does it mean you get a warm, fuzzy feeling inside? Jesus has a lot to say about that question in Jn 15. He uses the image of a Vine and its branches to illustrate the importance of intimacy. But for a brief word on the subject of intimacy with God, let's turn to I Jn 1.

I Jn 1:3 "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you"

What's that? The historical record of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

I Jn 1:3 "that you may have fellowship with us...with the Father and His Son."

Q: What are the by-products of fellowship (intimacy) with God? Notice 2...

1. Joy--V 4 "that your joy may be full."
2. A Clean Life--Vv 6-7 "If we say we have fellowship..."

A genuine Christian enjoys intimacy with God. That means God is real in his/her life. Real in a practical way.

Q: Are you experiencing intimacy with God in your life? Illust:

D. The Holy Spirit--A genuine Christian experiences the ministry of the Spirit (25-26).

V 25 "These things have I spoken...being present with you."

But Jesus is leaving. So He returns again to the subject of the Comforter.

V 26 "But the Comforter..."

Here's the fourth mark. A genuine Christian experiences the ministry of the Holy Spirit. What does that mean?

It's sad that, by and large, fundamental Christians talk very little about the Holy Spirit. We hear accounts of the abuses of some charismatic churches, and overact to the point where we ignore the Holy Spirit.

But listen. We need the Holy Spirit. Christ gave the Spirit to us. As we learned last week, He is our Resident Helper. He is Jesus' substitute.

Key: A true Christian experiences the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Q: In what ways? Jesus mentions 3 here...

1. The Spirit sanctifies the real Christian.

V 26 "But the Comforter, who is the HOLY Spirit"

Why is He called the "Holy" Spirit? The word "holy" means "unique, one of a kind, transcendent." It's what God is. He is unique. It's what the Holy Spirit is. He is God. He is one of a kind.

There's another reason He is called the "Holy" Spirit. It has to do with His work. Granted, just like Jesus, the Holy Spirit is completely sinless. Yet His title means more than that. He is holy, and His aim is to make others holy. Namely us.

Do you know what the word "sanctify" means? To sanctify means "to set apart, to make holy." That's what the Holy Spirit does. His objective is to set us apart from sin, and make us holy.

Is He doing that in your life? Do you have less of a taste for sin now than you did 5 years ago? Do you have more of a hunger for holiness now than you used to? If so, it's an evidence of the Spirit's work.

Years ago, A.W. Tozer pinpointed the problem when he wrote, "A whole new generation of Christians has come up believing that it is possible to 'accept' Christ without forsaking the world." (in Morley, 31)

2. The Spirit teaches the real Christian.

V 26 "He shall teach you all things."

The Holy Spirit is our Teacher. What did Jesus say He would teach us?

"all things"--What does that mean? It doesn't mean all things without exception. Jesus is not saying the Holy Spirit gives us an exhaustive knowledge of computer science, or cell biology, or renaissance literature.

Jesus qualifies "all things" at the end of v 26: "whatever I have said to you." This is great. The Holy Spirit is our Resident Teacher. Jesus taught the 12, and now the Spirit continues this teaching ministry.

How does He teach us today? Through the Word He has revealed. As we study the Scriptures, and submit to them, He teaches us everything we need to know about life and godliness.

3. The Spirit reminds the real Christian.

V 26 "bring all things to your remembrance"

Be careful here. Remember, Jesus is talking to the 11 apostles. These men were entitled to direct revelation. The Holy Spirit spoke directly to them (eg--to Peter in Acts 10:19). He reminded them of Jesus' words so they could pass them on to the world. We don't receive direct revelation. We don't need it. Why not?

We have the Scriptures. Does the Spirit remind us of Jesus' words? Yes. How? As we read the Scriptures. But He doesn't remind us of what we have not first learned! Illust:

Conclusion:

How do you identify a real Christian? It's not always easy. There are plenty of cultural Christians. Yet this morning, we've seen 4 clear, practical marks of a biblical Christian.

I want to ask you (and myself) to look at your life. Let's bow our heads, and consider some questions...

Do you love Jesus? Is there anything or anyone you love more than Him?

Is there any area in your life that is in violation to His Word? Is there any deed you've done, any attitude you're harboring, any thought you're hiding, that displeases

Him? Is there any area in your life where you are resisting Him? Does He have a ministry He desires you to do, and you're saying, "No"?

Are you experiencing intimacy with God? Is He real in your life? Are you spending time getting to know Him every day, through His Word and prayer?

Are you cooperating with the Holy Spirit, and His work in your life?

The bottom line is this. Do you know for sure that you are a Christian? That's the first issue to settle. If you have any questions, settle the matter today.

The next issue is this. Are you living in obedience to Jesus Christ? If not, listen to His words--Rev 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to Him, and will sup with him..."