

LORDSHIP

Years ago, I knew someone who said that they had just purchased a new Lamborghini and that they were bringing it around for me to see. In the back of my mind I was thinking, how in the world could this person ever afford an Italian sports car? I heard a car pull up and went out to see it. What they had bought was a cheap Lamborghini kit car. Basically, it was fiberglass shell stuck onto an old VW Beetle frame and engine. It was not a very good copy. The seams did not line up. The logo was in the wrong place and upside-down. The glass was all plastic. The engine sounded like a Beetle – basically a big lawn mower engine. Not the purr of a 12 cylinder supercar. What I remember most was how proud the person was who was showing it off. Showing it off like it was an authentic \$200,000 car when it was actually worth about \$2,000.

What do you think when you hear the word “Authentic?” Most think of the text book definition; real, genuine, and original. You do not have to be a collector to know that authentic is always more valuable than a copy.

Story of the zoo on Monday. Authentic is the difference between a real Rolex watch and the copy some guy on Yonge St. tries to sell you for \$10. It is the difference between the original Declaration of Independence and the copy they sell at the gift store as you leave the Museum.

After our new addition opened we rekeyed the entire church. We ordered new locks for every door in the church received a new key. The new key looks a lot like the old key. On the surface, you could probably not tell the two apart, but if you try using an old key with the new locks, it does not work. While it may resemble the original, it is not close enough to perform the task for which it was designed.

Today we are starting a new series called Authentic Faith. For the next 7 weeks we are going to be looking at what it means to be a Christian. An authentic Christian is a Biblical Christian. They do not simply look the part, they are the real deal. Today I want to start with the most basic attribute of what it means to have authentic faith. They are people who have received Jesus Christ by making Him Lord of their lives. Authentic faith requires lordship.

Act 19:11-20 God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, 12 so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. 13 Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon- possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." 14 Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" 16 Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. 17 When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. 18 Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. 19 A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. 20 In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

1. We Follow Him in Salvation

In this scripture, we see a clear distinction between the authentic faith of Paul vs the imitation faith of the sons of Sceva. They were trying to do what Paul was doing but without a relationship with Christ.

There are people in the church that are like that today. They are following religious duty and tradition, but they do not have a true relationship with Jesus. What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? From the beginnings of His earthly ministry Jesus' call was simply, "Follow Me." What does it mean to be a Christian?

Act 16:29-33 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved -- you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. 33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Authentic faith begins with Lordship. It means making Jesus Lord of your life. What does it mean when Paul said "Believe in the *Lord* Jesus and you will be saved?" Does that simply mean an intellectual assent that Jesus is God? James is clear that is not enough.

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that -- and shudder.

It is not simply believing that Jesus is Lord, it is accepting Him and making Him your Lord.

Following Jesus in salvation is, without a doubt, one of the most misunderstood truths of the Bible. Right now there are untold scores of people sitting at home, on their boats, on the golf course, and in bed, who if asked would say this, "Yes I am a Christian. I have trusted Christ as my Savior." There could even be someone listening to me today who would say something like this, "Well, I grew up in a Christian home and said a prayer at camp when I was 10 so that means that I am going to heaven."

I am not trying to downplay the importance of saying the sinner's prayer. What I am saying is that a simple expression of your need for forgiveness is different than a lifechanging decision to surrender your life to Christ. The person who asks Jesus to forgive their sins, but then demonstrates no walk of faith, no change in life and no ongoing relationship with Jesus is not a follower. Following Jesus in salvation means that He becomes the center of our lives.

The sons of Sceva had reduced faith to a formula. They saw that Paul through the Holy Spirit was healing people and setting them free, so they figured they could simply use the name of Jesus to make a profit. All the benefits and none of the responsibilities.

There are a lot of Christians who do the same thing today. They have reduced faith to a formula. They claim that Jesus is Lord, but they have never made Him their Lord. There is no relationship. Jesus is not the center of their lives, just a convenience for when they need Him. All the benefits and none of the responsibilities.

Mat 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

I think most people know who Chuck Norris is. What you may not know is that he is a Christian. When he was 12 years old he came forward at a Billy Graham crusade and accepted Christ as his Savior. But he never really fully surrendered his life to Christ.

He went on to become the karate middleweight champion of the world for eight straight years. He appeared in karate movies, and in one movie, he fights against Bruce Lee in a death match!

Years later, he starred in the TV series Walker, Texas Ranger. He was successful in almost every area of his life, but he knew that something was still missing. One day, he came home and he saw his wife Gina reading the Bible. He said to her, "You're not getting religious on me, are you?" She said "This is good stuff! You should read this." So he sat down with her on the couch and read the Bible. The Spirit of God began to work in him. He felt like God was saying to him, "You need to come back to me. You need to finish what you started when you were 12 years old! You need to make me the Lord of your life." And so Chuck Norris surrendered his life to Christ. Except this time, his life was transformed. If you watch the last two seasons of Walker, Texas Ranger, you see a much stronger emphasis on faith in Christ. After the show ended, he and his wife got involved in all kinds of different ministries. His life was changed when he moved from simply believing that Jesus was lord to making the decision to make Jesus his Lord.

2. We Follow Him in Sanctification

In the scripture we read this morning we see that when the people saw the difference a relationship with Jesus makes, the fear of the Lord came over them and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor.

Acts 19:18 Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. 19 A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.

These people in the church of Ephesus did not simply believe in Jesus, their lives were transformed. There was evidence of Jesus' lordship in their life. A drachma in the first century was the equivalent of the daily wage for a skilled worker. Most people at the time lived on about a half drachma a day or about 180 drachma a year. That means that the value of the scrolls that were burned was about 278 years wages, or about 20 million dollars.

Salvation is when we make Jesus lord of our lives. Sanctification is when we show it. It is the difference that Jesus makes in our lives. Sanctification is the process of making us more like Jesus. One dictionary says it like this, "It is the carrying on to perfection the work begun in regeneration." As an authentic follower of Christ, our mark or goal is to become like Him.

The Christian life does not mean that you can accept Jesus and then live the rest of your life like you never had. Biblical sanctification is not optional, it is a requirement.

Mat 6:19-21 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

These people in Ephesus were willing to give up earthly treasures in order to store up heavenly treasures. How about you? Are you willing to give up attitudes, actions and possessions that stand in the way of your relationship with Christ? They do not have to be occult scrolls. They can be anything, even good things, that are self-focused as opposed to God focused.

1Co 3:12-13 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

You can store up things on earth or in heaven, and you can store up your stuff and God's stuff. Gold, silver, and costly stones refers to investing into God's kingdom. These are the things we do for Jesus. These are acts of service that flow from a transformed life. When Jesus is Lord of our lives, His priorities become our priorities. Suddenly we start seeing the world differently. We start seeing the world the way Jesus sees the world, and that influences our decision making. It changes our priorities, it changes the things we value.

Part of sanctification is seeing sin the way that God sees sin. Next week we are going to be looking at the meaning of repentance. It means to see things the way that God sees them. To think differently. To see sin the way that God sees it. A change in mind leads to a change in direction.

So let me ask the question, what is the center of your life? What do you value. I am sure as those people from the church of Ephesus were burning their scrolls there were people that were watching them thinking "why are they doing that? What a waste!" They were doing it because their lives had been changed. Their values had been changed. They were different.

Rick Warren in the purpose driven life said "Did you know that your check book and your calendar (day timer) are theological documents? Without even knowing you, if you were to show me your check book stubs and you were to show me your schedule, I could tell you right now what you love, because the way you spend your time and the way you spend your money shows what you love the most."

What is the priority of your life, and do your actions show it. Not just what others may see, but deep down in your heart, has there been a transformation of your values? Are you different because of Christ. Not just a religious act for others to see, has there been true change?

You do not know what is in a sponge until you squeeze it, and often you do not know what is in the heart until it goes through trials. I know that we are all saddened this week by the racial unrest that we see happening south of border, and also here in Canada. I was told this week that, as a white guy, I had no clue and no right to really speak into this situation. Maybe so, but I do know that God has called us together as a community. As members of one body, when one part hurts, every part hurts. God has called us to love one another, and to value one another and to be kind to one another. At times we do that imperfectly, but we are family. We are brothers and sisters together in Christ. I pray that, during times like this, that we act like it. That we show our transformed values.

Only when the tide goes out do you discover who's been swimming naked -- Warren Buffett

It is easy to put on a religious act. You are in the water and from the shoulders up everything looks normal. But what is happening below the water line? Have you been changed?

3. We Follow Him in Service

The church in Ephesus was transformed by the grace and power of Jesus. Their lives were forever changed. They were willing to count the cost and lay down everything that was contrary to Christ. When this happened, we see that others around them took notice.

Acts 19:20 In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

There is a word that we use a lot in the church these days that is not in the Bible. It is the word VOLUNTEER. It means a person who voluntarily offers themselves for a service or undertaking. They do so without being forced or paid to do it. I am thankful to all the people who volunteer to serve in this church.

Please understand what I am about to say. Volunteering is good, but it is not biblical.

Mat 20:25-28 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 26 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

To have the heart and mind of Christ is to be a servant. If Jesus is your Lord, than you are His servant, His slave. The word in the Greek is DOULOS. I know a little bit about this having spent 2 years on a ship called the Doulos. When we lived on the ship I did not simply do whatever I wanted to. On a cruise ship you have 2 groups of people, the paying customers and the hired staff. The paying customers get to decide what they do and don't do. The staff do not, they do their job. They do what is expected of them. On the Doulos, we were all staff. We all had jobs to do. As we moved from port to port, I did not 'volunteer' to do my job, it was expected of me.

As Christians, we all have a job to do, we all have been gifted and have a part to play. If Jesus is Lord than serving Him is not optional. It is not just something that you decide to do if you have the time and if you have nothing better going on. Slaves do not get to decide. They do what they are told to do.

So let me ask you a simple question. Are you doing your job, or are you just enjoying the cruise? Is Jesus really the functional Lord of your life? Not just a figurehead or belief system you practice on Sundays. Is Jesus daily calling the shots? Who is your master? When people look at you, do they see a person following their own dreams or do they see someone following Jesus? What is the priority of your life? How are you serving?

The call of Jesus is not to be served, but to serve others because following Jesus is about action.

There is one more thing I want to say about the topic of Lordship. When Jesus is Lord of your life you do what He says, even if that overrides the voices of others around you. This is true of us individually, but it is also true of us as a church.

Jesus Christ is not only my Lord, He is the Lord of this church. I am standing here today speaking to you from an empty auditorium. Months ago the leadership of BBC decided to pause meeting together for safety reasons. This was a choice we made. In this crisis I know that there are very different responses. On one side are people who think that the church should not have stopped meeting together at all. On the other side are those who think we should not open the doors of the church again until every person has been vaccinated, perhaps more than a year from now. Most people, including myself, are somewhere in the middle. I will tell you that this pandemic has reaffirmed in me two things that I have always known but now more than ever have found to be true.

The first truth is that buildings are important. I heard so many times recently people saying things like “the church is people, not buildings.” That is true, but buildings are important. If buildings are not important then why did we just send 5 and a half million expanding ours? We not just sell it and do everything online? Because it would cripple our ministry. Just ask any church that does not have a building if buildings are important. Can we survive without a building? Of course. But God has called us to do much more than survive.

The second truth that has been affirmed in me is that meeting online is a cheap substitute for meeting in person. There is something that happens when God’s people get together physically that does not happen if they just stay home and watch on their TV in their pyjamas. I am so grateful that we have had these online services, and we are going to continue them long after this pandemic has come and gone because we believe it is a blessing for people who are *unable* to attend. But they are a poor substitute for the real thing.

For the past two weeks I have watched the services like the rest of you from home. I enjoyed the services, but I really missed being there. These past few months of going in to the church on Sunday morning and being with a small team has been such a blessing. I wish you could see behind the scenes of how this team has risen to the challenge to make these online services work.

So what does this mean moving forward? What will the church reopening eventually look like?

As soon as we can, we would like to start meeting together on Sunday mornings in small groups. That means that instead of sitting at home and watching the service in your pyjamas, you would get up and go to a home with a few other families and watch the service TOGETHER. There would be interaction and fellowship. If you are not currently in a small group, we will be forming groups that would love to have you be a part of it.

As soon as it is reasonably safe, we will also begin meeting again at the church. There are still many questions as to what this would look like, but in the short term in probably means just a few at a time. Preference will be given to people who are not able to watch the services online, and also to people who are low risk. It will be up to the individuals to decide whether to attend or not.

What I do want to stress is that this is not the new normal as I have heard so many people say. This is the NEW ABNORMAL, and it will eventually pass. Until then we need wisdom with how to proceed in an ever-changing situation. Please pray for us!