

Jesus- Support

Jesus, though He was all God, chose to limit Himself in some ways by putting on human flesh and living among us. The Creator God of the universe for the first time in all eternity began to experience fatigue, physical pain, hunger and thirst. If He got a rock in His sandal, He had to stop and shake it out. If He got hungry, He had to buy food or find it. He could have called down from heaven a heavenly feast and five star accommodations with a host of angels waiting on Him hand and foot, but instead He chose to live life in the same way we do so that He could “sympathize with our weaknesses.” (*Heb 4:15*)..... It is quite interesting to consider that the one who simply spoke the world into existence had to be concerned about where to lay His head and where His next meal would come from.

Once Jesus began His earthly ministry at the age of 30, He gave up His presumed means of support by walking away from the carpentry shop of His earthly family. He also called those who followed Him to give up their means of support, primarily fishing, and to fish for people instead. This sounds spiritually intriguing but you would have to assume that “fishing for men” was not very financially lucrative. Jesus walked out on a limb and called those who would follow Him to do the same.

4 Don't carry a money-bag, traveling bag, or sandals; don't greet anyone along the road. **5** Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' **6** If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. **7** Remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they offer, for the worker is worthy of his wages. Don't be moving from house to house. **8** When you enter any town, and they welcome you, eat the things set

before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there, and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near you.' Luke 10:4-9 (HCSB)

We know how Jesus and the disciples got by when they were ministering in towns that had received them, but how did Jesus and the disciples survive on a daily basis? I'm quite sure there were no food pantries, rescue missions, or government subsidized "free food" services. If a person was hungry, they had to grow it, find it, buy it, beg for it or steal it. It is hard to imagine a society where people who were hungry actually could possibly go hungry, even starve but that was the case in first century Palestine... We have so much.

The Luke 10 passage we just read revealed a good bit about how Jesus and the disciples survived. The people they served and ministered to supported them. I'm sure it was quite meager but it is clear that they were lodged and fed by the people who received their message. We still do that today. God's messengers, the pastors (bishops, elders) evangelists, and missionaries are supported by those they serve and/or by those who sent them.

But getting back to Jesus and the disciples, what about when they were between towns or in a community that rejected their message? How did they survive? Luke 8 reveals the principle means of support for Jesus and His earthly ministry.

¹ Soon afterwards He was traveling from one town and village to another, preaching and telling the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, ² and

also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary, called Magdalene (seven demons had come out of her); ³ Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others who were supporting them from their possessions. **L**uke 8:1-3 (HCSB)

It is reasonable to assume that these ladies came from relatively modest means since Jesus spent most of His ministry time with the common people. Most of those He healed, restored, and cast out demons were of quite meager circumstances. These ladies who followed Jesus didn't just tithe, they supported Him and the disciples by selling their few modest possessions. We know this wasn't much because when confronted with the need to feed a multitude it was quickly determined to be a financial impossibility. But, it seemed to be enough to get them by.

It is interesting to consider the two distinct groups who supported Jesus and the disciples: (1) Those who supported them periodically out of response to His and the disciples' ministry and their own convenience and ability, those who fed the preachers when they came to town, and (2) those who gave their all to support the kingdom work for the long haul.

I don't want to minimize the value and importance of the less frequent and less consistent supporters of the ministry. They collectively did much to contribute to the survival of the fledgling ministry of Jesus and His disciples, but I marvel those who gave all.

Is there any general distinction though between the two groups that so affected the level of commitment to supporting the work

of Jesus and His disciples? We obviously can't go back and interview each person but something is revealed about those who seemed to give up everything to follow and support Jesus so sacrificially- "some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses... were supporting them from their possessions." Luke 8:2-3 They had not just seen and heard the marvelous kingdom message that was preached. They had not just observed the miracles performed by Jesus and disciples. They were not just casual observers (spectators). They personally experienced it. They were transformed, delivered, healed, forgiven, restoredThey had come to appreciate in such a deeper, more intimate way who Jesus was and what He had done for them. It was only natural to give everything they had back to Him.

Another observation: Most of the people who supported Jesus and the disciples when they were ministering in their town did not follow Him wherever He went. They may have welcomed Him with open arms while He was performing miracles in their town but once He left, most of them for the most part went back to their way of life.

The ladies actually went everywhere that Jesus went. They were not just enthusiastic observers of His mighty works, they were devoted followers who had walked away from life as they had known it. What was the difference. One group was primarily observers, the other were participants. The observers had seen or maybe even experienced some of the life-changing miracles of Jesus, but they stopped short of fully embracing Him as Lord and Savior. The ladies, on the other hand, were transformed physically, emotionally and spiritually leading to their complete

forsaking of the old self and life and becoming fully devoted followers of Christ.

I have often read, throughout my ministry life (36 years), that 20% of the people in the church do 80% of the work and 80% of the giving. I'm sure there are exceptions and I believe New Hope is an exception to those figures. But, even if we are a 40/60 church, there is good reason to consider our own motives and convictions behind our support and involvement in Jesus' kingdom work through the church.

Consider: Sporting event (photo of football game???)

Based on your giving and serving Christ and His church, would you better be described as:

Spectator- (in the bleachers) May be very faithful but never or rarely give, never or rarely participate in giving, ministry or service. Not of the 20%. Some saved, some not saved.

Cheerleader- (on the sidelines) May give and/or serve but is somewhat sporadic. Make noise but not much is done. The attitude when thinking or talking about the church is more often they than we. (The 80%?)

Player- (on the field) Giving and serving are both long term, lifetime commitments. Thinking and conversation we, our, my regarding the work of the church. They give beyond what is required and they do so cheerfully. They teach, minister, sing, lead, care and serve. (the 20%)

With 80% of today's church being more like the villager who supported and followed Jesus casually when He was in town, I wonder is Jesus OK with that? How can we break the cycle?

How can we **Support Jesus** more like Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna. How does anyone come to such a point of devotion, sacrifice and service to the King.

Repent Though Mary's, Joanna's and Susanna's stories are scantily revealed, it is obvious that the darkness and sin they came out of was significant (demons and diseases). Had they not repented and turned to Jesus, they would have perished. (Lu 13) They didn't start following Jesus so devotedly just because He was such a great teacher or because His words were full of truth and grace. They first began to follow Jesus because they had experienced His forgiveness, cleansing, deliverance and healing. Their lives were transformed from severe darkness to marvelous light. They were rescued from the pits of hell to experience life to the fullest. They were released from Satan's prison to be "free indeed."

None of us realizes how destructive, how deceitful, how deluding even a little bit of sin was and is in our own lives. Even if we didn't come to Christ out of a world of "demons" and "gross sin" like those women, we still came to Him miserable, blind, sin-hardened and bound up in our self-destructive behavior, and quite incapable of redeeming ourselves.

And this sin nature still thrives in us all the time. I don't know about you, but I fight every day to suppress this propensity in me to do and be evil. It keeps me from being a fully devoted follower of Christ and quite sure at least most of you have the

same problem. You will always be just a spectator or cheerleader as long as sin rules and reigns in your life.

Remember, (video) background loop of Jesus on the cross) especially if you've been saved for a while, what Jesus actually did for you. As far as I can determine, Jesus only instituted the Lord's Supper for one reason, that we would remember His sacrifice. We wear crosses around our necks and hang them around our churches, but do we really remember. Do we have any idea the pain and suffering Jesus endured because of our sin? Can we even imagine the huge nails piercing His hands and feet? Do we have any sense at all of the excruciating pain surging through Jesus' body as they dropped the cross into the hole in the ground? Is it even possible that we conceive the extreme labor Jesus exerted and the pain He endured just to get the next breath as He pulled Himself up against the nails holding His hands and feet to the cross?

If we really remembered, we would follow more faithfully, give more sacrificially, and serve more fervently than we do. If we really remembered we would be a player, not a spectator or cheerleader.

React, respond in a tangible, significant way to what Jesus has done for you.

A common malady in much of the church today is that some may truly **repent** and may even fully **remember** the sacrifice of Jesus but we often fail to **react** or respond to what He has done for us. We fail to follow. We fail to give and we fail to serve.

Almost ten years after I became a Christian, I began to fully grasp how much I was holding back on God and to remember how much He did for me. My life began to change dramatically

even though I had been a spectator for Jesus for eight or nine years. My life-style changed, my priorities changed, I began supporting the Lord's work financially, I gave up secular music for the sacred, I began hungering for the Word, for growth, for understanding, for fellowship. I tried to share my faith. I went on visitation. I started serving. All this was before I began to sense the call to ministry.

Have you reacted to the work of Christ in your life or are you still a spectator or a cheerleader?