

With Borrowed Breath **(The Epic of the Cross Series – Part VI)**

4/5/2009

The notes that follow each question below come from discussions that occurred after the sermon or further consideration of some of the issues raised. They should not be considered the “correct” answers by any means. It is hoped that they will provide a starting point for developing your own discussion of Pastor Steve’s sermons.

1. Pastor Steve opened with an observation that identity theft is a growing problem. What motivates people to want to steal someone else’s identity?

They aren’t happy with who they are, how much money they have, or what they have done. In fact, they may have brought such shame to their own name that they are trying to hide by being someone else. They want to be someone or something other than who or what they already are, and they are willing to steal to get it.

2. Pastor Steve then said that taking the name of Jesus was different from taking His identity. How are these two things different? What does it look like to take on the identity of Christ?

Saying one is a Christian is a single act. It is a first step. At that point, it is likely that not much is actually changed on the inside. In order to take on the identity of Christ, one has to know much more about Christ. It is a multi-step process that most likely includes: 1) letting go of our old identity, 2) submitting to God’s leading as to our new direction, and 3) taking on the character of Christ as we grow to understand it by studying the Bible and learning from others who are more mature in their walk with Christ.

We need to remind ourselves that this is a process. The disciples lived with Jesus for three years, yet they were perplexed by most of what He said and did in the last days. Jesus was a living, breathing role model for them, yet they argued about who was the greatest amongst them. We need to help each other take on more of the characteristics of Jesus each day.

3. Read Matthew 16:21-23. Peter was a follower of Jesus (we would call him a Christian), yet Jesus had strong words in rebuke for him. What was the problem?

He was not really following, but rather was trying to impose on Jesus Peter’s view of what the Messiah should be and do. Peter knew the scriptures well and felt he understood the role of the Messiah. Further, he was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Therefore, two plus two must equal four. His problem was that he ignored the parts of the Old Testament where it was prophesied that the Messiah would suffer. We have the advantage of seeing all this from the perspective of being between the first and second coming, while also having the New Testament writings to clarify things. We can separate out the different prophesies and allocate them more appropriately.

4. a) Read Mark 10:32-34. What strikes you about this passage?
- a) It is written in the third person, even though Jesus was talking about himself. It was as if Jesus was trying to clarify the role of the Son of Man in the context of the Messiah expectations. He was painting a picture for them, so that they could begin to understand the concept.
- b) It describes in great detail exactly what is going to happen in the specific sequence in which it eventually does happen. It makes it crystal clear that Jesus knows exactly what He is getting into by going to Jerusalem, and yet He proceeds in that direction without delay.

b) Read Mark 10:35-37. What is the response of the disciples to this startling revelation?

They begin jockeying for the preferred places in heaven. James and John had already been identified by Jesus as being in a special group within the twelve (see Matt. 17:1-2) and it appears they wanted to insure that this special relationship would continue when they all got to heaven together.

5. Pastor Steve then described our identity becoming intertwined with that of Christ in the same way the plants can become intertwined with each other. He ended by saying that the cross is not one man dying for us, but us dying with Him. What do these two images say to you?

Our goal is to take on as much of the characteristics of Christ as possible, such that people do not see us, but see Him through us. Thus, our old, ego-centric self dies, just as Jesus died on the cross, and we now live for Him and He lives for others through us.

6. The primary Bible passage for this week was 2 Cor. 4:7-12, 15. Read it and then consider the following:

- a) What is “this treasure” identified in v. 7

The Good News; the gospel message of God’s love for us shown by sending His only Son.

- b) What is the earthen vessel or jar of clay that holds this treasure?

Humans. The gospel message has been entrusted to humans to carry to others.

- c) In v. 8-9 Paul describes the plight of the early Christians. What does it tell you about their life?

They suffered through a lot, but it did not affect their love for God or desire to tell everyone they met about Jesus, who died for their sins and rose again as the first resurrection.

d) In v. 10-12, there are multiple references to our earthly bodies. What does it say to you?

We are cognizant of what Jesus did on the cross for us and live life so that others might believe and receive eternal life. Our bodies are mortal and feel pain, just as Jesus did, but our focus is on eternity, not these brief years on earth.

e) Why did Paul and the early church submit to such persecution (see. v. 15)?

They were witnesses to each other and those who observed them. They did it all for Christ. They fellowshiped with each other, served each other, and worshipped with each other so that others might see and hear the Good News and also believe.

7. So how do we avoid being Christians in name but not identity? How do we make sure we are truly with Him and He is in us?

We consciously take on the lifestyle that He promoted. By doing things the way He did them, we begin to understand that the weakest, poorest, and meekest in the room are the ones that actually have the most power. We learn that loving others more than ourselves is liberating. We get involved with other Christians who are also seeking to know Jesus better, so that we can then encourage each other to be more like Him. Then, as we model Christ to others, we will be Christ in identity as well as in name.