

In life of our church has changed in the last few months. I am actually talking about the physical existence of our life. Starting in May, many of our freshman high school students have been getting their drivers license permit. With this, the latest trend has been “let’s grab Chad’s keys and see if he will let us drive his truck”.

With the exception of a single incident on the way to mountain top in a truck stop parking lot...this hijacking method has yet to work.

Our younger friends are excited about this because they have reached a milestone. That little laminated card identifies them as having a certain skill...one that allow them a freedom and privilege that will change their life. They have been identified as a driver.

Over these last two months, in our reflection on the Sermon on the Mount, Christ has been consistently calling us to See the people who have identified themselves with him, through the qualities of their lives and the way they go through life in this world. He calls us to see the people...and then to become the people. The calling of his children is the calling to make actual his kingdom on this earth, to begin the change that will happen in it’s entirety when he comes again to reign on this earth. To be identified by Christ is something Jesus does not us...and it is the life we live that signifies who we are really following.

We need to be identified in Christ and not ourselves

One of Jesus' focuses in this teaching is the way we interact with each other. The way that we treat, live and even have conflict with the people we see in life tells us about our relationship with God. If we will quickly cast off folks and refuse to live in honest relationships with them...how quickly then will we cast off God and in His attempt to be with us through his son Jesus Christ?

This idea of the "golden rule" matters because in how we love we show Christ's love and in how we judge we will be judged. In many ways our choices in relationships mirror the way we truly want God to interact with us.

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Christ cautions us about wolves among us. Unless you saw Liam Niasan's "The Grey", I doubt you are that scared of wolves. Perhaps a better analogy for our culture would be terrorists. Folks that come to live a falsely identified life among us for the purpose of our destruction.

What is interesting is Christ isn't talking about heathens or pagans. He isn't identifying the behavior of people outside of God like Paul does in many of his writings. Jesus is specifically talking about people who are inside of the community of God, inside the church, in our relationships. Those who have chosen to discount what God has told us and instead advocate a less sacrificing way of life. Jesus words here are about those

who choose to distort the message. The way we guard against this is to look at the fruits of the people and situations.

The Old Testament identified false prophets by one account. Their lack of future telling ability, which we would identify as the right thing for a prophet to do, didn't matter. What did matter was did that persons life and teaching lead others into a deeper relationship with God. Did that person cause God things to happen to those around them. Where they leading people towards a greater expectation of God in their midst or where they leading people on false journeys based on self-identification?

Proper response to Jesus' teaching matters because He is the supreme prophet. His words and ministry are here to draw us into a deeper relationship with His Father.

Inner motives matter. If things don't lead us to God and his kingdom they are false-not fulfilling their purpose, making bad fruit. This is the moment we don't judge and look at others, but we look inside our own lives and at our outward actions. What we produce shows what we worship. The difference between the church and the world is not acceptance but response. How have we responded?

We need to be identified with Christ and not ourselves.

The last few verses of this section can be the scariest. Christ himself has to identify us, it isn't about us knowing him....but about him knowing us. In that final time, those who

are the true children of God will be set apart for eternal life with him. It is an essential part of the Christian message. We have to be careful when talking about this, so we don't sound like crazy people...but we can't talk about heaven without talking about Judgement. In Jesus' whole ministry he speaks of this time. Our hundred dollar word for the day is Eschatological Necessity...There is an Eschatological Necessity (a certain completion) to the gospel message of Jesus Christ. We have to think about an end because there has to be a time when this world now is no longer the controlling force and Jesus' kingdom is fully and completely in charge. They are both here right now, but only one is visible, the age of the fallen world.

The two ages coexist for now, the fallen world and the kingdom of God, but they represent two different directions. The present age is characterized by sin and centered on man; the coming age is the redemptive reality which entered history in an ultimate way in Christ.

Jesus' message about us becomes his people and beginning this kingdom way on earth now matters because it calls people to what could be their eternal future. That's why righteousness, peacekeeping, meekness, dealing well in failed relationships, anger, how we give to people, how we pray and how we handle our possessions matter. Because we are seeking the kingdom above all else.

This eternal kingdom is the largest theme of all in the sermon on the mount and Christ has been talking the whole time about how your identity in him is what gets you and I in.

We possess this identity when we let Christ take charge, when we let Christ heal us, when we let Him begin to do His work in our life, when we cast off sin and thinking it is in power, When we let ourselves be identified in him.

Yes, our young friends now have their driving permit. They are playing at driving...well perhaps practicing is a better word. They have someone over 18 in the car with them. It is a time period where hopefully they transition into someone who couldn't drive into someone who can drive..a position that holds responsibility but also freedom. One day in the near future, they will go and take a few tests and be handed a new identity..one that calls them driver, a new state and with this new state comes a new season of life...one that will only continue to open up for them.

Christ calls us to this transitory state. A time in which we learn to be disciples, a time when we are guided by those more mature in the Christian life than us. A time will come when we will be tested...when Christ will identify his relationship with us. And with our new and eternal state, freedom and responsibility comes...and the eternal time of life with our God alongside us, in the physical flesh will begin and it will only continue to open up.

Friends, who are you identified with?