

Confirmation: All That Really Matters

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John 8

[31] Jesus then said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples ..."

Grace to you, and peace, from God Our Father and Our Lord and Savior Jesus The Christ!

A man's car broke down as he was driving past a beautiful old monastery. He walked up the drive and knocked on the front door. A monk answered, listened to the man's story and graciously invited him to spend the night.

The monks fed the man and led him to a tiny chamber in which to sleep. The man thanked the monks and slept serenely until he was awakened by a strange and beautiful sound.

The next morning, as the monks were repairing his car, he asked about the sound that had waked him.

"We're sorry," the monks said, "We can't tell you about the sound. You're not a monk."

The man was disappointed, but eager to be gone, so he thanked the monks for their kindness and went on his way. During quiet moments afterward, the man pondered the source of the alluring sound. Several years later the man happened to be driving in the same area. He stopped at the monastery on a whim and asked admittance. He explained to the monks that he had so enjoyed his previous stay, he wondered if he might be permitted to spend another night under their peaceful roof. The monks agreed, and so the man stayed with them again.

Late that night, he heard the strange beautiful sound. The following morning he begged the monks to explain the sound. The monks gave him the same answer as before.

"We're sorry. We can't tell you about the sound. You're not a monk." By now the man's curiosity had turned to obsession. He decided to give up everything and become a monk, for that was the only way

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he could learn about the sound. He informed the monks of his decision and began the long and arduous task of becoming a monk. Seventeen years later, the man was finally established as a true member of the order. When the celebration ended, he humbly went to the leader of the order and asked to be told the source of the sound.

Silently, the old monk led the new monk to a huge wooden door. He opened the door with a golden key. That door swung open to reveal a second door of silver, then a third of gold and so on until they had passed through twelve doors, each more magnificent than the last. The new monk's face was awash with tears of joy as he finally beheld the wondrous source of the beautiful mysterious sound he had heard so many years before...

But, I can't tell you what it was. You're not a monk.

No, you're not a monk, but I can tell you about the beautiful sound you're supposed to give when you confess Jesus Christ as The Lord of your life. Will you let me tell you about it for a few moments?

When you confess Jesus Christ as The Lord of your life, you are saying you intend to continue in His Word. In the Gospel I chose for this sermon, Jesus says, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples ..."

To continue in Jesus' word. I want to do that. I intend to do that. That's what you're saying when you confirm your faith and declare Jesus Christ is Lord.

To continue in Jesus' word has to do more with what you do than what you say. Would you repeat that sentence with me? To continue in Jesus' word has to do more with what you do than what you say.

The most important thing to remember to do to continue in Jesus' word is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, verses 31-46:

[31] "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.

[32] Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,

[33] and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

[34] Then the King will say to those at his right hand, `Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;

[35] for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

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- [36] I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'
- [37] Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink?
- [38] And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee?
- [39] And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?'
- [40] And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'
- [41] Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;
- [42] for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,
- [43] I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.'
- [44] Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?'
- [45] Then he will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.'
- [46] And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The Lord Jesus Christ you confirm as your Lord, Savior and Master most often comes to us incognito in the persons of those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, ill clad or naked, sick and imprisoned. How you treat them will be your final exam for confirmation. How you treat them will determine whether you continue in Jesus' word and live as his disciple.

Now, I have told you everything I know about what it means to continue in Jesus' word and to be his disciple and to confirm the Christian faith that Jesus Christ is Lord, Savior and Master. Do you wish to proceed with the confirmation?

If you are having any doubts, or feel it is too difficult or a little scary, you are perfectly normal and all you need is the encouragement I hope this final story provides.

A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. Well, as such things go, one thing led to another. The sales meeting lasted longer than anticipated.

Their flights were scheduled to leave out of Chicago's O'Hare Airport, and they had to race to the airport. With tickets in hand, they barged through the terminal to catch their flight back home. In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of baskets of apples. Apples flew everywhere.

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Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding. All but one. He paused, took a deep breath and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned. He told his buddies to go on without him and told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the floor. He was glad he did. The 16 year old girl at the apple stand was totally blind!

She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping or to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them into the baskets, and helped set the display up once more. As he did this, he noticed that many of the apples had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$20 for the damage we did.

"Are you okay?" She nodded through her tears.

He continued, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly." As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister...." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "Are you Jesus?"

Do people mistake you for Jesus? That's our destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace.

If we claim to know Him, we should live, walk and act as He would. Knowing Him is more than simply quoting scripture and going to church. It's actually living the Word as life unfolds day to day. You are the apple of His eye even though we, too, have been bruised by a fall. He stopped what He was doing and picked you and me up on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for all our damaged fruit.

He loves you dearly. And will continue to do so no matter what. He invites you to confirm Him as your Lord, Savior and Master by what you do to help people in distress. As you do that, you continue in Jesus word, you are truly his disciple and someone will very soon mistake you for Jesus. That's all that really matters.

In The Name of The Father, and of +The Son, and of The Holy Spirit. Amen.

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