

IMITATING JESUS:

Readings: John 13 v 1-17, & James 2 v 14-26.

How do you react when someone (probably a nominal Christian) says to you something like "I try to live by the golden rule" or "I try to live according to the teachings of Jesus"? Do we respond with admiration, or a fear that they are not saved, or with disdain that they don't understand Grace?

We're back to the tension between Faith and Works. Let's be clear: we are saved by grace. Did you ever sing "There's nothing more that I can do, 'cos Jesus did it all"? We have seen before that the evidence of faith is obedience – remember Rom. 1 v 8, & 16 v 26? There are things that God requires of us:

In John 13 v 15 Jesus makes it clear that He has set an example for them to follow.
Mark 10 v 43-4 "Whoever wants to be great among you MUST be your servant ...".
Phil 2 v 5: "Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus ..."
Col. 3: "Put to death" (v5), "rid yourselves" (v8), "clothe yourselves" (v12), "forgive" (v13), "put on" (v14). These are all clear commands. We do not wait for God to do it in us!
[See also 1 John 5 v 3; 4 v 21; 2 v 3-4; and John 14 v 15, & 15 v 10.]

We are responsible for our behaviour. In Matt. 23 v 23 Jesus even says "You should have ..." [in relation to Tithing!]. And James 4 v 10 tells us to humble ourselves – NOT ask God to humble us, or keep us humble!

Human effort will not save us – but that doesn't mean we are expected not to do anything:

Jesus gave up what He had in order to serve others: 2 Cor. 8 v 9.

Jesus put the needs of others before Himself: Mark 6 v 31.

Jesus was content to take the lowest place: born in the stable of a village Inn in a country under Roman oppression and occupation, experiencing the poverty of living as a refugee in Egypt, and then Nazareth (a pretty mean place according to John 1 v46); He began His ministry among the poor, He received sinners and the unclean ... so as we begin to move from Christmas towards 2021, let's remember the words "With the poor and mean and lowly, lived on earth Our Saviour Holy". These folk will never be converted if we have no contact with them! Perhaps this is the true test of our spirituality?

May I conclude with some words I recently read from Oswald Chambers "God's Workmanship", p96: "Jesus never tells us to shout 'Hallelujah'. He says 'do to others as I have done to you'. Jesus left heaven and lived nowhere of any importance all his earthly life."

Are we prepared not to be noticed?