

Taking the Next Step in your Loyalty to Jesus

Introduction

First, I would like to publically thank Pastor Viars for his willingness to give me the pulpit this morning. For those I have not met yet, my name is Rob Green and I serve in the counseling and seminary ministries as well as in the ABF ministry to the YC and Encourager's classes. My wife Stephanie and I have been married 16 years and by God's grace we have 3 wonderful children.

I would like to begin by asking you a question. Is it fair to say that you are looking forward to Jesus' return?

- Rev 21:4 reminds us that there will be no more tears, no more death, no more mourning or crying.
- That sounds good all the time but particularly when we are going through circumstances that cause tears, mourning, and death.

Before that final state, we believe that Jesus will begin his eternal reign on the earth and that we will reign with him. I thought I would show you the piece of sacred, holy ground I hope to reign under Christ someday.

- [two pictures of the OSU football stadium]

If that is not funny check this out I can so relate!
[Go Buckeyes blind date]

I am, of course, joking, but what is really interesting is how each of you responded either verbally or at least in your mind.

- Some of you are like, whatever, who cares about football. OSU, Purdue, Colts, Saints, Bears Bah humbug! I don't get it. The amount of time and money spent on one football season could erase the national debt!
- Some of you are like, dude, who threw up all over that picture and all over your hat? In fact, sarcastically you are thinking, Rob, that is a picture of THE Ohio State University.
- Maybe a few of you are like, right on man. Let's sing the fight song. Go Bucks!

I would like to suggest to each of you that one word explains your response: Loyalty.

- Some of you have zero loyalty to colleges, to football teams, or to the game itself. So you are like whatever. I DO NOT CARE.
- Some of you are deeply DISLOYAL to OSU because for one reason or another you cannot stand Ohio State.
- A few of us are saying "right on" because we have loyalty to OSU... you grew up in Central Ohio or like me OSU is your alma mater.

Loyalty explains our response. It's all about loyalty! With that in mind please turn to 1 Cor 3:16-23. That is on page 131 in the back section of the bible in the chair in front of you.

If you get nothing, remember nothing from this sermon besides one thing ... Here is it:

I must be loyal to Jesus because I belong to Jesus

Notice v. 23. “You belong to Jesus, and Jesus belongs to God.” We will unpack this statement a little later but for now let’s hang our hat on that some simple truth.

- Tell your neighbor “I must be loyal to Jesus, because I belong to Jesus.”

Before I go any further, some of you may have had a hard time saying that [maybe because the “tell your neighbor thing freaks you out”] or maybe because you are not sure you do belong to Jesus.

If you are here this morning wondering if that is true let me first say that we are glad you are here. But let me also say that

- Romans 6:23 would give you a very strong reason to believe that you do not belong to Jesus
 - o **Romans 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - o If you have never come to have a relationship with Jesus then you sin has separated you from God and that is why you cannot say “I belong to Jesus.”
- Thankfully, Romans 10:9-10 provides the explanation for the second part of the verse “the free gift of God is eternal life”
 - o **Romans 10:9-10** that if you confess with your mouth Jesus *as* Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
- When a person repents of their sin and trusts Christ as their personal Lord and Savior then the words of 1 John 5:13 can be true of them...
 - o **1 John 5:13** ¹³ ¶ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Call to repentance

For those of you who would confess this morning that you truly belong to Jesus, then I can ask you, “Are you loyal to Jesus?” have you made the logical connection in your mind between the reality that you belong to him with the reality that you then, in response, must be loyal to him?

- When you see this symbol (picture of the cross) does your mind flow to the mercy and grace that saved you and that is still makes an impact or are you like “whatever”?
- When you turn on the TV and some godless activity or words is going on does your loyalty to Jesus cause you to be bothered by that or are you like “whatever”?
- When your spouse or children honk you off and you are about ready to unload the 42 reasons you are right and they are wrong are you thinking about your loyalty to Jesus or about your loyalty to your functional God – you?

God wants to point out in very clear terms – you belong to Christ, Christ belongs to God, and therefore you belong to God. Those facts are true. It is also true that if you belong to Jesus then you must be loyal to him.

The only issue we have to deal with this morning is whether we will respond with loyalty to King Jesus.

- Not simply on Sunday morning
- But in the thousands of little decision points this coming week.

If I were to switch the metaphors a bit... are you loyal to the kingdom that God is building or you are loyal to your kingdom.

- You just can't do both...Jesus said no man can serve two masters. You will love the one and hate the other.

We are studying this year the book of 1 Corinthians and the important subject of taking the next step with joy. Thus, we are going to look this morning in this passage at 3 steps you can take to grow in your loyalty to Jesus.

#1. Increase your loyalty to Jesus by being Loyal to His Church (vv. 16-17)

As PV has been explaining the first three chapters of this book there is a recurring theme: DIVISION. That division even played out in the sarcasm of "I belong to Christ." Paul's argument has been very simple

- The divisions were having such a serious impact on the church that according to 1:12 Chloe's people heard about and reported it to Paul.
- The church was not as effective as it could have been, the church in Corinth was struggling to represent God well in their city and they could not have unity because they were fussing about too many other things.
- As if those issues were not enough...later in this book we will see issues over ignoring blatant sin, immorality, taking believers to court, legalism, and interpersonal insensitivity.

In other words, the church at Corinth has a number of issues that need to be addressed. There are a number of truths that they have to grasp. One of them is that loyalty to Jesus requires loyalty to his church. The text explains,

The church is a temple of God (v. 16)

Sometimes the Bible draws a distinction between the whole temple [the precincts] and the portion of the inner portion of the temple – the sanctuary if you will.

- It would be the difference between talking about our campus verses talking about our auditorium.
- The temple/sanctuary is the location where the deity dwells. Paul says that the temple is the church!

Think about how radical this is to the church at Corinth. As we will learn in chapter 8 some of them have still been visiting the pagan temples. They are well aware of the temple thing, been there, done that.

- In essence, Paul says there is only one temple in Corinth and you, the church, are it! Let's consider the purpose of the temple...

1. It is a place to worship God.
 - a. Worship takes place in a number of ways. In the Bible, people worshipped by singing, playing instruments, dancing, hearing the law, giving, and sacrificing.

Here at our church, during our services, we incorporate some of those same elements.

- i. Could your signing be rightly defined as worship? Is your mind resting on the truths from God's Word as you sing them?
 - ii. When you gave this morning, were you thankful for the privilege to worship God in that way. Or was it more like, "Oh well, I guess I can't get ____ now."
 - iii. Now that we are studying the Scriptures. Had you read the passage beforehand to get some general idea of what we would be studying? Are you hoping that there is something in this text that will challenge you to live your life for Christ?
2. It is a place to meet with God.
- a. When you came this morning, were you hoping to meet with God? Or was your expectation just a bit lower – like, I sure hope I stay awake today?
 - b. Did you come hoping that God would do something in your life today or in the life of someone else in the church?

People Loyal to Jesus are loyal to his church. Paul adds,

The church is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (v.16)

This passage is a bit different than the passage in 1 Cor 6:19-20 where the issue there is that the believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit and therefore should remain sexually pure.

Here the point is that the church [the group of people] is indwelt by the Spirit.

The application of this is powerful...

On the positive side, what happens when one does all they can to help the church, to build it up and to strengthen it?

- That person is honoring the dwelling place of the Spirit.
- That person is demonstrating loyalty to the head of the church, Jesus Christ.

It is not possible to be loyal to Jesus and then to ignore the church for whom he gave his life, for which he promises to build, for whom he serves as the head. In verse 17, he takes matters one step farther...

Those that Seek to destroy the Church – God destroys (v. 17)

Think about when one does harm to the church.

- Some people get mad at churches or people within them. So they gossip, slander, quit giving, and rot in their bitterness.
- Here is what is worse, they harm the dwelling place of the Spirit and the church for which Jesus gave his life and promised to build.

According to v. 17, God says that he will defend it vigorously.

- In fact, God will destroy them.
- That is one of the reasons Titus 3:10 reminds us to reject a factious man after a first and second warning.

- God says that people who seek to divide the church actually should be rejected by the church.
- Creating division is simply that serious.

I must be loyal to Jesus because I belong to Jesus. One way to be loyal to Jesus is to be loyal to his church.

Here are a few ways you can demonstrate Loyalty to Jesus by being loyal to the church.

- Baptism. In the minds of some, baptism is viewed as an option and membership is not significant at all.
 - o The problem with that line of thinking is that it minimizes loyalty to Jesus. Or to use the words of PV sermon two weeks ago, it is the equivalent of living in spiritual diapers.
 - o Baptism was the way you confessed your allegiance to Christ. There is no example of the Bible of a genuine believer that we know was not baptized.
- Membership. Some don't want to join a church because they don't want any accountability.
 - o They want to do what they want and then they want everyone to get happy about it. The problem is that is loyal to you.
 - o Here is the heart of deception...when you believe you are being loyal to Jesus when in reality you are only loyal to yourself!
- Service...every year people at the BCTC make a point to emphasize the service of this church family. Without question many of you served incredibly sacrificially giving up vacation and all the rest. So this point is not for you.
 - o But the reality is this...some of you need to serve. Service, for you, is your next step of loyalty.
 - o Passion play is coming up and some of you need to demonstrate loyalty to Jesus by doing what is necessary to make sure that passion play is an opportunity to share Christ with as many unbelievers as possible and to share the gospel message again with believers so that they might be strengthened.
- Getting along with others... have you ever noticed that not everyone always agrees with you? What happens?
 - o Do you get all grumpy and whiny and proud (like you could do better with ½ your brain tied behind your back)?
 - o Get along, quite thinking that you are so wonderful and work together.
- Celebrate and keep it up...some of you can honestly praise the Lord for helping you get this point. My encouragement to you is to keep up the good work.

The church, every church, belongs to Jesus. If you belong to Jesus then Jesus expects you to be loyal to him and one of the ways you do that is to be loyal to his church. A second step found in this passage is...

#2. Increase your loyalty to Jesus by finding wisdom in the Word and not in the World (vv. 18-20)

“World” can mean different things in the Bible. It can refer to people and the importance of loving them or it can refer to thinking that lines itself up against the Scripture. It is the latter point that we are concerned with here.

It bears saying that the wisdom discussed here does not eliminate our willingness

- To see a surgeon if a part of our body is not functioning well.
- To trust the engineers who design hydroelectric power plants that they got their math right and power will safely be delivered to our home.
- The point instead relates to the World’s philosophies and concerns that stand in opposition to the truth found in Scripture.

What Paul is saying is that those that are loyal to Jesus are not attracted by the wisdom of this age. Some have called this concept the great reversal. The great reversal in 1 Cor 1-4 has at least two elements

Wisdom is found in the message of Jesus (v. 18-19a)

The message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus sounds foolish. Attacks come not only from Charles Darwin or Carl Sagan but they even come from people like Bart Ehrman.

- Bart is a NT scholar and popular author who teaches at the University of North Carolina – a former student at Moody Bible and a graduate of Wheaton College – was asked what he thought of Jesus.
- The 2007 published version of his words are as follows, “I think Jesus was crucified like a lot of other people were crucified, and I think that, like a lot of other people, he stayed dead.”
- This man earns his living studying the Bible. But his study has led him to conclude that the gospel is foolishness.

Loyalty to Jesus however finds the words and works of Jesus true. The one loyal to Jesus regularly reminds himself or herself that Jesus is central to all of Christianity. Colossians 1:15-18 says...

- **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. ¹⁸ He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.**

John Piper, not long ago explained why he used Twitter.

- Simply, because everything is designed to exalt the name of Christ. Everything.
- So the message of Jesus is far from foolishness, it is what gives you life.
- The gospel, his death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is central to all we think and are but so is the concept of his return.

- Jesus will return and when he does he will make all things right. In the words of Philippians 2 “every knee will bow, ...and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

In other words when I equate WISDOM with the reality that everything is for Jesus then it changes my entire outlook:

- It changes the way you respond to your co-workers because the words you say to your co-workers are a reflection of your loyalty to Jesus.
- It changes the way you speak with your spouse because it is reflection of your loyalty to Jesus.
- It changes the way you discipline your children because it is reflection of Jesus.

In other words, those who are wise understand that wisdom is bound in the message of Jesus and loyalty to Jesus is living consistent with that wisdom.

- So if “foolish” is what I need to become in order to gain God’s wisdom – bring it on! A second point found in this passage is...

Wisdom is found in resting in God’s Sovereignty rather than yourself (vv. 19b-20)

Paul quotes from two texts, Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11. What unites these two passages in Paul’s mind is that they both teach the same thing.

- Sometimes people try to outsmart God.
- These two texts remind those in Corinth that not only does it impossible to outsmart God but God turns the tables on them and uses their ‘wisdom’ to demonstrate their foolishness.

Maybe the coolest illustration of these truths is found in 1 Kings 22. I do have time to unpack this passage but here is the jist.

The world celebrates leadership even at the cost of character, the world parades heroes and celebrities for their accomplishments, and knowledge is viewed as the ultimate winner.

- Jesus however, values servanthood, denying yourself, and humility.
- It is just as PV said last week; God uses a different measuring stick than man does because God’s wisdom is to man, foolishness.

Let’s be frank about it, God’s sovereignty does not always feel like wisdom. In fact, sometimes it feels like foolishness.

- We have had death after death in our church family ---- some of them were real surprises.
- We have had some in our church family experience job loss, a severe health challenge, and sufferings of various kinds.

When those days come, loyalty to Jesus will look like

- Not getting bitter
- Living in trust of a good God and doing all you can
- Not thinking that if you were God it would work so much better

The church at Corinth really struggled because they were using standards that the World would use and thus lost their loyalty to Jesus. In order to be loyal to Jesus you have to live out the message of Jesus.

For some of you taking the next step

- Taking FCI classes that help you understand the Bible better
- Taking FCI classes that will help you with parenting, marriage, or finances from God's point of view.
- Keeping a journal of one way each day that you worked to be loyal to Christ by being loyal to his word.

We have seen to this point that we must be loyal to Jesus because we belong to Jesus. Loyalty to Jesus is being loyal to his church and by counting the Word of God as the source of wisdom. The third potential step is

#3. Increase your loyalty to Jesus by boasting in Jesus alone (vv. 21-23)

Before we dive into these final verses, I want you to know that like many of you there are certain people that God has used to make a significant impact on who I am.

1 Thess 5:12-13 But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

- When I was in high school (Tom Zentz)
- My pastor growing up (Tim Kenoyer)

In each case, they were the ones in my life when major forks in the road occurred. God used them to steer me in the proper direction.

But God did not design any of them to take his place or to be praised beyond the scope of their servanthood. In essence he says this...

- You can appreciate John Piper (I read Desiring God like 20 years ago)
- You can appreciate Mark Driscoll (he has some great sermons)
- You can appreciate James MacDonald (funny preacher)
- You can appreciate Pastor Viars, Dutton, Aucoin, Woodall, Curtis, Garner

But you may not worship them, the sermons they preach, or the cool things they do that you like so much.

In v. 21, we get the list of men again (1:12). We have already learned from Paul that

- He did not baptize you
- The wisdom of this world, particularly of your pagan society of absolute foolishness
- Paul is nothing because he plants
- Apollos is nothing because he waters
- In fact, every leader is nothing but a servant

In the text there are 2 primary reasons why you must emphasize Jesus a lot and people just a little.

In Christ everything belongs to you already (vv. 21-22)

The point is simple; every one of those individuals already belongs to you.

There is absolutely no sense in fighting about who is best, giving the four reasons you listen to Driscoll's podcasts instead of Piper or why you follow Piper instead of following MacArthur.

- When you do this you automatically become self limiting.
- You limit your knowledge, you limit your exposure, you limit your ability to think outside of certain limits and you miss all that God has for you.
 - o It is like going to the beach on vacation and never getting up early enough to watch the sun rise.
 - o It is like going to Niagara Falls and never going to the observation deck. The views from the side are cool, but that is only one perspective. Ride the boat, go to the observation deck. See it from as many places as possible.
 - o It is like going on an airplane and never looking out the window to enjoy God's creation from an entirely different perspective.
 - If time, trip to Washington Dullus with unbelievable clouds
 - o When you get hooked on only one preacher, one spiritual mentor, one important person in your life. You miss it! You automatically limit yourself. Because you miss the views that God has for you.

Here is one simple example,

- Growing up somehow I got the idea that there was no such thing as a saved Presbyterian. They did not exist. Those words were mutually exclusive.
- Today, I have learned so much from my Presbyterian brothers. I don't agree with them about everything but I have learned so much.
 - o I learned why some churches only sing the Psalms.
 - o I learned why some don't believe in instrumentation.
 - o I learned how they understood their Bibles and I became more grounded because of it.
 - o Even when I don't agree I have learned so much about Christ's church that I would have otherwise missed.

Loyalty to Jesus is not exclusive loyalty to any one man – that is foolishness. Loyalty to Jesus is recognizing that he has provided all of these persons for the benefit of the whole body.

So enjoy it. Let's also notice,

You belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God which means you belong to God (v. 23)

You belong to Christ and to God. This is where we started. It is an amazing truth that Jesus rescued you and made you his own.

Part of the reason in these first 4 chapters that Paul is so irritated by their divisions is that when you praise men you praise the person delivering the mail rather than the one who sent it. Here is what that does....

It encourages people to believe that they are more important than they are

I think it is good to be reminded from time to time that God can replace you and everything you do in less than 5 seconds.

- Because what happens when people fill us with praise is that we begin thinking that they are right.
- It is easy for us to want to be king and queen (absolute ruler of our little kingdoms). When we are worshipped that tendency gets encouraged.

It demonstrates that you don't understand where your loyalty should lie

PV talked about his relationship with Kris before they were married and how crazy it would be if she married the one who delivered the mail.

- We get that don't we? Yet, that is exactly what we might be tempted to do spiritually.
- When we do, it is not only damaging for the person we praise but for us as well.

So we return to the place where we started. The text says that you belong to Jesus. That is a positional fact that is true for every believer. The question is whether you are loyal to him. In this passage those who are loyal.

- Increase their loyalty to the Church
- Increase in their willingness to find wisdom found in the Word
- Increase in their boasting about Jesus and not about mere men