

An Important Question; A More Important

Answer

Intro. Most of us don't really know what we are getting into with a new job. We know the basic skills, duties and responsibilities. But no amount of training really prepares us for the reality. Years of theology and scripture did not really prepare me for the first middle of the night call to the hospital when an accident took the life of a young man. I got through it but I quickly realized the "job" was not just fun things like baptisms and weddings.

I. The first question the Lord asked was an easy one. The disciples had lots of quick answers about what *other* people were saying. These were common misconceptions among the crowds following the Lord. The next one was the "money" question: "Okay. But what do **you** think?" The Lord really didn't care what others thought of him. It was important what the *disciples* thought because they

were in training to be his messengers of salvation. I imagine there was some silence as the disciples thought about their answers. Peter spoke for them, "You are the Christ." In Hebrew and Greek, Christ means "the anointed." For the Israelites, only prophets and kings were anointed. Remember how the prophet, Samuel, anointed David king. The Israelites misunderstood Messiah to be a conquering hero who would overthrow the Roman oppressors and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. It was therefore a dangerous title. Herod and the Israelite collaborators would be forced to destroy such a threat. That may be why the Lord told them not to tell anyone. He would be even more of a target than he already was. This is halfway through Mark's gospel and the Lord needed the disciples to fully understand who he was in order to understand the mission and *their* place in it. He told them the reality: he would be rejected by his own people,

suffer, die but rise. I don't think the disciples heard that last part, so shocked their minds quit working. This was another turning point in their journey with the Lord. They had to commit or turn back. In fairness to the disciples, the Lord told them what the mission was. They continued to follow although had moments of doubt. Like us.

Concl. This time of year it is easy to identify followers of sports teams by the jerseys and hats we wear and the flags on our cars. Fans proudly display the colors and symbols of favorite teams or fashion designers. What do fans of Christ do to show their support? It can be the same way sports fans do: wear medals, crosses and clothes with religious slogans. Those are *external* signs and may be abandoned if being a follower becomes too difficult, like a losing season. More important are the *internal* signs like a heart open to the Lord, prayer and reflection on the Word of God and a sense of respect for the life God

has created. The internal signs should burst forth into external actions such as feeding the poor, giving drink to the thirsty, visiting the sick and imprisoned, burying the dead, clothing the naked and giving shelter to the homeless. These are called the Corporal Works of Mercy, actions that truly reveal the faith that is within the heart of a follower of Christ. The disciples began to realize the reality of their "job" was different from what they first thought. The cost to them would be high, but for the Lord, much higher. How we answer the Lord's question determines if we are followers in the good times but quit in the tough time and refuse the cross.

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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