

“Changes”

Has your life changed since you became a Christian? Hopefully all of you can say a resounding YES to that question. As a Christian you have made a hard choice without regret. You have chosen to follow Jesus. You have decided that personal comfort is secondary to the needs of those around you in your community. You have decided that the needs of your family while remaining dear to you are secondary to the desire to love God and love your neighbor as yourself. You have decided that personal comfort is no longer a driving force in your life and you would rather make do with less than see someone else suffer. You can look back over your life and see where these choices you have made, while difficult and even painful at the time, have led to blessings in your life. As a Christian you can see that fruit has been born in the wake of your dying to self-centeredness.

Has your life changed since you became a Christian or do you still have a ways to go?

I fear that Jesus is more like a movie star to us than a close and beloved friend. What I mean is this. We all have a favorite movie star. We feel connected to him or her because of the characters they have portrayed and if they walked into this church this morning we would be excited to see them and would even greet them as a friend. If John Wayne were alive and walked into this church right now, I don't believe anyone would have trouble recognizing him. Those of us who hold John Wayne in high esteem would feel especially close to him and everything that he represented that was good about America. But those of you who do not know who John Wayne is would not be excited by his presence. You wouldn't know

about his political views and the America John Wayne represents for you would be an America of the past that no longer exists. It's the same with music, or sports, as long as the person, group, or team we like is doing good things then we don't have any problem supporting them with our time and our money—buying tickets, or CD's or watching the games or DVD's. But if they do something we don't like then we just don't support them. Or if we have never heard of them or their music then they mean nothing to us. I am afraid we have begun to treat Jesus like a movie star. As long as we like Jesus then everything is okay, but let Jesus do something we don't like then that's it we're out of here. Jesus wants us to change the way we live. Jesus wants us to focus outward and away from ourselves. Jesus wants to be the center of our universe. Jesus wants to be in control of our lives. Jesus wants to be the light that shows us where to go. Jesus wants to draw us to himself so that we can be with him forever. Jesus wants us to be his friends, not his fans. In Matthew 7:22 – 23, the fans of Jesus find out the hard truth that knowing Jesus is not enough. We need to be known by Jesus.

I have another fear for myself and for you. I fear that we have become balanced and stable in our Christian lives. We are comfortable in the place we have carved out for ourselves in our support of the ministry of God's church. We think we are doing enough to please God with our belief and our effort, but we don't push. We don't do too much because we don't want to make ourselves uncomfortable. We don't want to seem too religious to our friends who don't go with us to church, so we don't talk about our faith and our beliefs unless we are in a place where we are expected to do so—like church or Sunday school. Everything is fine as long as we

don't have to do too much. Church is a place where we go-- not something we do. But in Matthew 25, the parable of the sheep and the goats, the ones who are considered righteous, are the ones who believe church is something that we do. Are we too comfortable? Are we still more interested in serving ourselves than we are interested in serving Jesus Christ? As Jesus said the fruit that we bear will show what kind of people we are.

Are there changes that need to be made in our lives so that we more closely represent Jesus in this world? The answer is up to you. That new covenant predicted in Jeremiah is in force now ratified by the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus is drawing all people to him and we only need to accept his gift of life and let that gift take hold in our lives so that we will be honored by God.

Scriptures referenced: Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34

John 12: 20 - 33