

Jesus/Santa



Are you “Religious”? Often Christians balk at the moniker “Religious” and reply, “No! I’m not Religious but I do have a personal relationship with Jesus”. In today’s culture being “Religious” has a distressing essence that tends to terminate communications and end discussions. Whether you consider yourself religious or you consider yourself in a relationship you must understand that doesn’t completely define your association with “Your Lord & Savior”. What ever church you go to or what ever pastor (minister) you listen to, you will hear the message that “God gave you a Free Gift through Jesus Christ to reconcile you to Him and make you welcome to His Kingdom”. While that message is **Not Wrong**, there is much more to Christianity than that and once you digest that message it is appropriate to look into the Bible and see what Jesus and His Apostles said about this.

Matthew 10:34-39 paints a bleak picture of Jesus’s followers, He talks about Peace and the lack there of, He talks about Family Relations, their breakdown and what they should look like but then Matthew, Mark and Luke all talk about a Cross and the possibility of the Loss of Life. Earlier in Matthew 10 he dispatches His disciples exclaiming that they will be like “Sheep Among Wolves”. That’s not all folks, in Luke 14:25-33, Jesus discusses qualifications for being His disciple but much of it is the same message Matthew discussed and seems to indicate that renunciation of the call of the world is key to your discipleship.

This is definitely not the P. R. message you may have heard in your church, but Jesus is not looking just for people to follow Him around and listen to His inspirational messages as was the case early on in His ministry when thousands of people followed him looking for something from Him but with no investment in Him. To those who were listening, He said, *“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”* (Mark 8:34) and by the end of His ministry only the 12 and a very small group of men & women continued in faithfulness to Him. He obviously wasn’t trying to build a megachurch.

Jesus sent this message consistently throughout the gospels, as well as the message of only one level of following (Discipleship) Him. His take was that serving two masters would never work, Luke 16 and Matthew 6 both reprove that concept, warning that one of the masters will be hated. He goes on to illustrate that portrait in Matthew 6:19-21, Luke 12:33, Luke 12:20, Mark 4:18-19, John 14:23-24 where He first clears the air around your bondage to wealth and how you would be best advised to invest it in Heaven, but goes on to exemplify how reliance on your wealth will not provide immortality. He moves from there to your fruitfulness and a reminder that worldly cares, quest for riches and pleasure can easily impact your productivity and your view of discipleship. Jesus points out that love is the key to all of this when He said, *“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.”* Apparently, keeping His word is the appropriate exhibition of your love for Him and His Father and according to an earlier passage loving Him comes with the expectation of loving your neighbor.

G.K. Chesterton wrote, “The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting; rather it has been found difficult and left untried.” The previous paragraphs are only a sampling of the message that Jesus sent to those who followed Him and to you who purport to follow Him. The obstacle that everyone faces who chooses Christianity is, “How to maintain that Dual Citizenship and reconcile the opposing forces of God and the World”. A laborious task, but well worth the struggle, since the rewards are great, not only in Eternity but right here on this planet.

There is a problem, and that is, The Nature of Humans!! Blaise Pascal in the middle 1600’s wrote, “The sole cause of man’s unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room.” His point being that humans crave “Distraction”. Peter Kreeft studied Pascal’s writings and in [Christianity for Modern Pagans: PASCAL's Pensees Edited, Outlined, and Explained](#); his restatement amounts to this.

We ought to have much more time, more leisure, than our ancestors did, because technology, which is the most obvious and radical difference between their lives and ours, is essentially a series of time-saving devices.

In ancient societies, if you were rich you had slaves to do the menial work so that you could be freed to enjoy your leisure time. Life was like a vacation for the rich because the poor slaves were their machines. . . .

[But] now that everyone has slave-substitutes (machines), why doesn't everyone enjoy the leisurely, vacationy lifestyle of the ancient rich? Why have we killed time instead of saving it? . . .

We want to complexify our lives. We don't have to, we want to. We wanted to be harried and hassled and busy. Unconsciously, we want the very things we complain about. For if we had leisure, we would look at ourselves and listen to our hearts and see the great gaping hole in our hearts and be terrified, because that hole is so big that nothing but God can fill it.

So we run around like conscientious little bugs, scared rabbits, dancing attendance on our machines, our slaves, and making them our masters. We think we want peace and silence and freedom and leisure, but deep down we know that this would be unendurable to us, like a dark and empty room without distractions where we would be forced to confront ourselves. . .

If you are typically modern, your life is like a mansion with a terrifying hole right in the middle of the living-room floor. So you paper over the hole with a very busy wallpaper pattern to distract yourself. You find a rhinoceros in the middle of your house. The rhinoceros is wretchedness and death. How in the world can you hide a rhinoceros? Easy: cover it with a million mice. Multiple diversions.

In Pascal's 1600's distractions were limited to somewhat expensive activities and thus only the well-to-do got to participate. However, in today's virtual reality practically everyone should be able to find something that will prevent them from thinking about their lives and what their ultimate destination will be. Yet it was not until Elijah sat quietly in a dark cave and listened intently that he encountered God (1 Kings 19:13). In today's culture that would be defined as Booring!! yet boredom could drive us to diagnose our plight and seek deliverance. Jesus defines that activity as "Entering by the Narrow Gate" and He said that even though the way is hard the rewards are great (Matthew 7:13-14).