

JCCC Admin

From: "Johns Creek Christian Church Admin" <jcccadmin@johnscreekchristian.org>
To: "Johns Creek Christian Admin" <jcccadmin@johnscreekchristian.org>
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2009 10:56 AM
Subject: Fw: from Rev. Randy Barnhart, JCCC, March 12, 2009



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Putting Jesus in His Place

It's really not a bad phrase; honestly it's not. But sometimes it makes me uncomfortable nonetheless. I am talking about the common phrase, "my *personal* Lord and Savior." I think I understand what people mean by it. I've certainly heard it said by a lot of folk I love and respect, but there is a side of me that wants to ask, "So what?" Whenever I hear this version of the Christian confession, "Jesus is my personal Lord," the question, "So what?" usually enters the mind. Why should I find "your *personal* Lord" interesting, let alone compelling?

It sounds to me like "my personal chauffeur" or "my personal diary" or "my personal opinion" or "my personal trainer" -- persons or things that are in my employ, or that "belong" to me. I want to suggest that in the most important sense, Jesus is not my personal *anything*, least of all, "my personal Lord." And in the most critical sense, he's not "yours" either.

I have a close friend who is forever putting me in my place (in the way that only close friends get away with) by reminding me, "It's not about you." He did this to me not too long ago during a meeting in which some friends and colleagues were essentially taking turns saying some very nice things about me (most of which I hardly deserved). The whole exercise was uncomfortable for me, embarrassing even. Apparently my discomfort was poorly hidden because somewhere in the middle of these wonderful compliments he leaned over to me and

whispered, “Relax, dude. It’s not about *you*.” And he was right.

The same thing can be said about the Christian confession of faith in Christ: “Jesus is Lord.” Sometimes, not always, but sometimes the confession “Jesus is Lord” is misunderstood merely to mean merely what we individually think about Jesus. It’s understood in a “who Jesus is *to me*” sort of way. I am sure such confessions are genuine and earnest (I hope so because I make them, too!), but they can also represent a certain false humility at best and a thin theology at worst. Of course, there’s nothing wrong with having an opinion about Jesus (who doesn’t have an opinion about Jesus?!), but my personal opinion is not necessarily the same thing as Christian confession of faith. Something critical is endangered whenever I completely replace “the story” in favor of “my story.” Maybe it’s easier to speak in the first person, “Jesus is my Lord” than it is simply to confess with the earliest Christians, “Jesus is *Lord*.” But the easier confession, if it is easier, is not nearly as full or rich.

Scholars of the New Testament tell us that the earliest Christian confession is the simple statement, “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9). By that the earliest Christians did not mean that Jesus simply ruled “in their hearts” but that he laid no claim beyond that. Warm and fuzzy as the statement is about my heart and Jesus, the earliest Christians had bigger ideas. When they confessed “Jesus is Lord” they were making a statement about the nature of ultimate reality, about the universe. Their confession was cosmic, huge, life transforming. Ours dare not be any less. According to the New Testament, for whatever it’s worth, to be a follower of Jesus Christ is to affirm that “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Otherwise, why unbind the gospel in our church?

Pax Christi,

Randy

REMINDERS:

...Girl Scout Sunday will be observed at JCCC this Sunday, March 15. If you are or ever have been a Girl Scout, we encourage you to wear your uniform and be recognized as part of this service.

...JCCC Youth will sponsor a lunch Sunday, March 22, following worship. [This lunch was originally planned for March 15th and has been postponed a week.] **Lasagna, salad, bread and desserts will be provided by the youth and their sponsors and families. Please plan to join us for lunch and make a donation to our summer mission trips. There will be a presentation during lunch to give info about our mission plans for the summer. You don’t have to be a youth to go on these trips, so if you think you might be interested in doing some mission work this summer, stay for the lunch to find out more.**