

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Marks of Jesus: Christ's People are Scarred People

November 1, 2015

Sermon Text: Galatians 6:17

Scripture Reading: Acts 20:18-31

Introduction-

From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. (Galatians 6:17)

This is a remarkable statement by the Apostle Paul and worth our serious consideration this morning. It leads us to this important principle:

Every true Christian bears the marks of Jesus in some form. These marks Paul speaks of here are not character qualities. They are scars. Christians are scarred people. Not scared, but scarred.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then

the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. (John 20:20)

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." (John 20:27)

This past week we published a blog post at ACFJ in which we said that a "false happy" is very typical among Christians and is even taught and promoted in many if not most churches. A false happy is the notion that Christians must be happy all the time, and if they aren't, then they need to adjust their attitude and they may well even be sinning. Churches and church leaders work very hard at creating and maintaining this "happy" atmosphere, with the result that a person who is NOT happy, will be made to believe that something is wrong with them. That their faith is lacking. That perhaps they don't know Christ. Here are some of the comments we received:

We were told in my former church that no one will be attracted to an unhappy Christian. We were told to always present ourselves so people would say, "I want what she's got." That never made much sense to me, since that's not my experience in salvation, looking at others and saying, "Wow, I want what so-and-so's got." (That was the same remark made when the pastor had his son ordained as another pastor – a young pastor – in the church. The pastor remarked, "We should give him and his wife a good experience so he'll end up running a church of his own and those congregants will say, 'Send us more like those!'" Really odd statement, actually.) Thinking back now, though, I can understand why the pastor's wife always seemed so..... plastered smiley face. I once asked her how she was always so cheerful. She smiled and said something like, "Vitamin E."

This is so true. I have visited many churches here, and never felt like I fit in. I am so miserable and all these people are smiling like they don't have a care in the world. They also don't ask me any questions and seem like they only want people like themselves in their circle of friends. Aren't they curious about a visitor? I was just looking for a 'family' to belong to in my desperation—isn't the Church supposed to be a family, or a hospital for wounded saints? Acts 2: 42-47

describes the fellowship of believers in the New Testament Church—Lord, bring us there again.....as a light in this dark world.....and for Your glory!

I couldn't stop crying when I read this. It has applied to my whole life—I can remember as a child that if my sister and I cried we were threatened with a beating. By the time I was in high school I had published poems—but no one ever picked up on the fact that they were always about hiding behind masks and trying to find a refuge in the Lord. My counselor recently told me that my husband whistling near someone who was crying was a strong way to say, "Change your attitude now!"—and those were the times that he didn't say outright, the Bible commands you to rejoice in the Lord. Eventually what happened to me was that every time I went to church and heard music I started crying uncontrollably. And my younger daughter stepped up the plate then and said that my unhappiness was an abomination to the Lord. I am so so glad that you are saying it is ok to cry!

Excellent point. This is very true. Not only that but some abusive men can come from these kinds of families. Where everyone puts on a fake christian facade and never talk about anything negative...just pretend we are all happy and always 'be sweet'. So

when a family member (male) starts showing signs of wickedness as an adult, they all ignore it and pretend it isn't so. They gloss over the glaring evidence so they can protect the fake happy environment in their family, which is believe is another act of evil in itself. Then when these kinds of abusive men marry, after coming from these kinds of fake happy families, they abuse their wives emotionally or physically if they are 'real' in anyway by expressing any righteous anger (in a respectful way), or any sadness, or any irritability, or any complaints as a human is prone to...basically anything that deviates from the 'be sweet' mantra and the 'fake happy facade'.

I read that on the walls of the Warren Jeffs compound buildings, was often painted the sentence 'be sweet' and at the entrance to homes. I realised just how abusive it is to enforce a perpetually happy, smiley, deny reality, always be positive attitude and demeanour onto someone. It is denying their very existence as a person in a way.

You begin to see it?

We are never told in God's Word that following Christ will mean happy, happy, happy. What we are told is precisely what Paul says here – *a Christian is a scarred person. A true Christian wears the scars of Jesus.*

Some of these scars are literal scars. Paul had this kind, as did Christ Himself:

Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one--I am talking like a madman--with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

Now think this through very, very carefully. Was Paul a real Christian? Yes! Was Peter? Yes! (Peter was later crucified upside down most likely). And our Lord was – a Christian!! What were all of them like? They were *scarred*. Scarred by the hateful

and murderous attacks of the world, *especially the world that paraded as the people of God, the "church."*

What is happening throughout the world today to real Christians? Many of them are scarred. Beaten. Burned by acid. Blinded. This is how it has always been:

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated-- of whom the world was not worthy-- wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though commended through their faith,

did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:32-40)

Christian people are scarred people. They bear the marks of Jesus.

Some of these marks are not *visible*. Many bear the marks of being traumatized by their persecutors. Mental and emotional and spiritual scars.

Such people are rejected in a false happy "Christian" environment. They are looked down upon and guilty and criticized. They are told that there is something wrong with THEM, that they are being a bad witness for the Lord, that they are a kind of infection in the church...so they had better put on that smile.

But can you see that all of this is a rank, dishonest denial of the reality and existence of evil, and of the true experience of the Christian in this fallen world? "Come on, Jesus. No need to sweat all that blood and be so anxious."

A false happy, let's say it once more, is a dishonest denial of the presence of evil. It enables the wicked to come in among us and never be called to account. Because, you see, to maintain

a false happy community, we cannot admit to the existence of evil, especially in the church. It's an unpleasant subject.

Listen to Barbara Roberts comment on this:

"If you don't feel it, fake it until it becomes real."

That idea comes from Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the cult "Christian Science". It wormed its way into Pentecostal circles decades ago and now there are many people sitting in pews who think it is good Christian doctrine. It's allied to the Word Of Faith heresy.

Many of the words of Scripture then are really rejected today:

John 15:19-21 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (20) Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (21) But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.

Think about this. How many books have you read, how many sermons have you perhaps listened to, that say that the Christian's goal is to become so liked by the world that people will believe the gospel? All of this is a rejection of *genuine Christianity and genuine followers of Jesus*.

More on these scars

Think now very carefully about this. What kind of a "Christian" impresses you the most? What kind of a "Christian" do you want to be like? And so you begin to think, perhaps, of famous Christians back in history. Calvin, Luther, Augustine, Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, (and many women too, whose names most of us don't know). Think about them. What was their experience? They were *scarred*. They were persecuted. And I think that without doubt quite a lot of their scarring was not in their flesh, but in their mind and heart. As a result, these were not "false happy" people.

2 Corinthians 11:32-33 At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, (33) but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

Edwards was fired from his pulpit and sent out into the wilderness as a

missionary to the Indians. Calvin and Luther had prices on their heads. Whitefield was persecuted by his own church, the church of England. Now let me ask you to think about this question:

Do you think that these people, because we are so familiar with them as great saints in church history, somehow did not bear the scars of this suffering in their minds and hearts? And what of our Lord? Is it possible that even the Son of God bore not only physical scars from being hated and killed, but “soul-scars” too?

Isaiah 53:3-4 He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (4) Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

Do you understand what Isaiah is saying here? He is saying that the Son of God was SO acquainted with grief, and with being despised, that His very title could be “Man of Sorrows.” And then:

The conclusion of “the church” of His day was that GOD was displeased

with Him! They said that He was smitten by God, and that His affliction and suffering were proof that He was not acceptable to God.

And I say this then with all confidence, that this is as true today as it was then. The church, many professing Christians, conclude that a scarred Christian is despised and rejected by the Lord. But the truth is, that a scarred Christian is a genuine Christian, honored by the Lord.

2 Corinthians 12:7-11 So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. (8) Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. (9) But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (11) I have been a fool! You forced me to it, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I was not at all inferior to

these super-apostles, even though I am nothing.

What did the OT prophets look like?

Jeremiah 18:18-23 Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words." (19) Hear me, O LORD, and listen to the voice of my adversaries. (20) Should good be repaid with evil? Yet they have dug a pit for my life. Remember how I stood before you to speak good for them, to turn away your wrath from them. (21) Therefore deliver up their children to famine; give them over to the power of the sword; let their wives become childless and widowed. May their men meet death by pestilence, their youths be struck down by the sword in battle. (22) May a cry be heard from their houses, when you bring the plunderer suddenly upon them! For they have dug a pit to take me and laid snares for my feet. (23) Yet you, O LORD, know all their plotting to kill me. Forgive not their iniquity, nor blot out their sin from your sight. Let them be overthrown before you; deal with them in the time of your anger.

Surely it is time for Christians today to radically adjust their thinking. Because they would have Jeremiah put on a smiley face, and give him a chorus to sing about "where this happy feeling comes from".

If YOU bear the scars of Jesus, then be assured, you are not being punished by Him. His marks are your marks, and you are His.