

GATHER "WITH ME"



***He who is not with me is against me,
and he who does not gather with me, scatters.
Luke 11:23***

The stress all through our Lord's teaching is that whatever we do as his followers is to be done always in union with him.

***I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me,
and I in him, bears much fruit,
for apart from Me you can do nothing.***

John 15:5

Don't go off on your own and try to do things apart from me.

Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. (Luke 24:49)

I will not leave you desolate, I will come to you. (John 14:18)

Lo, I am with you always. (Matthew 28:20)

And the reason this is stressed continuously through his teachings is because Jesus knows what we're made of and how prone we are to start out with him... and then in very subtle ways to swing off on tangents of our own, still pretending in our minds that we are there with him, and that what we are doing is in his name, but we know deep in our hearts, and he knows that we have left him behind long ago, even though we still pay lip service to his words.

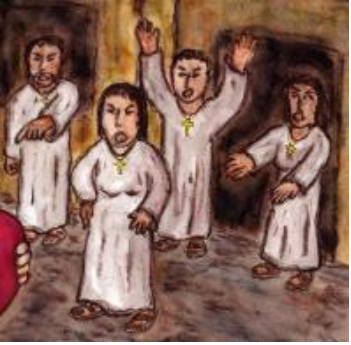
He who is not with me is against me.

There's no other way, and if you're not gathering "with me" then you're scattering.

But what does it mean to be with Jesus?

All we have to do is look back on our own lives. And if we have the sense, we probably could look at things we're doing in our lives right now to see the silly, evil, devastating things that we have done all the while claiming that we are with Jesus.

We're doing it in his name thinking we're on the right track.



Think of the wicked judgments that we have formed in our hearts against others, the bondage that we had brought people into, and the condemnation that we had heaped on their heads.... all in the name of being “with Jesus”.

During the inquisition, when people were burned at the stake for not holding to the right doctrine. Jews were buried alive if they were unwilling to confess Jesus as their Lord. Countless people were put on a torture rack and tortured, right out of their bodies to try to make them confess errors that they didn't even understand, much less never committed.

And among the people who were behind this evil thing were men who spent hours a day going through what they were convinced was prayer. And who were absolutely sure that they were in the will of God.

Now, how can this be that we and others can go off into such unmerciful, ungodly things and still think that we are with Jesus?

The answer is that we have to be able to distinguish very carefully between two kinds of being with Jesus.

There is the “with” of the ***insider syndrome***.

And there is the “with” of the heart.

The “with” of the Insider Syndrome

Now the false “with” of the ***insider disease*** is when I think that I have an exclusive relationship with Jesus, something very unique and special.

When I think that I'm in the inside circle, it's just me and a few other heavies and Jesus.

And that we experience a relationship with the Lord which others who are less enlightened, less versed in scripture, less humble than we are, less spiritual can't possibly enjoy.



The time Jesus came into the region of Tyre and Sidon and this Canaanite woman came out and cried at the top of her lungs, “*Lord, thou son of David, have mercy on me*”. She's not even a Jew, she's a Gentile, but she calls him the son of David. “*My daughter is grievously tormented with a devil*”. And Jesus says nothing. And then his disciples come up to him and they beg him, notice what they beg him to do; do they beg him “*Lord, please heal this woman's daughter*” or “*do something for this poor tormented Gentile lady, Help her Lord*”? No, they begged him, “*Lord, send her away, For she crieth after us*.” *After all, Lord. We're the insiders and she's an outsider, and she's annoying us. Send her off*”. At that point, the disciples obviously were convinced that they were insiders, but they were so far away, so wrong, so unmerciful.

The insider was this Canaanite woman. She was actually the insider because she came to him in a way that the disciples had yet to learn (and eventually did learn). She came to him with her need from her heart.

Or the time James and John (who were part of the inside 3) come up to Jesus and say, *“Lord, we want you to do for us whatever we ask”*. And he says, *“well, what do you want”*, *“Lord, Grant, that we may sit one on your right and the other on your left, in your glory. We want to be with you, Lord. We love to be with you”*.

But they want to be with him as insiders.

Then one day they're going down through Samaria toward Jerusalem and they get to a village where the villagers refuse to receive Jesus and his disciples because they're heading to Jerusalem and they're Jews. Again, our two friends, James and John, say, (and we're just like them) *“Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven and consume them”*? *“You know they're trying to treat us as outsiders, let's show who the outsiders really are, Lord”*!

Or the time little children were brought to them so that Jesus would touch them... and again, here come the brave inside disciples rebuking those bringing them, *“get out of here, Jesus doesn't have time for that”*. But Jesus, when he saw it was much displeased, very displeased. And he said, *“let the little ones come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of heaven”*.

Now whenever we are with Jesus with our hearts, thinking of ourselves, very often secretly, as insiders, we are doing the same thing those disciples are doing.

We're driving people away.

We're misleading them.

We're making it very, very difficult for people to find their way to that mercy, which is found nowhere else but in Jesus.

***He who is not with me is against me.
And he that gathereth not with me, scatters.***

The “with” of the Heart

“And to be with me what you have to do is leave behind your insider syndrome, your big ego, your spiritual rightness, all your knowledge...and come to me with your bare-naked heart, and with your desperate need. If you would only admit it, then you're with me. And when you are with me with your heart in that way, then you will be a door through which people can find their way to me instead of the wall you've so often been, barring them from my presence.



“With your heart... in your heart... draw nearer and be with me first of all at my cross”.

What was it that drew that Canaanite woman? It was nothing but the aroma of Calvary, the aroma of the cross, which her mind surely didn't fully understand. But she sensed that here was healing, here was deliverance, here was help. The cross is what drew her. And it was the cross that drew those bringing the little ones. And it was the cross that drew the blind, and the lame, and the poor, and the maim, the sinners, and the troubled, and the demon possessed, and all the others too. It was the cross that drew them to him.

And finally the disciples too... found their way to the cross.

Notice the difference between Peter before Calvary and after Calvary. Before Calvary, we see Peter also so often full of this insider thing, "*Lord though all should forsake thee, yet will not I. I'm with you, Lord*". But after Calvary, we see that love which was surely there underneath all that bluster. We see that love, which is now the only thing left, and the bluster is gone, the pride is gone, the self-righteousness is gone and we see Peter with nothing but that love.

***Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?
Lord, you know I love you.
Feed my sheep.***



Now it's a love that has been brought through the blood of the Cross, tried in the fire, cleansed by that fire of suffering, down into the depth of Calvary and brought back up again alive. And that was the thing, that love of Calvary that really brought Peter to life and enabled him to come to Jesus and be close to him in a way that he never knew before.

And it's at that point when we find ourselves truly at the foot of the Cross that we experience a fellowship with Jesus that can be known nowhere else. And this does not happen just at the beginning of your walk with Jesus, it goes on and on and on. And the minute you think you've come to the place where you don't need to be at Calvary anymore, you're in trouble.

You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was destined from before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake, through him you have confidence in God who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

I Peter 1:18-21

Our Lord is telling us... draw *with me*, come *with me*, be nearer in your heart.

Be with me, through the mercy of God

There's absolutely no way that we can understand who Jesus is, or have any sense of what he's about, what he's doing until we open our hearts to God's mercy. And we begin to appreciate what that is.

When the Pharisees, who know their scriptures and know all about God, begin to condemn Jesus for having dinner with a rich tax collector, a sinner. And Jesus' answer is "*go and learn what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice*"...he's quoting Hosea 6:6. In Chapter 12 of Matthew we see the same thing these guys come again. Now they catch Jesus red hot, he's broken the commandment of the Sabbath. He's broken the Sabbath. He and his disciples are going through the grain fields, plucking the grain. "*Now we know you've broken scripture. Now you've done it*". And Jesus's answer to these guys "*if you had learned, if you had known what this means. I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless*".

And in these answers to the Pharisees, Jesus is surely talking to us.

You want to know who I am?

You want to get some sense of what I'm doing?

You want to be part of what I am?

Go and learn...

I will have mercy, not sacrifice.



Take into your heart Psalm 117, the shortest Psalm. Memorize it.

Oh praise the Lord, all ye nations praise him, all ye people for his merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the Lord Endureth forever.

Praise ye the Lord.

When we open our hearts to that merciful kindness, which is great toward us, we will begin to understand what his truth is. And the mercy and the truth are always together, always. And when we appreciate his mercy, then we begin to see Jesus, to know him, and to love him, and to follow him, and we won't be so busy picking at everything else. We'll be just so busy praising and thanking him and doing his merciful will that our lives will be fulfilled. We won't have to try to fulfill ourselves in picking out all the specs from our brothers' eyes.

Be with Me through the Holy Spirit

Finally, Jesus is saying to us also in our hearts, be with me, through the Holy Spirit.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered, and they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

When had they been with Jesus five years ago, two months ago last week? That may all be true, but the significant thing was that these men were *with Jesus* right up to that moment.

They were *with Jesus* as they stood before the council.

They were *with Jesus* when they were locked up in jail.

They were *with Jesus* all the time through the Holy Spirit.

When they're released, they go back to their brothers and sisters and together they all pray.

And now, Lord, look upon their threats, and grant to thy servants to speak thy word with all boldness, while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus.” And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:29-31

Now the Spirit that was in that place, that shook those walls, and that filled those Saints ...is among us now. And the one desire of the Spirit is that we should be able to draw near to Jesus with our hearts.

***He that is not with me is against me.
And he that gathered not with me scattereth***

It's probably true that there's more gathering going on, ostensibly, in the name of the Lord on the earth at this moment than at any time since the Apostolic days. All kinds of gathering is taking place. People are being gathered into this and into that.

Very soon God himself will make it clear, it is up to him to determine this, not us,

How much of this gathering was gathering?

How much of it was scattering?

How much of it was life?

How much was death?

How much was building up and edifying the body?

How much was actually tearing down and destroying and splitting and dividing the body?



And when God has finished making that clear, we can be sure that the only work that will remain, and the only fruit that will last, will be that which was performed by those who were with their hearts truly with Jesus.

May God show us areas of our lives we are with him “with insider syndrome”, may he make that clear to us and may he help us to turn around and get near him “with our hearts”. If it's in any way true that we, with our mouths or with our busyness, are with Jesus as insiders and actually forming walls that keep the struggling, mercy hungry people away from him...if in any way that's true, may the Lord show us, so that we may turn around and come through that wide open door into those wide open arms of him, who is the mercy of God.

Both for us And for others.

***Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.***

Take my yoke upon you.

Get under my cross,

Get into the mercy of God which is incarnate in me.

Enter into my Spirit, which is the Spirit of self-emptying.

***Learn from me for I am meek and lowly of heart
and you'll find rest for your souls.***

For my yoke is not legalism, but easy.

And my burden is not self-conscious commitment, but light.



Let's pray. We ask Lord God that you help us to answer the call of your Spirit and in whatever way is necessary for each of us to leave whatever place that may be away from Jesus and away from his cross and draw near to him, Lord God, with our hearts, and with our knee, Lord God, this day. We ask it in his name. Amen.

Message and prayer REB 1978

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HAS BEGUN HIS REIGN