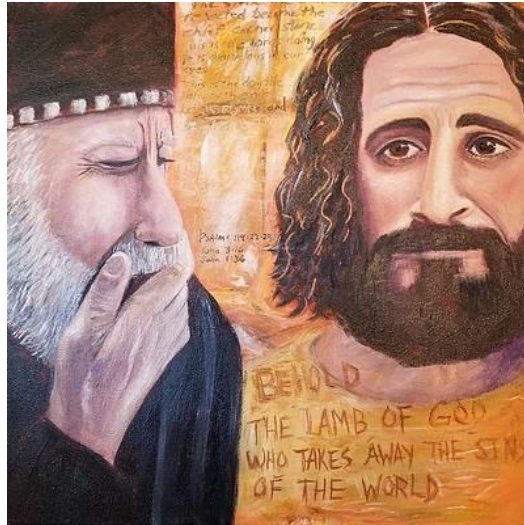


BORING???



Let's face it

Christianity?

Most people today find Christianity boring,

Most teenagers find Christianity boring.

Church?

Who wants to go to church?

It's boring.

The Bible?

"Are you kidding?"

You actually read the Bible?

What's the matter, are you depressed?"

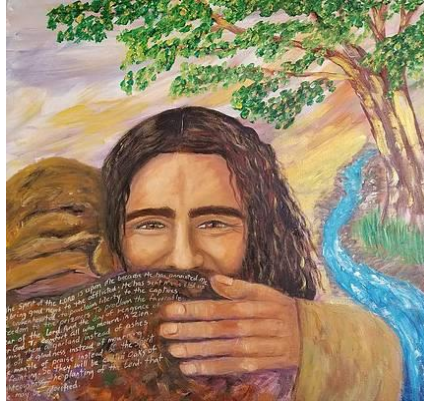
There are two reasons why people find Christianity boring.

First, they don't see anything happening like what happened in Jesus' day, or in those early days, or today...

like people getting healed,

lives dramatically changed.

In Jesus' day, it was exciting! Wonderful things were going on!



Oh, you can find churches today where the music at least has a beat, but that gets boring too, after a while.

The second reason why people find Christianity boring is because...

It's too cheap, too easy.

It doesn't offer much and

It sure doesn't demand much.

“Come to church. Sit through a service and we'll punch your card. And if you have all the numbers punched out when you die, you'll go to heaven.”

Compare that with the way Jesus did things, the way he still does things.

First of all, Jesus was not boring.

The religious professionals of Jesus' day were as boring as they are today.

But Jesus was not a professional.

He was an ordinary man who manifested the power of God.

People came because he could heal.

They came to hear words that burned like fire.



They came because they saw everybody else flocking to the temple, or the seaside, or wherever he happened to be.

And they didn't want to miss anything.

But notice this: Jesus never made it easy.

Whenever Jesus had a big crowd eating out of his hand, he did what no modern evangelist would dream of doing.

Instead of building on the momentum of these growing numbers, and harnessing this crowd into a movement...

Jesus would sift the crowd down to a handful.

He would deliberately say things that would turn them off, offend them, frighten them, cause them to walk away.

“Now great multitudes accompanied him; and he turned and said to them, ‘If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.’ ”

Luke 14:25-27

Talk about pouring ice water on a hot fire!

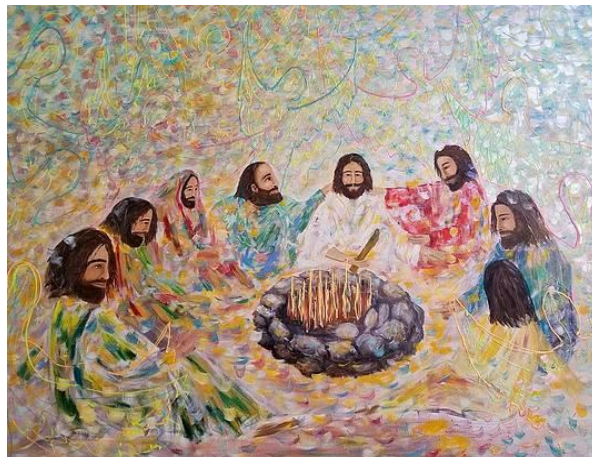
You can just see these people shaking their heads as they walk away. *“This guy is just too much!”*

Does Jesus cry out to them? *“Wait a minute! I’m sorry. I take it all back! Don’t run away. Come on back! Bring me your prayer requests. I want to prosper you! I want to bless you!”*

No. He lets them go.

Because Jesus isn't looking for crowds....

.... he's looking for disciples.



As far as Jesus is concerned, one disciple is worth more than a thousand admirers.

Admirers are fine if all you want is to fill your church building, put them on your mailing list, shake them down for a little money.

But if you want people who are of use to the redemptive purpose of God....

.... you want disciples.

That's what Jesus was looking for.

Jesus spent three and a half years preaching, teaching, and healing from one end of Israel to the other, speaking to crowds that often numbered in the thousands.

What did he end up with?

A handful:

- 12 apostles, one of which was a phony

- and roughly another 110 men and women who were serious about following him.

Was Jesus a success?

By today's standards, he was a dismal failure.

But by the standards of God's kingdom, he was a roaring success.

This handful of 120 disciples was all that was needed ...

....to spread fire on this earth.



Disciples.

So what is a disciple?

“Well, it’s a person who belongs to a church and helps other people.”

- No, that’s an admirer.

“Well, then how about a person who knows the Bible and prays each day?”

- That’s an admirer.

“Then a disciple is a person who speaks in tongues and heals the sick.”

- That’s an admirer.

Let’s narrow it down to Jesus’ definition of a disciple:

All these people are coming to him.

They want to get close to him. They want to learn his secret. They want to be blessed.

So what does he do?

He says, *“You see this door? I’m standing inside this door. If you want to get close to me and get to know me and receive what I have to offer you, you have to come through this door. And the only ones who can get through this door are those who leave everything else behind.”*

“...whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Luke 14:33

Does that mean I’m supposed to hate my wife, hate my husband, hate my kids, get rid of my house, cars, bank account?

He’s saying;

If you haven’t come to the place where you...

- love me more than any of these,
- love me to the point where all other loves compare as hatred,
- love me to the point where you hate anything that tries to get between you and me....

If you haven’t come to that place, you’re wasting your time trying to follow me.

“He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son and daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Matthew 10:37-39

A disciple is:

A person who is committed to Jesus to the point where Jesus is first in their life.

A person who demonstrates this in the way they live, relate to people, relate to the Body of Christ, handle their money, use their time.

Now if you're saying, *"This is too much! Who can live like that?"*

The answer is, *"You haven't even begun to live until you do live like that!"*

This Jesus that we tack onto our lives on Christmas, Easter and some Sundays....

This Jesus who comes to our rescue when we're in a jam, and then is conveniently set aside until the next crisis....will fade from our lives completely as he has faded from the lives of so many others if he doesn't come first.

Jesus never allows himself to be used as our heavenly butler who comes when we call, obeys our commands, and leaves when we dismiss him, *"You can go now, James."*

Jesus, the Messiah can only be known, experienced, loved, enjoyed...

... when we understand that he comes first.... ahead of everything, everybody...

- every plan,
- every hope,
- every dream.

To be a disciple of Jesus is to renounce everything in favor of Jesus....

- **everything we have,**
- **everything we are.**



You're still living in the same house. You're still married to that man - that woman. The kids are still your kids. You're still at the same job. But...

None of these has a claim on you like Jesus.

None of these fulfills you like Jesus.

And if Jesus should lead you on a road that causes conflict with these other things, you won't hesitate a minute, you will know what you have to do.

Most Christians in North America find Christianity boring.

That's why they are so lax about it all.

It's boring. It's dull. What good is it doing?

The reason they find Christianity boring is that...

They really don't know what it is.

They haven't entered it.

They are standing on the front porch and they think they're in the house.

They haven't a clue what's inside that door.

They are like the multitudes that came to watch, and listen, and be healed.

But the minute Jesus told them what they had to do to come through the door, they took off like a shot.

Churchianity is boring.

Lutheranism, Catholicism, Pentecostalism, Calvinism and all the rest Boring!

Following Jesus is life.



It's the only life that makes sense in this crazy world.

It's the only way to a living relationship with God.

But following Jesus means following him on his terms.

And these are his terms:

“He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son and daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Matthew 10:37-39

Those are his terms.

Follow Jesus on those terms and you won't be bored.

You will experience things that will amaze you.



And you will never miss what you left behind.

Message: Richard E. Bieber 2004 Nova Scotia

Featured Art: Courtesy of Jenny Allio at jennyallio.com

Prayer- Lord bring us to the place where we love you so much, seek you so diligently, where we place you above everything, everything Lord. Instead of boredom, may we find such an intensity of life that we will never be bored. May our closeness to you, our love for you, our commitment to you... lead to such life, such healing, pouring into us and out of us, that instead of finding you boring...others will find you real...authentic...amazing and sparks of life are ignited in them. Amen.

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