

Introduction

- “Everyone wants to be popular!” according to the teachings and concepts of Mr. Dale Carnegie, a famous teacher and writer on self-improvement and corporate training during early 20th century.
 - “Everyone wants to be popular!” “Not me,” you say. Yes, even you. Oh, maybe you don’t want to become a super star and have your name on billboards or on magazine covers. But even still, you do want to be popular.
1. Perhaps we can use another word, “be recognized.” In our marriage, we want to be recognized by our spouse. If we have children and grand-children, we want to be recognized by them. And beyond that, we have a certain circle of friends that we want to fit in with and be popular among. That’s us, human beings, and there is nothing wrong with it.
 2. Being popular isn’t a bad thing; looking forward to be recognized is ok. But we must always watch very carefully whom we are trying to be recognized with, and what we are doing to become popular. As Christians, I think we need to seek first to be recognized with the Lord. We need to make sure what we are doing is what God wants us to do, and be the person who God wants us to be. Don’t try to please everyone, try to live a life to honor the name of the Lord.

I. The Synagogue

1. The Holy Gospel of Luke chapter 4 tells us that Jesus was filled with the power of Holy Spirit, and He traveled to all the surrounding areas of Galilee to preach the Gospel, and thus He became famous.
2. Verse 16, “**And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read.**” Here the Bible says that it was Jesus’ custom to worship on Sabbath Day. Remember last time we talked about Jesus’ baptism? He didn’t have to be baptized because He was sinless, and yet He did it to show how important the baptism was. Now it’s the same; Jesus didn’t have to worship in a synagogue, but He went to worship “**as was His custom**” to show how important worship service is. Even Jesus wouldn’t miss the worship service, shouldn’t we try our every best each Sunday?
3. There were hundreds of synagogues in Jesus’ time; Jerusalem alone had over 400 synagogues. According to Biblical scholars’ studies, 10 faithful men could support a synagogue; therefore some of the larger cities could have many more synagogues for prayers’ meeting and studying God’s words. Prayers’ meetings

usually were on Mondays and Thursdays in the evening, while Sabbath days were pretty much whole day service.

4. During the service, a man would stand up and read a text, and then explained the text. They took turns to read different Scriptures and then explained the Word...some of the records shows that there were 7 readings and 7 sermons in a Sabbath day service!
5. May you would say, “the sermons must be short!” Not really. Remember I just said that the service pretty much last for whole day? That’s what they do in a Sabbath day; they completely rested from their labor, and the whole day was for the Lord. To reflect the Word of God, and to repent from what they had sinned against God. It didn’t happen just once or twice a year; it’s every Sabbath day, every single week. Now you know what it means to “**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Exodus 20: 8)**”
6. Some of my Seventh Days Adventist friends argued with me that we should keep the Holy Sabbath, which is Saturday. I asked them how they kept the Sabbath, and then I told them how Jesus and the Jews kept the Sabbath 2000 years ago. I said, “If you really want to keep the holy Sabbath literally, that’s what you should do, make it holy whole day!” Laws couldn’t save us, only the life in the Word of God can save us through the blood of Jesus.
7. To Lutherans and some other churches who are closer to our tradition, we need to know that God literally wants us to rest from our daily labors when worshiping Him. Dedicate your worship day to the Lord, save it for reflecting His Word, and share your life and faith with your family members. “**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (Exodus 20: 8)**”

II. The Prophecy

1. Luke 4: 18, “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.**” This passage is taken from Isaiah 61: 1-2. Now this was certainly not the whole text that Jesus taught from that day. But Luke records here the highlights, or maybe the portion of the text Jesus focused on the most.
2. The six statements in this passage summarized Jesus’ earthly ministry and what He came to do. Remember a few weeks ago we talked about John the Baptist sent his disciples to question Jesus’ Messianic identity? “**Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another? (Luke 7: 20)**” And Jesus pretty much showed and taught them what He did to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 61: 1-2, the passage we just read.
3. In Hebrew language, which was also what Jesus read on that day, Messiah means “the anointed One.” So when Jesus read the first 2 statements in this passage, He

actually was giving the reference to the Messiah...and He concluded, “**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**” What? Who is the anointed one? Just look at what Jesus had done in Luke chapter 4 alone...Jesus was the anointed one, He is the Messiah.

4. There is nothing here of restoring the glory of Israel, nothing about conquering the enemies or giving judgments to the nations. It’s about preaching and caring ministries to everyone, especially to the poor, to the needy, and to the oppressed. That’s what Jesus did; He is the Messiah. It’s very clear, but the Jews didn’t get it.
5. Verse 22, “**And all spoke well of Him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from His mouth.**” They didn’t get it, but they liked what Jesus preached. Have you ever wonder why? I think people tend to hear what they want to hear. I am sure that you’ve seen some of the TV preachers how to preach to the audients. They talk about how to be successful on wining the crowd, how to be popular, how to be rich, how to make God answer your prayers...most of the teachings are about how good you are and how well you will be; everything is about YOU! Then, how about repentance and forgiveness? How about carrying the cross daily and follow Jesus? How about suffering and persecution because of the Gospel?
6. I don’t want to point out the exact name. In one occasion, Larry King invited the preacher to his program. That preacher clearly said that he would never preach about cross, repentance, forgiveness or hell. He said that he wanted to give his members “positive messages;” he wouldn’t say anything to offend his audients. And he said it was his calling from God to do so.
7. If he was right, then Jesus must be wrong!

III. The Teachings

1. The first response of the audients who listened to Jesus was very positive, because they heard what they wanted to hear. Isn’t this Joseph, the carpenter’s son? How and where did He get this wisdom to preach! Yes, Jesus gained His popularity in the service, but He didn’t stop there! Popularity wasn’t something Jesus was focus on; He wanted the audients to know the Truth, the real meaning of the Word. So Jesus gave 3 illustrations to the audients:
2. Firstly, “**Physician, heal yourself.**” In Jesus’ time physicians wasn’t always efficient; in many cases they had to “practice medicine” so that they could conclude the medications actually worked or not on the same sickness. Let’s say that you are a physician and you catch a cold, people would challenge you: if you are so good on the medicine, why don’t you heal yourself first so that we can trust in your healing ability? It’s the same doubt when applying to Jesus; it referred to the cross. Remember one of the robbers said to Him on cross, “**Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us! (Luke 23: 9)**” It’s the same concept. Can you really save lives? If you can, save yourself and us, now!

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3. Secondly, Jesus said, **“There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah...and Elijah was sent...only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”** In another word, don't think that you are a chosen people of God so that it's ok to do whatever you want, just like the ancient Israelites did. They refused to listen to Elijah; they were attracted by thus and worshiped other gods and goddesses. God can choose another group of people to carry His blessings and to fulfill His missions. You need to know Him through the Word, and apply the Word into your daily lives.
- ✓ I think this lesson also speaks to us, Christians. Don't think we are covered with the blood of the lamb so we have to direct ticket to heaven; we can do whatever we want and live the life we want. NO, we need to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we pray “Thy Will” be done, not “My Will” be done. We need to exam our focuses, and turn our eyes upon Jesus each day.
4. Thirdly, Jesus said, **“And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”** You see? Elijah turned to the foreigners and blessed them because Israelites wouldn't listen; Elisha turned to the foreigner and healed Naaman because he was the only one who actually obeyed the words of prophet. Maybe Naaman's faith was a little bid shaky, but he DID what Elisha had told him to do. What about the Israelites? They may know the Word, the Truth, the Will of God, but they didn't DO it. Faith without deeds is empty faith.
5. This message isn't just for the Jews in Jesus' time. It's for us here. It's not welcomed by the Jews so Jesus was rejected. Are we willing to embrace these teachings from Jesus today?

Conclusion

1. We've talked many this morning, let me give you a final reminder about this message:
 - a. Remember the day your worship God is the day you suppose to rest, to reflect the Word, and to share your faith and time with you family.
 - b. Don't just listen to what you like to listen, listen to the whole Truth.
 - c. Have faith on the Great Physician, trust and obey what He said. Live for Him, be thankful on what you have, and give while you still can.