

B. Miller 60th Sermon.

Place: South Whitley Church of the Brethren.

Time: Sunday Morning Service, Aug. 20, 1944.

"WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?"

Text: Acts 11:26

Intro:

The frequent use of words often results in little thought about their content and meaning. In the text, we have these words: "And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

My friends, we've heard that word "Christian" used over and over again all our lives; we've read it in print; a common expression to describe the ideal is to say: "They have a Christian home," or "he is a Christian gentleman," or "she is a Christian lady." Even some of our friends in other denominations have used the word, "Christian" as a title for their particular faith and denomination.

What does Christian mean? I looked the word up in the dictionary and this is what Webster said: "A Christian is one who believes, or professes, or is assumed to believe in Jesus Christ--a decent or respectable person."

This is true, but is rather abstract. You could perhaps name other things that are involved in being a christian, but I choose to mention but three things:

Body of Sermon:

1. First, a Christian is a follower.

While our Lord was here on earth in His earthly ministry, He constantly invited men everywhere to follow Him. As He walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw Simon, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers.

And Jesus said: "Come ye after Me, and I'll make you to become fishers of men." And straightway they forsook their nets and followed Him. And when He had gone a little further thence, He saw James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in the ships, mending their nets. And straightway He called them; and they left all and went after Him.

And as Matthew, the despised tax collector of his day, sat at the receipt of custom, Jesus said to him also, "Come, follow Me."

Even so today, Jesus urges men to follow Him. To follow anyone means that we go in the same direction as the one whom we are following. If you were to tell me to follow you in my car, and you turned north, but I turned south, it is obvious that I am not following you.

I can remember as a small boy how we used to have heavy snows. And when my father would go to the barn or garage, I would follow him in the snow. His steps were much longer and I can recall yet how I would stretch my little frame out, so I could step in his tracks. Somehow, I felt secure there.

That's the Christian's task--to step in the footsteps of Jesus.

"Footprints of Jesus, That make the pathway glow;
We will follow the steps of Jesus, Wherever they go."
If they lead through the temple holy, Preaching the Word;
Or in homes of the poor & lowly, Serving the Lord, we follow.
If they lead o'er the cold, dark mountain, Seeking the sheep;
Or along by Siloam's fountain, Helping the weak, we follow."
And if following Him leads us up the rugged hill to Calvary, we still will be faithful and say, "We follow Thee, Lord."

It was the aged Polycarp who faced death because of his faith in Christ. The pagan world was going to burn him at the stake. Before he was placed in the leaping flames, however, he was told by his persecutors that if he would recant, renounce his faith in Christ, that they would set him free.

Listen to his words, as he replied to them: "For 70 long years I have served my Lord, and He hath done me nought but good; I cannot forsake Him now." And with those words on his lips, he was thrust into the flames and was consumed. Ah, they killed his body that day, but they never captured his spirit.

To be a Christian means we follow Jesus all the way.

2. Secondly, a Christian is a Disciple.

The word disciple means a "learner."

One of the fascinating things about following Jesus is that we never quite "arrive." There are always added lessons to learn, new experiences to enrich us. Jesus, our Ideal, is always just a little farther on, beckoning on.

Quote Phil. 3:13.

The Christian saint is not made so, overnight. A small child doesn't suddenly learn to walk. He learns to walk by walking. He stumbles and falls down, but he gets up and goes on again, The

Christian life is like that; we learn to walk its path, by walking. The more we learn, the better able are we to walk.

We learn of Jesus and about Him, through reading His recorded life; through the church and by studying His life as revealed in others' lives. The Christian is a learner, a constant seeker of new truth.

3. Third, a Christian is a Witness.

A witness is one who gives evidence that a thing is so.

If you're acquainted with court procedures, then you know that a person is called on the witness stand to tell what he knows about the case. Witnessing on the part of Christians, is essential to the spreading of the Gospel and of the Kingdom of Christ. We are to tell what we know.

Is it not a rebuff to us, and does it not thwart the progress of the church when we have neighbors who have never heard us recommend Jesus and His way of life to them?

I wonder if we as Brethren haven't been a little too conservative here! We've said, "We'll let our Nazarene, Baptist or Methodist friends do the witnessing."

Dwight L. Moody was one of the world's great evangelists. I am sure that among other things that made him a great success and a power for God, was his spirit of evangelism. He made it a rule to talk to someone about Christ each day.

What would happen to a church, a community, and eventually the world, if all Christians would become enthusiastic about telling the story?

Large corporations and companies know the value of human contact, so they send out salesman who come to our homes to advertise and sell their products. And you know how they try to make a sale!

I wish we could do that spiritually. Every Christian should be a salesman--one who advertises and "sells" Christianity to others. To be a secret disciple is to be no disciple at all.

If there would be anything that the early church was efficient in it was their zeal and accomplishment in witnessing and soul-saving.

Conclusion:

My friends, it's a wonderful privilege to be a Christian, It calls for the best that is in each of us. To be a Christian, then, means at least these three things:

1. Following after Jesus.
2. Learning of Jesus.
3. Witnessing for Jesus.

May the Lord help us to so order our lives, so as to be worthy of the name Christian.