

Not a Fan: Decision Time
October 15, 2017
Lynn Haven UMC

Introduction

“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14 NLT)

In this sermon series, Not a Fan, we’ve observed that Christ isn’t looking for fans, enthusiastic admirers, who only get close enough to enjoy the benefits He offers. Instead, Jesus is looking for completely, committed followers who are willing to do whatever it takes to be in a relationship with Him and remain faithful to Him. So we’ve looked at what separates true followers from mere fans: they know Jesus personally, not just facts about Him; they follow Christ more than rules; they make Jesus their One and only, not one of many. Now that we know, it’s decision time.

Digging Deeper

Being a follower of Jesus involves a....

DECISION

- We must not approach this decision lightly. Jesus doesn’t want us to say we will “try” to follow Him. When it suits us. When it is convenient. No, He will not allow us to keep dipping our feet in two ponds. We must (gasp!) commit. What scares you the most about making the declaration that you are more than just a fan? What are the ramifications of such a proclamation? Will it wreck your completely comfortable style of Christianity? Probably so. But to quote the great Jedi master Yoda, “There is no try. There is only do.”
- Certain decisions we make have no lasting impact on anything at all. What kind of shoes will you wear? What will you have for breakfast? But making the decision to give your life to Christ, well, that one should reach further than just your life. In what ways can your personal decision to accept Christ become not only evident to others, but also impactful to them in tangible ways?
- When did you make the decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ? How did your life change as a result?

DETERMINATION

- As we are reminded in our verse today from Matthew 7, the pathway to life eternal is not going to be easy to navigate. As a matter of fact, it will sometimes appear so treacherous that the majority will wander off and find an easier, less obstructed course. However, true followers see the wisdom in shirking the popular paths of the majority. What are some of the challenges you face while “sticking to your guns” as it relates to living out your faith? Have you ever been rejected, or not included in something as a result of your convictions? Were you able to recognize God moving in those situations? Remember while people may sometimes make you feel lonely, you will never be alone if you are truly His.
- Does it sometimes feel like our society is preaching a religious message of “just be nice and everything will be fine”? That may fly for a fan, but is nowhere near all it would take to be called a follower. Jesus tells us the truth about what it will cost to choose Him, and He doesn’t promise

it will always taste good going down. As a matter of fact, in John 16:33 He assures us that we will have many trials and sorrows. How you prepare your heart for adversity will determine whether you shatter or shine in difficult situations. Mature believers know they must build their faith muscles to become prepared to cope with those troubles. Has your faith ever been shaken by a tumultuous circumstance in your life? How did you keep your relationship with God intact during your darkest moments?

DESTINATION

- Have you ever tried to get into an exclusive venue or get an interview with a highly sought after employer? You might have discovered it is not always what you know, but sometimes who you know. In John 10, Jesus said of Himself, "I am the Gate. Those who come in through me will be saved." (John 10:9a NLT) Have you ever considered that the person of Jesus, not a physical location, could be the "heaven" we are spending our lives attempting to reach? What can you do to begin focusing on Him right here and now so you can know Him better? Are you ready to take a path that leads to Jesus? It's been said the vista points along the way are pretty spectacular!
- Read Philippians 3:12-14. The Christian life is a journey. The road to sanctification is one we will walk our whole lives and it will undoubtedly be filled with many detours. The smart traveler will be preparing every day to make sure they can go the distance. After all, when we hear we've reached our final destination, don't we all hope it's not too hot in the place we end up?! 😊 Does the process of becoming like Christ seem to be a daunting task given the longevity of its assignment? Think about these two things for a bit this week: do you allow room for grace to cover the plot twists that complicate your journey toward sanctification? Do you freely extend that grace to others when they stumble?

Conclusion

We have spent the past few weeks talking about what it means to truly follow Jesus. Now there is a time to talk, and a time to act. We can no longer straddle the proverbial fence. If you are going to be in this, be in it all the way. Prepare your hearts for the day when you must choose and say, "I'm not a fan of Jesus at all...because I'm a completely committed follower of Christ!" Can you say that unreservedly? It's decision time. Are you going to be a fan or follower?