

## **DEVOTION: John 1:19-23**

### **Devotion**

People came to John the Baptist to ask him "who are you?" Often, when we're asked who we are or what we're about, we began by reciting a list of our roles and accomplishments:

**Roles:** I am a teacher, doctor, student, pastor, etc.

**Accomplishments:** I am a graduate of \_\_\_\_\_, certified in \_\_\_\_\_, an expert in \_\_\_\_\_, a specialist in \_\_\_\_\_.

But, when John was asked who he was, John's first impulse was to confess freely what he was NOT: "I am NOT the Christ," "I am NOT Elijah," "I am NOT the prophet". He confessed these things freely, despite the prestige and power and expectations of those around him. Certainly, many of his followers would have wanted him to assert his spiritual authority and supremacy. But, John was crystal clear on who he was, so he faithfully and consistently pointed to Jesus as the one Christ, the one Savior, the one Lord.

### **"I am NOT the Christ"**

Take a moment to consider whether you live a life consistent with the powerlessness of John's confession: "I am NOT the Christ." Are you faithful to the reality that only Christ can save others, can heal broken hearts, can bring happiness to a person's life, can provide purpose and meaning and security to others, can deliver people from evil?

Or do you ever catch yourself trying to take responsibility for people's problems or feelings, trying to ensure someone is happy with their life, trying to protect someone from getting hurt, or trying to save people from the consequences of their mistakes or character flaws . . . In other words, trying to be someone's "Christ" through your own efforts and emotional exertions?

Some specific examples:

**Parents:** Do you feel like its your job to make them feel like their life sacrifices were worthwhile? make sure that they are happy? make sure that their marriage works?

**Siblings:** Do you feel like its your job to keep them from getting hurt in this fallen world? keep them from making their own mistakes and decisions?

**Family:** Do you feel like its your job to make sure that two members in your family get along? to forward communications between members who have chosen not to speak to one another?

**Friends:** Do you feel like its your job to always cheer them up? to clean up after other people's messes/addictions/issues? to give people the advice that they need to hear?

**Significant Others:** Do you feel like its your job to make up for everything they didn't get in life or from their family? to keep them satisfied and content? to make sure their feelings are never hurt?

You might be wondering, what's so wrong about these things? They seem harmless, helpful, even "Christian." But, in reality, oftentimes by doing the above things for people, we are actually crowding out God's ability to meet and confront a person directly with the fullness of His Presence and Glory. We all know that God has a habit of meeting people at the moment when they finally realize that they have no control over their lives, that there is no happiness for them in this world, that they can't afford to trust or rely on people anymore. When we try to keep people artificially happy through our human efforts, we are enabling them to avoid the sorrow in their soul that only Christ can fill. Put differently, if someone is **RELYING** on us to do any of the above things, then we have become an idol in their life, taking the place of where Christ should sit. The problem is God tends to meet people when their idols are removed or broken down, and that might require us getting out of the way.

All of the above are ways in which we can fail to live out the profound truth of John's confession, "I am NOT the Christ," "I am not your Savior," "I am powerless to control or guarantee your happiness," "I am helpless to deliver you from your mistakes and sin," "I can not fix your relationships," "I can not rescue you, I can not save you from everything you hate about this world." But, I know someone who can.

**Prayer:**

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. I am NOT the Christ, but you ARE, Lord Jesus, so I relinquish all of my saving/rescuing/care-taking exertions into your hands.