

# Identified in a Living Jesus

~ A Clash of Perspectives ~

With so much talk in Church about ‘purpose’ these days; might I ask: Do you indeed have a God-designed purpose? Do you know what it is? Will your life make a difference in the earth because of it? In eternity?

We do indeed have a God-designed purpose, but to clearly discern that purpose, we must first come to understand that the fruitfulness of our lives (their effect in the world & eternity) is not our responsibility, but the Lord’s.

Our part is to present ‘ourselves’ (not our works) to God as living sacrifices. And if we ever really accomplish this ‘presenting’ of ourselves to God - We will fulfill ALL the purpose He has destined for our lives. Rom 12:1-2

If we want to present ourselves to God in effective reality (beyond all the mystical, theological, doctrinal theory); we have to know ‘where’ that presenting literally takes place. *This is where God waits to receive our lives as living sacrifices.*

Meeting with God in this particular place entails choosing a path to get there. If we choose the wrong path, we end-up in the wrong place. So, it is important ‘how’ we choose. Ps 23:3

We chose our paths based on our given perspective of where they lead. We chose them on our expectation of ‘where’ we will arrive when we reach the end of that particular path. So to put it simply: The end of the path must be perceived from the beginning; else we will never start down any road.

## Perceptions

At times the same path to different people can appear to lead to different ends. One man considers that end valuable and takes the path. The other man considers that end of lesser value than the first and does not take the path. Why the difference? Well... It’s all about how we personally value whatever is presented to us.

The incarnate God walked among His own people as their Messiah, yet because of their perspectives of Him; most failed to recognize their time of visitation. Lk 19:43-46

This did not have anything to do with the manifest presence of Jesus or the miraculous phenomenon taking place right before people’s eyes. Instead, it had everything to do with the value of who the promised Messiah was to them personally; and their ‘perception’ of Him based on that value. Mt 16:13-15

The people of Jesus’ day were not looking for a humble, praying Savior who spent ALL of His time relationally identifying with the daily needs of the people. They were thinking in much more grandiose and empirical terms.

They were awaiting a Messiah King who would crush & shame their oppressors with the Rod of the Law...never someone who would meekly give Himself into the hands of heathen enemies; much less forgive them their sins. Ps 2:9; Lk 23:34

## The Ancient Duel

How we perceive Jesus relationally interacting with us and among us in our day is of paramount importance. For if we are indeed to 'present ourselves' to Him as living sacrifices, we must know where and how to do that. Rom 12:1-2; Ps 51:16-17; Mt 9:13

From the preaching of John the Baptist, all the way through Jesus ministry and the beginnings of the New Testament Church...two particular perceptions can be seen forming in men, relative to this relational interaction.

These are two views which were, (and are), entirely different perceptions of who Jesus is and what can be expected of Him. **And therein lays the problem...**

Beyond the love demonstrated at the cross, what can be expected of Jesus is not what gives us a clear relational view of Him at all. Instead, it is a present-tense and on-going daily understanding of what He expects of us; which is to say, *what* we are to present to Him...and *how* we are to do so. Pro 21:3; Hos 6:6; Is 58:1-12

In Jesus day, the people expected a slayer king; one who would kill their enemies and free them from oppression. Instead, they got a lamb and a cross. A lamb they not only rejected, but also demanded be crucified.

The Lamb however 'was' their King and the cross, their liberty. Jesus 'did' slay the true enemy. When this was all said and done, there were those who saw the Lamb as King, embracing Him as such. There were also those who never saw Him who He is...who continue waiting for a king more noble than this embarrassing Lamb.

The same two groups live on in the Church today. Where the Lamb is seen as King, there is always a hunger; a need to know & follow His Person as their living Righteousness. In the other group, there exists a conviction; the idea that the religious righteousness they think they possess themselves...should be followed by others.

In the past year, I have witnessed in many people an intense increase for a real experience of encounter with the Person of Jesus – *A longing hunger*. At the same time in others; I have witnessed an intense increase in the reactionary fear of this same spirit of hunger – *A clash with its very nature*.

In the Hungry, I have witnessed their hunger drive them (in some very incredible ways) toward finding, knowing, and embracing Jesus on a very real level of intimate relationship. He is their life. He is what they value above all else. Thus, in their minds and hearts, everything apart from embracing His Living Person is secondary; just a stepping stone toward Him being the Rock of their personal holiness.

In the Fearful, I have witnessed a profound insecurity; driving them to defend the traditional status-quo which defines them. That traditional paradigm is life to them. It is what they value above all else. Thus, in their minds and hearts, everything (including Jesus) exists to affirm, grow, and sustain the particular style of religious life which serves as the foundation of their personal holiness.

On the one hand, I have watched the first group desperately fight their way through layers of 'paper tigers' (pictures of Jesus, religiously painted) in search of their own Damascus Road encounter with Christ.

At the same time, I have watched many traditional churches shaken to their core by this invading hunger. People are leaving their pews, unsatisfied. And the resultant fear has caused these churches to react, by declaring, (in word & deed), that anything which questions or challenges their traditionally held 'copyright' of godliness is an 'enemy' of God which must be rejected, if not attacked and slain.

## Which Revival?

In this past year in particular, I have seen a remarkable intensification in each of these two distinct yet contrary spirits. They have clashed with fervor! (To say the least) And mostly, I have just been left to pick-up the pieces as best I can.

Each of these spirits is, by nature, a Spirit of Revival because faith is the substance of things expected. Thus, our personal perspectives have everything to do with what we are waiting to see 'revived.' Heb 11:1

One perspective is a hope to see Christ fully quickened within each member of His Body in a way that brings the Church unto the full-stature of Jesus. The other hope is for a Church empire quickened in its full-stature of power; shaming and correcting the world by bringing sin into judgment in the Name of Jesus.

These are distinctly different perceptions of revival. And being caught in the clash between them this past year; I felt like a man feeling his way along the wall of a smoke-filled room, looking for a way out. I needed to know what to do. So, longing for wisdom, I went looking for the answer in prayer – Not knowing I was about to have a Damascus Road experience myself.

## Getting Below the Smoke

I have learned from God that stewardship demands 'quality' before quantity. Thus, the less money; the less talent; the less time; and the less people I have available to me; the more wisdom I need from the Lord to maximize the qualitative impact of those resources.

It's never really about what you lack, but instead; what you do with what you have at hand. So this past August as I was praying for wisdom and thinking about what I lacked, and how best to use what I had; the Lord got me to thinking about the 300 people on my email list. Then somehow, that connected with a particular part of the story of Gideon and his 300 men.

And he divided the three hundred men [into] three companies,  
and he put a trumpet in every man's hand,  
with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers.

And he said unto them,  
**Look on me, and do likewise:**  
and, behold,  
when I come to the outside of the camp,  
it shall be [that],

**as I do, so shall ye do**

Judges 7:16-17

We all know this battle was not won by numbers, but instead, by only a few men; each flowing in a like-minded spirit with Gideon, trusting God over their own '*natural math*.'

That natural math was overcome when Gideon called their attention away from their natural circumstances, saying: "Look upon me and do likewise. Follow me and do exactly what you see me do." And when I read that, I knew the Lord Jesus was telling me to LOOK UPON Him and follow Him in just that same way. But how?

"Lord" I said. "Gideon's men received clear & understandable instructions. I need to be able to somehow look upon You in a way that enables me to see and do what You do."

Feeling led to fast as well as pray, I just 'looked on Jesus' in personal worship. I quit analyzing natural circumstances. I quit asking for answers. I just worshipped, telling Him I wouldn't stop until I could see Him in a way I could clearly follow.

After nearly six weeks of praying, the Lord in His timing spoke to me out three connected portions of scripture.

"My Beloved put His hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for Him. I rose up to open to my Beloved; and my hands dripped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh; upon the handles of the lock; I opened unto my Beloved, *but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone...*"

Song of Solomon 5:4-6

I saw the beauty of the love described in that verse, but my first thought was, “Why would one knock and then leave?”

Knowing that this was the Lord however, and not someone playing silly games; the obvious answer seemed to be that He didn’t want to come in to me, but instead, was calling me ‘out’ to Him... *calling me to find Him where He was and to follow Him where He was going.*

## The Price of this Love

That is exactly what the Shulamite lover did when she went out, *seeking Him*. She went out passionately hungry for Him; frantically searching for and calling for and longing for Him.

Like Blind Bartimaeus, the Shulamite became desperate. She would not be hushed. And just as with Bartimaeus, the Lover of her soul heard her cry; calling her to Himself... *where He was*. Mk 10:49

In the Church today, we might casually say that this was a woman, ‘On fire for Jesus.’ It’s a cliché used often enough. But, beyond the cliché, perhaps we should ask our selves a question: Do we have this burning passion for Jesus? Rev 2:1-5; Jer 29:11-13

If we look at the whole story in context, we’ll see: There were hindrances to finding her Lover. There were obstacles to getting THERE, where He was...

Driven by her shameless passion, the Shulamite stops to ask the watchmen of Jerusalem if they have seen this Lover she so hungers for. And the revelation of her passion brings about an unexpected & ironic response...

It was the watchmen’s duty to keep the citizens within the walls of Jerusalem safe. It was their duty to ‘protect the Shulamite’ as a Daughter of Jerusalem. Yet instead, *they maltreated her*. They stripped her veil from her and beat her as though she had done something terribly wrong! And then, turning away in disappointment, she encounters the Daughters of Jerusalem. But even her sisters, instead of consoling or helping her, mock her without pity.

“What is thy Beloved more than another?” They quip, offended that she would even ask them such a thing in the way she did. “Why would you charge us so?” (Call us to swear an oath unto you of our knowledge of Him – Call us into account of our knowledge of Him)

The fact of the matter was that ‘these’ Daughters of Jerusalem had no knowledge of the Shulamite’s Lover at all. They knew not who or where He was because they were occupied with other things. They had no hunger to find or know Him. And the Shulamite’s outspoken passion disturbed their quiet world of conformity. Jn 3:19

I meditated on these things in amazement. I read and re-read them; soaking in them with a desire to know why God had brought me to this book and these scriptures and would not let me leave.

Then, early one September morning, I came across Song 7:10-12 again. And a single word within those two scriptures apprehended my entire being:

Let us get up early to the vineyards...

THERE will I give thee My loves

I stared at the word. *THERE* in the vineyards...

*THERE* where Jesus walked...

*THERE* where He was to be found...

*There... There... **There***

The word drove me first to my knees and then to my face, *below the smoke*. And there, below the smoke...the Lord spoke.

“Michael, I wasn’t found **THERE** in the city  
because I had left

I wasn’t **THERE**

I had already passed through the gate to the regions outside the walls

*Outside was where I could be found*

**THERE** (outside) is where you will find Me”

I cannot say if I had a vision or whether the words simply took form as a picture in my mind, but I suddenly saw a door beneath the smoke; a door just a few feet in front of me.

As I stared at this door, I heard the Lord call to me from outside as though He were some distance away.

Crawling below the smoke, I looked through the door. And when I did...I saw the following words ‘engraved’ on what appeared the side of a huge rock mountain:

Therefore Jesus also,  
that He might sanctify the people  
(reconcile them to the Father)  
suffered outside the gate

Therefore  
Let us go out to Him  
(There - where He is)  
outside the camp  
bearing His reproach

Heb 13:12-13  
(See also Rom 8:16-18)

I had no energy in me whatsoever. All I could do was stare at that slate-grey mountain and those silver-grey words calling me to 'go out'...and I wanted to... *but I had no strength.*

So a great sadness swallowed me, because...I could find no strength to rise and go out. And prostrate there on the floor; I had turned my face down into my hands.

It seemed like a long time passed, I can't say how long... I couldn't bear the idea of looking up again at the words on the mountain. I tried not to see them in my mind. And eventually, it seemed like all time had stopped. And nothing but my breathing existed...*until I felt His Presence.*

"**Look upon Me**" the Lord softly said. But I was too afraid to do so... I wanted to run away...to disappear. I needed to somehow not exist so I would not have to face Him in this shameful weakness.

His Presence was so indescribably fearful, I thought I would die. I was scared beyond imagination, yet more frightening was the fear that He would depart – And I would be separated from Him...

Like I had been actually speaking these things out-loud, the Lord bent over me and replied: "**My grace is sufficient Michael. Don't be afraid. My grace is perfected in this weakness because I AM the strength of the humble. I AM the Reviver of the contrite. I AM your Grace. You only need Me.**" (2 Cor 12:8-10; Is 57:13-19)

With that, Jesus lightly touched my right ear and breathed on it. And then, I heard a rushing sound approaching, as though from far away, yet with great speed.

Suddenly, I was swept out through the door; enveloped in what felt like an overpowering ocean wave... I felt like I had fallen from a great height into a raging ocean. I was rolled violently over-and-over in a fearful way.

When this stopped however and I looked up; I was not dead. I was not hurt. I was on my feet, at the foot of the mountain; acutely alert. And as though surrounded in the mighty waters of His voice, I heard Jesus say:

**Follow the hunger**  
Go where the hungry yearn for Me

Hear & understand

I have withdrawn from the 99 to seek that which is lost and hungry for Me

Come and follow me,  
**there**

### Willing Vessels

This was at once both a shocking and remarkable experience for me. It seems surreal to me now, some three months later. More a dream of my mind. Just something imagined.

My heart however speaks otherwise. *It was very real.* And looking back in retrospect at the entirety of this past year, I now see that the Lord has been pulling us more and more in this direction of placing more attention on the spiritually hungry and less on the conformed & presently content.

The Lord wants us to look ‘outside’ the walls of our churches, and the programs going on within them, and see just how mindful He is of the realities of the poor. He wants us to see that He is overtly conscious of the hopeless, the needy, the elderly, the sick, and especially the lonely.

In truth, that loneliness is the greatest poverty of our modern-day-world. And it is not a natural problem, but instead, a spiritual one.

Jesus’ answer to the problem is not to wave some all-powerful magic wand over the bruised to heal them, nor to send angels from heaven to miraculously mend the broken-hearted. Instead, His will and plan is to send them His love in the ‘living sacrifices’ presented unto Him. Those willing to be filled. Those willing to be poured-out.

In these surrendered vessels, Jesus will manifest Himself as Wisdom, Righteousness, Holiness & Redemption to those so hungering to know Him as such. He will be God incarnate among men; available & reachable ‘in His Bride.’ And if men truly find Him **THERE**...their hunger & thirst **WILL** be satisfied. 1 Cor 1:30; Mt 5:6

## Christ Incarnate

On the night before His death, Jesus prayed that we might become one with the Father; one with Him; and one with each other so ‘the world might believe’ He was sent to reveal the perfect love of God’s mercy. Jn 17:20-23

Ephesians chapter two reveals the spiritual reality of our having been saved by grace and ‘seated together with Jesus in heavenly places.’ It speaks of our heavenly identity with Christ.

It is right that we hunger after the experience of knowing Him THERE at His throne. And in our congregational worship, we identify with Him THERE in some pretty wonderful ways. Yet, there is also a terrestrial identity to be had with Jesus, though not one we are so quick to seek... And that’s because, our heavenly identity is known through the cross which ‘He’ bore. Our terrestrial identity on the other hand, comes through the cross ‘we’ bear ourselves.

The lived-out experience of identifying with Jesus at His throne is for our personal edification, and that of the church as a whole. Our experienced terrestrial identity with Christ is to be His love incarnate in the world, poured-out unto others.

...Come ye blessed of My Father,  
inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat:  
I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink:  
I was a stranger, and ye took me in:  
naked, and ye clothed me:  
I was sick, and ye visited me:  
I was in prison, and ye came unto me

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying  
(Lord...*when did we ever touch You in this way?*)

And the King shall answer and say unto them,  
Verily I say unto you,  
Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren,  
Ye have done it unto Me

[And]

Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these,  
ye did it not unto Me

Mt 25:34-40 & 45

We are called to be light unto men from our seating with Jesus in heavenly places; but we are also called to be bread unto men out of our incarnate identity with Him here in the earth. 1 Cor 10:17; Is 58:7; James 2:14-17; Lk 14:13 (See also: Pro 19:17; 22:9; 28:27)

Attempting to do the first without accepting the equal responsibility to do the latter does not bring glory to God. To the contrary, it grieves God when we approach Him so. And it causes men to blaspheme His worthy Name at the sight of our one-sided, cost-free faith. James 2:6-7; Is 58:2

Like Peter's mis-led desire to remain on the Mount of Transfiguration; there is today a great desire to identify with Jesus in the 'mountain-top' glories, yet little or none to walk in His footsteps through the valley of lost, lonely, searching souls.

Peter longed to stay on the mountain; and understandably so. But Jesus knew something Peter didn't. There was a grieving father with a demon-possessed son waiting for them below. And if Jesus didn't go to him in that low-place below the mountain, he would never be free... Mt 17: 1-4 & 15

Most of my personal efforts to present the fact and responsibility of our terrestrial identity to others has fallen on deaf ears... That doesn't change the fact however, that Jesus is not only upon His heavenly throne, but walking in the hungry shadows of the valley as well, longing to rescue the lonely. Joel 3:13-14; Song 7:11-12

## A Calling Away

God's house is and always will be a House of Prayer; a place to know the throne room glory of Jesus; and a place to be filled with the strength of that glory. What we must come to understand however is that the purpose of this glory is to fuse us together in our terrestrial identity with Jesus, so the world can be touched by that glory.

This is not a work of identification taking place in the heavenlies; (that was already accomplished by Jesus' voluntary death on the cross). This is being made one with Him in the dust of the valley. And it is a union that can only take place when, standing in the shadows of that valley, we pick-up our own cross and follow Him, THERE. Jn 17:22

Jesus is already walking among people who have never heard the Gospel; people that no one cares about or even know exist; people who for the most part are off of most peoples (and most churches) radar.

I'm not really talking about those who are economically poor, but even more notably – *those who are poor in experiencing the love of Jesus in real-time, realistic ways.* [You may even be one of them]

We hide this poverty so well behind our facades, it becomes all but invisible...except to Jesus. He knows where we are. He knows how to get to us. And He is saying, **"If you truly want to know My Presence, come and walk with Me in these paths. Come follow Me, THERE."**

Without exception; ALL of us will be challenged by this call. Some will be like Peter, Andrew, James & John, who immediately laid aside their lives to follow Him. Others will be like Elisha, who hesitated; but in the end, followed and '*ministered unto*' his master. Mt 4:18-22 & 1 Kings 19:19-21

Unfortunately, still others of us will be like the religious young man approaching Jesus on the basis of his morality. He thought that moral obedience would be enough. But Jesus asked for something far beyond just that morality. *He asked for his life.* And the young man, turning away from the Lord in sadness, proved he was simply not willing to surrender that. Mt 19:16-22

Whatever it may mean, I have decided to follow this call by Jesus to come to Him 'outside the gates.' My reason for doing so is not to accomplish a good work or to be a good servant or even to be obedient to God's will. For me, it is far beyond all of that. *It is about my own hungering passion for His Person.*

Jesus said that, 'Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness WOULD be satisfied.' He is our Righteousness and the Perfect Love of God. And nothing can separate us from that love when we move toward Him; positioning ourselves THERE where He walks in love among men.

That place and path is the present 'Center' of all time and history. It is the prophetic heartbeat of heaven, beating in the shadows of the valley as hope. It is the peace that passes all understanding...*the peace we know so little of...*awaiting us, THERE.

I don't know so much, but I do know this: This place He calls THERE is not found in the places where most are seeking Him. Jesus has withdrawn Himself from what men deem glorious to pour Himself out into those who are empty. *That is where He can be found.*

By this the Father is glorified. By this, He experiences an abundant joy.

To be identified with Jesus and His cross; we must pick-up our own. We must go out to Him THERE where He is...poured-out into the emptiness of men together with Him. Poured-out unto the Father's joy. Jn 17:21-23; 15:13; 1 Jn 4:20-21; Is 55:6-7

If you will still yourself and listen, you will hear His call:

'Arise and come away'<sup>1</sup>

IT IS A CALL TO LOVE

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<sup>1</sup> Song 2:9-13