

What Might Jesus Say about American Christians Today?

What tragic irony that those who identify as white Protestant evangelical Christians currently constitute a major support base for one whose character, policies, and practices are so profoundly objectionable to most Americans!

Historically, evangelicals have understood themselves called to spread “good news,” bringing others to salvation in Jesus Christ, thereby saving souls and building up the Church, the family of God. It grieves me deeply as a Christian that most white evangelicals, because of their politics, are giving Christianity such a bad name. The man so many seem to revere may occasionally honor God with his lips, but his heart clearly manifests other devotions.

Evangelicals also claim to live by the Scriptures. Well, one can select isolated verses to support almost anything. But let’s consider some particular teachings of Jesus that almost all Christians and most biblical scholars would regard as authentic and/or true to Jesus’ message:

“There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.” Mark 7:15

“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14

“How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! . . . It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Mark 10:23, 25

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . . Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be filled.” Matt. 5:3, 6

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Matt. 5:44

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth!” Matt. 6:24

“How can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” Matt. 7:3-5

“Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?” Matt. 7:16b

“The last will be first and the first last.” Matt. 20:16

“Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known.” Luke 12:2

“The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink and be merry.’” But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you, And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’” Luke 12:16-20

Jesus’ other parables and sayings, too many to cite here, clearly present a picture of what God’s rule would look like, contrasted to the ways of the world. Imagine a world of shared abundance, forgiveness instead of retribution, faithfulness and humility over expedience and self-interest, compassionate justice for the poor and the stranger, and major reversals of fortune – very different from one where the rich and arrogant prevail, the weak are scorned, the immigrant and refugee are denied sanctuary, and the self-righteous have no shame.

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