

## The Vicar of Christ?

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by Jim Stauffer

During the Pope's visit to this continent and to Cuba it was difficult to view him as the **Vicar of Christ**, that is "one who is chosen to perform functions for another."

Jesus said, Matthew 5:10-11\*, "*Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.*" When in Cuba, this Pope, who claims to speak for the downtrodden, hobnobbed with the Castro brothers while ignoring those they are currently suppressing and abusing.

Jesus was criticized for the opposite behavior. He tried to reach those most in need of the comfort the Savior brings. He sat to eat in the house of Matthew, a publican, with other publicans and sinners. The Pharisees attempted to taunt His disciples with this fact. Matthew 9:11, "*And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Teacher with the publicans and sinners?*" Jesus' answer gave insight into the spiritual aspect of His mission. Matthew 9:12-13, "*But when he heard it, he said, They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice: for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.*"

When Jesus sent His disciples on the "**limited commission**," He gave instruction, "*Get you no gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats nor shoes, nor staff for the laborer is worthy of his food*" (Matt. 10:9-10). He did not send His representatives out in expensive and gaudy garb with the intent of communicating their personal righteousness. They were preachers of His righteousness in an effort to call the lost sheep of Israel to the humble life of servitude demanded of those in His kingdom.

These preachers of the message of the kingdom of Christ went from city to city not knowing where they would eat or sleep. They trusted in the One who sent them and were satisfied with food and shelter when needed.

On the other hand the Pope traveled in luxury few of the wealthiest can afford. He spent time viewing and glorying over the 175 million dollar refurbishing of the cathedral. He then had his audience in that place consist of those wealthy donors who enabled the expensive enhancements of the cathedral. They along with powerful politicians and civic leaders made up the cast of the scene that impressed so many.

The Pope looked more like the Pharisees Jesus spoke of in Matthew 23 than the disciples Jesus sent to preach to the lost sheep of Israel. Matthew 23:27-28 "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*" Matthew 23:29-32 "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we should not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye witness to yourselves, that ye are sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.*"

I simply could not observe anything the Pope did that seemed to represent the Messiah I read about in scripture.

It seems apparent to me he is much like those leaders who were intent on pleasing the Pharisees. John 12:43, "*For they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God.*" He prayed in public and did all the things a disciple should be about privately with cameras and crowds watching. Matthew 6:1, "*Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.*" Matthew 6:5-6 "*And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee.*"

Before you pass this off as improper judging, consider his actions versus the words of the Lord.

— via *The Lenexa Edifier*, September 27, 2015

\* *Scripture quotations from the American Standard Version*

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