

JESUS — VICTIM OF IDENTITY THEFT!

Since this is my 40th anniversary in this ministry, I could spend more time selfishly focusing on me or LBM. I could share the numerous accolades and congratulations I have been getting from well-respected celebrities like Bart Simpson and The Big Bang's Sheldon Cooper. But since I am proficient in speaking fluent “sarcasm,” I am also aware that some are fluent in taking things the wrong way.

So I hope that most of you who truly know my heart, know that **my words in this article are most importantly intended to represent a heart filled with compassion for the “least of these.”** For instance, related to issues like immigration and deportation, we can legitimately have differing positions. My goal is not to debate those varied positions but to encourage genuine followers of Christ to love our neighbors, not fear them. I want us to passionately reflect Jesus’ love of all humans created by God, which I happen to also believe includes most all humans! 🙏

During the time of the Greek Empire, a few hundred years before Jesus, a group of criminals stood before King Alexander the Great for judgment. When Alexander asked one man his name, the man smiled confidently because his name was also Alexander. He knew the king’s penchant for conquering and might have hoped King Alexander would pardon him, possibly allowing him to violently break the law in the future in support of their great leader without fear of punishment. But instead of a smile and pardon from Alexander, he looked angrily at this young man and thundered: *“Soldier, change your behavior — or change your name!”* **Christian**, change your behavior — or change your name!

One of the greatest challenges in sharing our faith today is that some so-called “Christian” political leaders are not even genuine followers of Jesus Christ. They’re giving Jesus and true Christianity a bad name. Jesus has become a victim of identity theft! The cruel, un-Christ-like things being done in His name are heartbreaking!

Depending on your news source, you may not have heard some of these recent appalling news stories related to Christ followers, making it more difficult for us to witness.

Christian Persecution?

An executive order to end anti-Christian bias was signed on Feb. 6, 2025. It aims to protect religious freedoms and end perceived anti-Christian bias or persecution. This seems like a good thing but when we dig deeper, it is easy to see the contradictions related to the “Christian” things some in this administration are for and against.

1) Let’s make sure we can say Merry Christmas without being persecuted (reminiscent of the persecution the 1st century Christians experienced?); yet, nearly two dozen Afghan Christian Refugees in NC legally, who sought asylum in the U.S. after the Taliban takeover, were ordered to deport before their cases were even heard.

2) Let’s make sure there is prayer in school; yet, on April 28 Rev. William Barber and 2 other ministers were arrested in the Capital Rotunda for peacefully praying. Rev. Barber is African American and dared to wear a white robe with the words “Jesus was a poor man” emblazoned on it.

3) Let’s make sure we have the religious freedom to boycott fast-food chains over rainbow-colored fry boxes; yet, when a 27-year-old Iranian English teacher converted to Christianity and fled for her life to seek asylum in the “Christian-friendly” country of America, she was shackled, flown on a military cargo plane, and dumped in a detention camp in Panama. I read this heartbreaking story of Artemis Ghasemzadeh from the front page of the 2/19/25 San Diego Union newspaper.

Constantine Christianity?

This new executive order reminds me of Roman Emperor Constantine’s “conversion” in 312 AD. Before that, Christians were truly suffering persecution by torture and death, yet the church was growing and thriving! But when Christianity became the official religion of Rome, many decided to “convert” to Christianity for fear of government persecution if they didn’t. Suddenly, the church got watered down, diluted, and power-hungry. It stopped looking like Jesus, the One who was willing to suffer and be a servant rather than rule and lord it over others. Behind the scenes, the devil was saying, “If you can’t beat them, join them!” The church became political and tried to rule by force and power rather than by the cross and humility and love.

Today we see a similar distortion. Some in the current administration seem more focused on attacking immigrants than embodying the compassion of Christ. Jesus was literally a refugee. **It is diametrically (or should I say diabolically?) opposed to the teachings of Christ to be abducting refugees in the name of the One who was a refugee.** I have seen those detained treated cruelly and physically in ungodly ways as if they were not even humans. Instead of racism or hatred, Jesus taught us who our neighbor was in the story of the

Good Samaritan. Jesus was for the poor as the Bible speaks over 2,000 times about helping the poor and hungry ... but never once about enriching the wealthy at their expense.

"The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the foreigner, denying them justice. So I will pour out my wrath on them and consume them with my fiery anger, bringing down on their own heads all they have done," declares the Sovereign Lord. Ezekiel

22:29, 31

The Bizarro Gospel

It seems we are living in the upside down Bizzaro World Jerry Seinfeld described as this alternate reality demonstrated by anti-Robin Hood behavior. In fact, Jesus was so bold as to say entry to Heaven is dependent on how we treat the poor, the hungry, the foreigner (Matthew 25 says the way we treated these people is the exact way we treated Jesus!).

Some currently in power have weaponized a distorted perversion of Christianity in order to exploit power, discriminate against humans who are not white, pad the pockets of billionaires, and lie to cover it all up. If someone in this position is simply not a follower of Jesus, like a 1st century Roman emperor or a modern day white supremacist or fascist, then we pray they see the light and the truth and repent, choosing to genuinely follow Jesus. He was not a moral guardian to Roman leaders and did not try to change their laws. Paul stated: *"It isn't my responsibility to judge those outside the church ... God will judge those outside ..."* (I Cor. 5:12-13).

However, Jesus did have strong words for those claiming to be religious yet were wolves in sheep's clothing! Those pushing a Christian nationalist agenda for our country not only hurt a lot of humans created by God, but they give Christianity a bad name, and exemplify the identity theft of Jesus. He said His followers are not to be like those lording it over others and imposing forceful power to manipulate people and situations (Matt. 20:25-28), but rather we are to be servants of the people, realizing that genuine change comes from a heart transformed by love and not by laws.

Dangerous Immigrants?

"But Larry, aren't we safer as a country and individually if we deport all these illegal immigrants?" Research from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), as well as a plethora of other agencies, overwhelmingly shows that native-born Americans are significantly more likely to commit violent (and non-violent) crimes than immigrants.

Native-born Americans are 10 times more likely to commit violent crimes involving weapons. U.S. born citizens are 5 times more likely to commit other violent crimes and 2 times more likely to commit property crimes or drug crimes. If we really want to Make America Safe Again, by this strategy it seems we should start deporting American citizens. Oh wait, they're already doing that!

Interestingly, when I went to the current NIJ website, this information had recently been taken down because of an Executive Order review. However, I was able to find it from the 2021 website that clearly verified these findings. It's almost like some in the current administration did not want people to see this information or know the truth! Could they possibly be fear-mongering to continue to pull the wool over people's eyes ... initially to elicit votes and then to support their inhuman treatment of immigrants and people who are a different color?

On a personal note, quickly off the top of my head I counted a dozen wonderful immigrant friends my wife and I have, all created by God to be a certain color and race, most importantly part of the human race. Half of them are solid, mature followers of Jesus Christ. And we have made great inroads sharing our faith with a few of the others. If they were deported, our city/country would be much worse off. For those immigrants who don't yet know Jesus personally, it would make it exceedingly more difficult to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. If we are truly Christ-like, shouldn't we be more concerned about helping people find Jesus than finding ways to deport them?!?!

I'm a Missionary To China!

God has orchestrated some butterfly-effect type unbelievable "circumstances" to allow me to be currently sharing my faith with an adherent of Confucius from China and a Jewish atheist/agnostic from England. This internet age has allowed me to be a missionary while sleeping in my own bed! In both cases it has been more difficult for me to encourage them to embrace Christianity as they clearly see the hypocrisy and ungodly behavior of some in leadership in our supposed "Christian" nation.

Jesus taught us to love (even our enemies) and not to seek revenge, so if God does orchestrate a conversation for you with someone who questions the state of Christianity today or some of the things said

and done in the name of Jesus Christ, just remember to point out to them that Jesus is currently a victim of identity theft!

Let's reclaim His name—not with power, but with love.

