

Jesus and the Authorities

“Nevertheless, many of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.” John 12:42-43.

It's easy at first glance to read the gospels and to think that Jesus was rejected by upper-class Jewish leaders and accepted by the lower-classes workers and peasants – that Jesus was an advocate for the poor and a judge of highfalutin extravagance. Jesus and the apostles healed blind and lame beggars. Jesus fed a few hungry crowds of thousands of people. Some of the apostles were uneducated fishermen. Jesus spent a lot of time with a lot of the lower-rungs of the class system, if it can be called that.

However, Jesus also spent a lot of time with the Jewish leaders who were wealthy. He ate at many Pharisees' homes and taught them, though many rejected His teachings. Jesus revived the dead daughter of a ruler who had great faith in Jesus's abilities. Here in John's gospel we read that many authorities who were followers of Judaism believed in Jesus, but they were afraid of being cast out of the synagogue. It wasn't that they didn't believe in Jesus. It was that they loved vanity and their pride more than they loved Jesus and God.

What we find in the gospels is what we expect to find in real life: People and life are complex. It's not as simple as Jesus was rejected by the wealthy and accepted by the poor. In fact, many poor disciples only followed Jesus because He fed them. Someone who is impoverished can love their life just as much as someone who is wealthy. Painted here in John's gospel, then, are two reasons why Jesus was rejected: Unbelief and pride. There were some who didn't believe because of Jesus's teachings. But there were also many who believed the words of Jesus but still refused to follow Him because they loved their lives too much.

We may have a belief in Jesus, but only a belief isn't *close enough*. To become a disciple of Jesus means to give up our lives. It means being cast out of synagogues. It means being rejected at times by friends and family. Those who give up their lives for Christ receive a glory that comes from God, and this glory is beyond any comparison with the glory that comes from people. **[DJR]**