

Values: Christ Centered: Jesus is Lord of Conscience

Matthew 5:38-42

3/16/25

***Christ-centered** – Everything we do is evaluated in light of our relationship with Jesus Christ. If something helps us individually and as NPC to become more centered on Christ, we will do it. If something does not, we will not do it.*

Let me know what you think about this, I am prayerfully considering a face tattoo. And not little ones like Jelly Roll or Lil' Wayne, I am thinking something big like Mike Tyson. I'm thinking something classy and meaningful, like a Scottish cross starting at my hairline, coming down my nose to my chin and then the arm bar under my eyes. Or maybe to be dramatic, to have the arm bar come across my eyes, so when I blink the cross comes alive! If you think this is a good idea, why? If you think it is bad, why? What values would I communicate?

Blame Pastor Travis and our intern James who inspired me with this idea through their preaching the last two weeks. Pastor Travis had fun illustration about witchcraft and at the end of the day witchcraft, and voodoo for that matter, is about controlling the present and future. It falls in the same category as gambling. Gambling in the end is about attempting to control and secure your future. Then James inspired me with his fine sermon on how we are proclaiming Christ. Would people know if we are Christians if we stopped wearing the cross around our necks? Or do people know because we tell them that we are praying for them? Or we may miss certain things because we are committed to worship? Or sharing how our friendship with Jesus Christ is positively impacting our lives?

This Lenten season Christ's Holy Spirit has led me to preach on Christian values. What do we value? How do Jesus' values inform our decision making.

Let's hear Jesus' values in Matthew 5:43-48.

Love your enemies. No other spiritual teacher says it that explicitly. If you think a face tattoo is edgy, try applying Jesus' teaching when concerning Israel and Hamas or Russia and Ukraine, or to a person who has recently betrayed you. The goal of Jesus Christ is to empower us with His Holy Spirit to overcome evil through generosity! Turn the other cheek! Give the shirt off your back! Go the extra mile! A high value for Jesus is to overcome evil through generosity!

Now if we only have the Old Testament, tattoos are forbidden. Gambling is forbidden. Witchcraft is forbidden. So is eating pork! Leviticus 19:28 You shall not make any gashes in your flesh for the dead or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord. Leviticus 19:31 Do not turn to mediums or wizards... Proverbs 13:11 Wealth hastily gotten will dwindle... Leviticus 19:18 ...You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. Traditionally Protestant Christians have valued work ethic and that we trust that our lives are in God's good and gracious hands; thus, gambling undermines work ethic and faith in God's providence.



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Witchcraft, gambling, voodoo is about controlling one's future; thus, undermines faith in God. Tattoos were traditionally linked to pagan faith or not having faith. I have a tattoo, but I would not recommend getting a tattoo for you or your children as I get older. But if you do have tattoos, you are still a child of God for whom Jesus lives and desires friendship with you.

In the end, the highest value for the Presbyterian Christian is that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the conscience. So, wherever you come down on tattoos, gambling, witchcraft, Jesus Christ is your judge. Whatever you are deciding to do, does it glorify God? Does it better humanity? Does it deepen your friendship with Jesus Christ? Does it invite others into friendship with Jesus?

In our leadership team we are trying to build a culture in which, *Everything we do is evaluated in light of our relationship with Jesus Christ. If something helps us individually and as NPC to become more centered on Christ, we will do it. If something does not, we will not do it.*

If I were to get a Scottish cross tattooed across my face, before the decision, Christians would prayerfully consider, does it deepen friendship with Jesus Christ? Will it invite others into friendship with Jesus Christ? If it does, get the tattoo. If it doesn't, don't. Jesus Christ is the Lord of the conscience: this is the highest value for Presbyterian Christians. God is your judge. My judge. At the end of the day, we know it is all about friendship with Jesus Christ and what the Lord desires for us is to overcome evil with generosity. To overcome evil with friendship with Jesus Christ. To learn His values to recreate life instead of destroy life.

Love,
Pastor Curtis