

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

IF JESUS CAME to LAS VEGAS

Text: "And Leaving Nazareth He Came and Dwelt in Capernaum". Matt. 4:13

What do you think would happen if Jesus came to Las Vegas? We have a good deal of guidance in the Gospels by which to answer such a question. Let us attempt to answer it, therefore, with reference to the facts which the Gospels give us.

If Jesus came to Las Vegas, provided He could get a visa to enter the country at all, the first thing that would greet Him would be a wave of adoration. There can be no question about that. Great crowds would throng and press to see Him as He passed. Wherever He walked His words would be caught and written down by reporters. He would be invited to speak in public and to dine in private. He would not have a moment in which to call His soul His own. The great and the small would seek Him out and all would have something to ask. The great would want His support, the small would beg for His help. Simple folk would struggle to touch His clothes, hoping that some of His power might flow into them. Such a wave of adoration as the world has never seen would rise up to greet Jesus if He came to Las Vegas.

That is what happened when Jesus first appeared in public in the town of Capernaum. Las Vegas would do no less.

But if Las Vegas' first reaction would be a wave of adoration, I think it is perfectly safe to say that the adoration would soon give way to disappointment. The people who wanted to engage Jesus to speak on television and ride in parades (in Las Vegas someone would be sure to arrange a parade) would discover that He was not interested in doing these things. He might not always issue a statement to the press on schedule; He might not be willing to be taken captive by the people who would want to control His life. In fact, it is practically certain that one fine morning when all the people who were trying to take possession of Him came to His house, they would discover that during the night, He had quietly slipped away.

That happened in Capernaum, too.

Then, as adoration had given way to disappointment, so disappointment would give way to a mounting wave of hostility, for Jesus could no more come to Las Vegas without being asked to take sides in critical issues than He could avoid being involved in the tensions of His own day in Palestine.

In Las Vegas He would be asked political questions. "Will You lead a crusade against Russia?" And many would not be pleased to hear Him answer, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you!"

He would be asked religious questions. "Are You in favor of the Catholic Church or the Protestant Church," or of this or that denomination? And many would not be pleased to hear Him answer, "A new commandment I give unto you: That ye love one another as I have loved you."

He would be asked social questions. "Are you in favor of free enterprise or government control?" And many would not be pleased to hear Him answer, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Oh, yes, He would disappoint those who expected Him to take sides on the political and ecclesiastical and social issues of the day and many of those whom He disappointed would begin to wonder if they really wanted Him around after all, for it is easier to settle our differences in our own way if we leave Jesus out of account.

Gradually, but inexorably, the lines would be drawn between those who loved and followed



REV. D. M. CLARK

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Him and those who feared Him and wanted Him out of the way.

That happened in Palestine too, you remember...

I cannot bring myself to end this exercise in historical imagination by saying that if Jesus came to Las Vegas, you and I would see the same tragedy reenacted. But even the thought of His coming poses for every one of us a question: If He did come, which side would we be on?

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