

The Jesus I Thought I Knew

This morning I want you to get into your way back machine and travel back through time to your early childhood.....however young you can go to and still access your earliest memories. Whether or not you were raised in the church, one way or another I am sure you heard the name Jesus. That name is found in conversation, songs, swears and prayers.....Try to recall your earliest memories of Jesus.

(Grace, Jesus Loves me, camp songs, night time prayers) Do you associate a particular family member or other person with your earliest introductions to Jesus? (Ask them)

I am guessing that it is true of many things in life, but certainly when it comes to religion, we spend considerable time learning, unlearning and relearning.

A cold glass of milk with sugar cookies might be a good way to describe the Jesus we first met. Soft and warm, Gentle Jesus meek and mild.....those adjectives might be appropriate for the Jesus we first knew. (Slide #1)

But education, experience, discussion, reflection, are ongoing and they demand a re-defining, or at least a re-considering. We read books, we see movies, we hear people talking, perhaps we hear sermons preached, or join a study group. Maybe we even pick up the Bible and read it! In our daily life, the more time we spend with a new friend, the more facets of them we get to see and experience. Our understanding of who they are grows. The picture starts to fill out. This is exactly what happens in our spiritual life. When we spend time with Jesus. Our understanding of them grows. No longer milk and sugar cookies. He has always been so much more than that. Teacher. Friend. Man of justice and grace and mercy. Healer. Preacher. He was so confident that he went up to perfect strangers and invited them to follow him. But some saw him as a trouble maker, a disturber of the peace. Some think he was untamed and untameable. (Slide #2) Jesus was no stranger to confrontation. He took on the leaders of the church, and eventually the government. No longer simply Jesus meek and mild!

Some of this we can understand. Imagine your brother or cousin or friend suddenly entering the city's largest church, and beginning to teach. He has no formal training. Imagine your brother or cousin or friend performing miracles. What would you think? What would people say? How would people react?

Have you ever felt that someone close to you, didn't really know you? How might that feel? I wonder if Jesus ever felt that way? His own parents could not understand him and why he was doing the things he was doing. His disciples were often taken by surprise! The leaders of the church were so threatened by him. No one seemed to really know him....they just didn't get him!

You know that sometimes when we look back at a time in our life, or a past relationship, we are able to see and understand it with much greater clarity. When I reflect on my younger days, I understand so much better, my parents, and my relationship with them. I see and understand it in a whole new way now. I am so grateful. And in some ways, I see how I could have been a much better son.

I am suggesting that we have a tremendous advantage over Jesus' parents, and the disciples, and all His followers, and the church leaders because of the perspective from which we learn about Jesus and that period in history. Consider all the resources available to us now to gather information. And yet, even today, it is undeniable that there continues to be great confusion as to the nature of Jesus.....Gentle, Jesus meek and mild, cold milk and warm cookies.....or troublemaker, radical, untamed and untameable?

Some have described Jesus this way:

- + A Victorian nanny who pats the heads of children and advises kindness to mummy and daddy
- + A friendly Mr. Rogers – kind, gentle, and soft spoken
- + A cosmic Christ hovering over the earth
- + A radical hippie concerned with politics and peacemaking

What is your vision of Jesus, and what has contributed to you holding this vision? Do you think it is possible, for whatever your current vision of Jesus is, to change – to grow, and expand, and fill out? Do you want it to?

The people responsible for Jesus being crucified never accused Jesus of being a bore. They never thought of him as a Victorian nanny or a friendly Mr. Rogers. They thought he was unsafe, destructive to their way of life, and worshipping, and their understanding of the Scriptures. To them, he was a dangerous firebrand! He had called the respectable clergy hypocrites. He referred to King Herod as ‘that fox’. He went to parties in disreputable company. He threw indignant and unscrupulous tradesmen out of the temple. He cured diseases anytime, anywhere, any day...yes, even the Sabbath! He welcomed those who society had cast out, into his presence. He could care less about a person’s wealth or social position!

Jesus was anything but dull. If we believe that Jesus is God, then we can safely say that God is not dull!

Gentle Jesus meek and mild. Mr. Rogers. A Victorian Nanny. This man turned his society upside down! He caused such a disturbance in peoples’ lives and communities that those trying to keep the peace and order of the establishment, were convinced that they had to do away with him in order to keep the peace – to keep things the way they were.

It is essential that we explore the nature of Jesus....to see more of who he was – things that we might not really know or understand about Him. Perhaps we have a default vision of Jesus that is quiet, kind, loving. He is certainly that. But he is so much more.

How would you describe the Jesus of your childhood? If you were to paint that picture, what would He look like? What might your picture of Jesus today look like? Any different from your picture of Jesus from years ago>

Are you prepared to do some exploring?

Are you prepared to allow your picture of Jesus change?

Amen