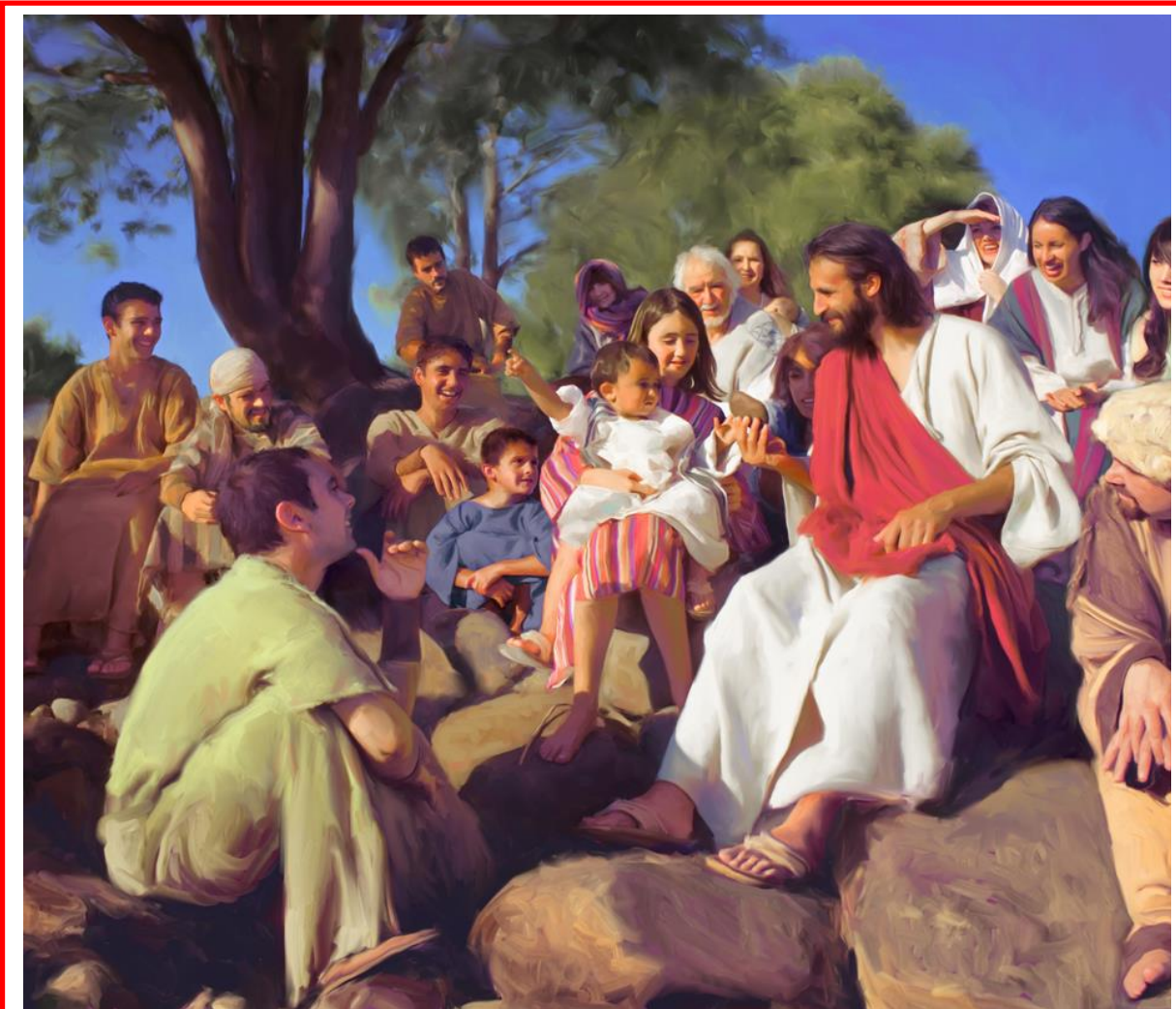


Lesson Three Jesus the Teacher.



Who was Jesus? You may have similar answers to the people of His day – a healer, a troublemaker, a liberator, a threat to law and order, a heretic, a prophet, a community organizer.

His friends and foes, however, would have agreed that He was a powerful teacher.

Read: Proverbs 3:1-26 Trusting in the Lord.

As we read the Gospels we can see that Jesus taught at least 7 different ways.

- 1.** Through signs and wonders; Healing blindness; Healing paralysis; Calming a storm; Casting out unclean spirits; Liberating people – whether from military, political, economic, social or personal oppression.
- 2.** Through public lectures. Crowds would gather for a mass teach-in on a hillside near the Sea of Galilee. Whole neighbourhoods might jam into a single house and then spread around the open doors and windows, eager to catch even a few words. Some would catch His words down at the beach, sitting in a boat, His voice rising above the sounds of lapping waves.
- 3.** At surprising, unplanned impromptu moments – at a dinner party, some public place or on the road.
- 4.** In private retreats and field trips with His disciples.
- 5.** By public demonstrations – like leading a protest march into Jerusalem in a royal entry as He denounced the city's ignorance of what makes for peace. By civil disobedience while delivering important words of instruction and warning and also by an alternative economy based on generosity rather than greed, inspired by a boy's fish-sandwich donation.
- 6.** By finely crafted works of short fiction called parables. These often put people in groups where there were children who are more attracted to stories rather than arguments.

Read: Mark 4:1-34 – parables of Jesus.

All these over-lapping ways shows us that Jesus truly was a master-rabbi, capable of transforming people's lives with deep messages and unexpected imagination.

What was the substance of His messages? What was His point? Jesus repeated one phrase over and over again – the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Heaven.

What do these phrases mean to you today? Some think it just refers to the place where the righteous go when they die – a perfect new world. To Jesus the kingdom was a reality – to come down here now. Not a distant future reality – it was at hand.

In Jesus' day **kingdoms** were the dominant social, political and economic reality. Contemporary concepts like nation, state, government, society, economic system, superpower, empire, culture, and civilization all resonate in that one word: **kingdom**.

The Roman empire was a top-down power structure – limited rewards but many punishments. It was through His crucifixion that Jesus did His most radical teaching of all.

By being crucified, Jesus exposed the heartless violence and dictatorship that existed. He demonstrated that God's kingdom wins, through His gracious self-giving on behalf of His enemies.

It is not through conquest that God's kingdom grows – but through apparent weakness. It expands through reconciliation rather than humiliation and intimidation. It triumphs through a willingness to suffer rather than a readiness to inflict suffering.

Read: Jeremiah 31:31-34 a New Covenant.

God, in the form of Jesus, demonstrated His nonviolent noncompliance with the world's brutal powers-that-be. He showed God to be a different kind of king and His kingdom to be a different kind of kingdom.

Sadly today, not everybody seems interested in the good news that Jesus taught. Many are more interested in un-forgiveness, revenge, isolation, taking advantage of others, obsession with various types of addiction, fame and wealth.

Yet, underneath even the ugliest of these desires there can still be seen a small spark of something pure, something good, something holy – a primal desire for aliveness, which may well be the portal into the Kingdom of God.

To be alive in the adventure of Jesus is to seek first the kingdom and justice of God....to become a student of the one great subject Jesus came to teach in many creative ways.

Engage:

What on thought or idea challenged or intrigued you from this lesson?

Can you recall one of the most important teachers you had in your life and why they were so significant?

How would you translate the term kingdom of God into words or images that make sense today?

Activate: this week, notice where you seek and find aliveness.