

Bible Study Series
DREAMTHINK.
BE.DO.

Session Four – Jesus

“Different Jesuses” - practically as many versions of him as there are followers!

We have various denominations, we have multiple gospel accounts

Jesus is:

Yvette Flunder

- son of a teenage girl
- adopted son of a labourer
- not upper-class
- lived among the marginalized
- religious and political subversive
- killed for mobilizing people on the hillside and away from the synagogue [not in power]
- he liberated women
- he was an example of what the table of the Lord really looks like

Jesus:

Bernard Brandon Scott

- Galilean
- Jewish
- peasant
- came from low social class
- if Jesus were to come today, he might come from a village in Guatemala

Jesus was among the outcasts, the “unclean”

Helen Prejean

The story of Jesus is all about crossing borders

Rick Ufford-Chase

- Jesus challenged the border and stepped into the other world
- Jesus defies religious and political convention, and is killed for it
- we’ve sanitized Jesus almost to the point where there’s nothing left
- we forget that the gospel is about sacrifice, so we end up in churches of privilege
- we may be unwilling to ask questions about the implications of what our belief in Jesus is for our time

Literary genre of gospel

- each gospel was a record of the developing traditions about Jesus from different communities
- layered stories

-subjective representations of Jesus aimed at a community of believers in a particular time and place

Amy-Jill Levine

- instead of taking gospel accounts as ‘transcripts,’ it might be better to take them as remembrances like ‘this is something they might’ve said/done’
- we get an “overall picture” of Jesus from the gospels - person dedicated to healing, to teaching, whose force of personality drives a movement, provocative enough that people might be inclined to listen

Marcus Borg

- basically, our only source for knowing about Jesus are the Christian gospels
- so, not a lot
- he was a wisdom teacher; had an enlightenment experience
- he was a healer
- he was a Jewish mystic

-Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God

John Dominic Crossan

- kingdom of God - a divine, instead of imperial, agenda
- Jesus is alternative - threatened empire

“Parable of Lincoln High School”

-language of metaphor and parable - express truths

The post-Easter Jesus

-much of what we know are images and metaphors - not historical, but still powerfully true

-pre-Easter and post-Easter Jesus

Borg

- post-Easter is about Christian experience and tradition
- the truth of the stories [of scripture] is in their ancient, archetypal symbolism

Rita Nakashima Brock

-there are lots of different understandings of salvation

-we’ve put a lot of layers on Jesus

Flunder

-there comes a point where we have to get back to the person who stood in the water with Jesus

-one gospel: not Caesar, but God who runs the world

Crossan

-we have four “according to’s”

Conclusion

- one reality: someone beyond all description, but fully human
- complex and radical message of Jesus - points to how we might live a Christian life today

Bible Study Series

DREAM. THINK. BE. DO.

Session Five – Risk

In no other area of life, or discipline - except religion - is the denial of progress held up as a virtue!

-somehow, “the way it was in days gone by” holds a mysterious authority over people

Today, a reformation is going on - a re-visioning of the Christian life as a whole

-ideas of faith and spirituality are reforming to reflect the 21st Century

-struggle to articulate what we believe *Ron Buford*
-people want to know what you believe, and you should believe something
-it's important to have a clear message

Nancy Ammerman
-“we have something distinctive and something good, and we're willing to talk about it” - makes for a thriving community

Rick Ufford-Chase
-the challenge: to recover our relationship with Jesus, and be evangelical in our spirit

So, what are we going to do about:

-care for creation?

-violence?

-massive migrations of people [refugees]?

-human rights issues, in general?

-the fundamental challenge: being authentic Christian community

-are we willing to take genuine risks?

-if you're defensive about your faith, let it go *Mel White*
-let the Holy Spirit do the converting
-we can work with multi-faith groups

Marcus Borg
-a vision of the Christian life centred in wisdom and in the Spirit of God

-centred in compassion and justice

-corresponds to deep yearnings in most people, for:

-a fuller connection to God, a deeper connection to what is

-the world to be a better place

-the Christian task is to raise consciousness on this - about God, and how society is put together

Micah 6:8

-justice, kindness, humility

Blind obedience to rules gets in the way of faith

Walter Brueggemann

-Romans 12 - an ethic that is counter to Caesar; a counter-obedience

***primary marks of the Christian life: hospitality, generosity, no vengeance, sabbath, no coveting

-true faith - a great leap towards the margins

Yvette Flunder

-it would be liberating for the church to practice extravagant grace and radical inclusivity

Amy-Jill Levine

-faithful reading of scripture, and also that God is about inclusivity and grace

-We need to seek agreement that will lead towards wholeness

-call to be in solidarity with the poor

Stephen Patterson

-There is a great wide world that does not live with the privilege we have

Minerva Carcaño

-we need to reclaim as vital ministry living among the poor

“Being Good” - legalism (set of rules)

Instead: relationship and action

-putting people before the rules

-we must address violence, today

John Dominic Crossan

-God is not violent (we know this from the revelation in Jesus)

-we're called to union with God

-Jesus - stunningly radical

-our outrage should be on behalf of those who suffer

Rita Nakashima Brock

-the church should be a safe place

-people should be able to come to the church to receive solidarity and support

-living our faith is hard work

Emilie Townes

-blending our spirituality with our social witness

-humility and mercy

“Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that” (Thurman)

In the 21st Century, we can claim a distinctive voice, as Christians by:

-being in solidarity with the poor

-countering the idolatry of wealth

-Practicing non-violence

-seeking justice and inclusivity