

Life of Jesus

Session 3: A Subversive Sermon

Here in the West, Jesus is a familiar figure to Christians, dominating Sunday School lessons and sermons since our earliest memories. Yet, removed as we are by 2,000 years since he walked the earth, He remains somewhat mysterious. Why did He come? What did He teach? What was He really like?

Let's take an adventure to know more of this person about whom we assume so much familiarity. We will be exploring the Life of Jesus in 21 sessions; the first 14 will focus on Jesus' life and ministry in the 1st Century and will end around Easter. The last 7 will focus on Jesus' life and ministry in our own century and will take us through the month of May. Let's experience the Life of Jesus together!

Deep Hope: May we, together, (re-) fall in Love with the Messiah as we understand, imitate, and experience the Life of Jesus.

PART I: Review

1. 1st Century Jews were living in the Promised Land, but under Roman Rule after a long history of oppression.
2. There were 4 major "camps" or philosophies about how best to deal with the Roman problem.
3. Many believed that the Messiah—a prophesied king—was near and would free Israel and let them live and worship in peace. This would be God's Kingdom on earth.
4. Jesus arrived and announced that God would be "setting up HQ" on earth. He begins to show His authority to prove His message. Is He the King or merely a messenger?
5. Jesus' miracles reveal Jesus' enemies and goals—it doesn't look as if He wants to defeat Rome.

PART II: The Subversive Sermon

1. The Sermon on the Mount is a condensed statement about what it looks like to live in the Kingdom Jesus is setting up on earth. It's not about how to escape our earthly life and get to heaven.
2. The Sermon manages to borrow ideas from EACH of the 4 philosophies, while upsetting ALL of them! And defying Rome!
3. Jesus' Sermon is about a new Way of life—a new Kingdom on earth where:
 - Jesus is King over all the earth and
 - the citizens are people of all nations who **trust** God as Father and **love** everyone like family.

Part III: Small Group Discussion Questions:

- How does Jesus' redefinition of who is "blessed" affect you?
 - Are you challenged? Relieved? Puzzled?
- Jesus talks about a "kingdom of heaven." His listeners would have assumed he was talking about a renewed Israel. Many of us assume He is talking about a good place we go when we die...What is He *actually* talking about? **In one sentence, how would you describe the "Kingdom of God?"**
- How do Jesus' words challenge the four major groups of His day?
- What if "perfection" was about maturing into a person who truly loves everyone? How is **loving everyone** a different focus than "never sinning?"
- Who do you have a hard time loving? An individual? A group?
- How does seeing God as a Father who actively loves everyone affect your thoughts about the high standards Jesus sets for citizens of His Kingdom?
- What are you left wondering/thinking about/pondering?

Part IV: Gospel Reading:

Read John 1-5

Jesus talks with some unexpected folks and does some amazing miracles—what sort of person is He? How do you picture Him?

Bonus Challenge: Re-Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) ☺

Prayer: "Father God, please show us Jesus and His Kingdom—what does it mean for us to live in Your Kingdom today? Please show us that You are our Father and Jesus is our true Leader. Let us trust and obey You—not our own selfish ideas—today. Become our one desire that we might live into our identity as the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Thank you! Amen.