

Life of Jesus

Session 4: Face of the Savior: Jesus Art

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.
2. There were 4 major "camps": Sadducee, Pharisee, Essene, Zealot
3. Many believed that Messiah would free Israel and reinstate God's kingdom on earth.
4. Jesus announced (and proved with miracles!) that the Kingdom was at hand—not an after-death reality, but rather God's rule breaking into our reality.
5. Jesus' miracles **show** what God's kingdom looks like, and the Sermon on the Mount **tells** what it is like! Jesus defines the kingdom as those who seek to become people of mature love (even for enemies) who trust God as Father, with singular focus.
6. The Sermon manages to borrow ideas from EACH of the 4 philosophies, while upsetting ALL of them! And defying Rome!
7. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount charts a course for Christian community—life in the Kingdom of God—for all Christians everywhere.

PART II: Face of the Savior

1. Christian art has a controversial history, but art can be an expression of Christian life
2. Big Idea: Art can be an avenue for discovering (or re-discovering!) Jesus.
3. Bad Jesus art is out-of-touch not with talent, necessarily, but with the *real Jesus*.

4. Christians have made Jesus-art from very early on. Much early art was symbolic and there have been debates about whether images of Jesus are idolatrous.
5. Images of a ruling/authoritative Jesus predominated until the middle ages, when depictions of the crucifixion became more popular (Thanks, Francis!).
6. Artists must grapple with Jesus' humanness and divinity—how to portray *both*?
7. Jesus art is everywhere, and “good art” is subjective. But stretch yourself! 😊

Part III: Small Group Discussion Questions:

- 1. Which images are you drawn to? Can you say why?**
2. What tools does an artist have to show Jesus—the real Jesus?
3. Is it helpful or hurtful to try to paint Jesus?
4. Why might some art be better or worse?
5. What is the best possible result from a piece of art trying to portray Jesus?
6. What is the worst possible result from a piece of art trying to portray Jesus?
7. What are you left wondering/thinking about/pondering?

Part IV: Gospel Reading:

Read Luke 10-15

Jesus uses short stories called parables to illustrate his points. Or is he intentionally hiding his dangerous message in cute stories? Read Jesus' parables in the middle of Luke and see what you think.

Bonus Challenge: Find a parable in a different Gospel (they're tough to find in John—try Matthew or Mark!)

Prayer: “Father God, please show us Jesus. We need a fresh vision of Your Son. We need to fall in love with Him all over again, to be captivated by Him, enamored by Him, on fire for Him. We owe Him our allegiance, so help us see Him as He is. Amen.”