

Life of Jesus

Session 5: Hidden in Plain Sight: The Parables of Jesus

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: Hidden in Plain Sight

1. Jesus' spoke in _____. (approx. 1/____ of His teaching!)
2. Were Jesus' parables just fun, memorable stories?
3. The prophets warned about _____ with parables (e.g. Isaiah 5)

4. Jesus sees Himself in the role of _____, warning God's people.
5. Big Idea: parables are connected to the message about the _____ of God.
6. Parables both _____ the heart's condition and...
7. Parables force a _____! Jesus saw judgment coming *again*.

Part III: Small Group Discussion Questions:

1. How have you read Jesus' parables in the past?
2. What's one of your favorite parables, and why?
3. What is the Kingdom of God?
4. Why did Jesus use parables (like the ancient prophets)? What did He think was coming on Israel?
5. How did Jesus' parables/riddles expose people's hearts?
6. How did Jesus' parables/riddles force a decision?
7. It can be tempting to immediately "apply" Jesus' parables to our own life—and some parables definitely speak to us right where we're at! But it's important to first ask, "How is this story connected with the heavenly kingdom Jesus was bringing into the earth?"
8. Practice "decoding" a parable! Choose one:
 - Luke 13:6-9 (The Unfruitful Tree)
 - Luke 14:15-24 (The Great Banquet)
 - Luke 15:11-32 (the Prodigal Son)

Part IV: Gospel Reading: Read Luke 16-19

Jesus consistently reaches out to those the rest of His society scorned and ostracized. Read these chapters of Luke with an eye out for Jesus' scandalous treatment of the outcast.

Prayer: "Father God, please open our eyes to see the kingdom. We need a fresh vision of Your Son and the sort of work He is up to in our world. Give us the eyes to see and ears to hear and heart to feel all that we need to in order that we might be your true sons and daughters and avoid the calamity that comes when we pursue our own agendas. Amen."