

Lenten Study Series – Beyond Belief
Session 2: “Meeting Jesus Again”

Marianne

Historical Jesus and “Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time”

Backstory - breakthrough book, an academic book that didn’t come together, but a heartfelt book to communicate what Jesus was about

Christianity as a liberating tradition

Marcus

“Official debunker”

Whenever we emphasize the divinity of Jesus, at the expense of his humanity, we lose track of the utterly remarkable human being he was

Our only sources for knowing about Jesus are, basically, the Christian gospels

Generalizations we can make about the historical Jesus:

- he was executed because the powers-that-be felt threatened by what he was up to
- he was a wisdom teacher - he had an enlightenment experience
- he was a healer
- he was a Jewish mystic - he had vivid and frequent experiences of the Sacred

Chapter 2

Marcus

Jesus was not:

- a rugged individualist
- a political conservative
- of the mind that people ought to fend for themselves through hard work
- of the mind that God was going to hold us to account in the final judgment

So much of what had been thought of as Christian morality over the centuries was not very central to Jesus at all

The historical Jesus was:

- A social prophet (like Martin Luther King Jr)
“He was a God-intoxicated Jewish voice of peasant social protest”
- A wisdom teacher (like the Buddha)
- Against the domination system

Galilee

-an economic oppression happening in the time of Jesus

Jesus was passionate about “the least of these”

The church is a human institution - it has, perhaps more often than not, used the story of Jesus not to include people...but has used the story of Jesus to judge people...even to beat up on people

He was from the Jewish peasant class; Nazareth was a tiny, peasant village.

He might, therefore, have been non-literate...peasants would not have had access to scrolls or the opportunity to learn how to read.

Clearly, he was brilliant.

A charismatic presence around him; experienced differently by different people.

Chapter 3

Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God is for life here and now, for life here on earth

Why was he killed?

The political meaning of Good Friday

Chapter 4

Political meaning of kingdom of God (deeply spiritual)

It was a metaphor because the hearers of Jesus lived under other kingdoms

“The kingdom of God must be something different from what we’re living under”

Kingdom of God is about justice and peace

-economic justice - just distribution of God’s earth

-“Your kingdom come... give us this day our daily bread”

-the central survival issue in peasant life was having enough food

Marianne

Marcus’ political inclinations

Pivotal book in Hebrew Bible: Amos - lots about justice and compassion

Importance of systemic injustice; our Christian work is not just personal, but there is also a public and political dimension to Christian life

Our task: what does it mean to love our neighbour?

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Who comes to mind as examples of contemporary social prophets?

Which ideas from this session did you resonate with? Which did you find challenging?