

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY --- "JESUS ACCORDING TO JESUS"

Kern Memorial United Methodist Church, Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Sundays, Christian Formation/"Steve's Class"

Tuesdays, 10 a.m. and Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m.

Study Outline

Week 1 --- "Who Is Jesus Christ for Us Today?"

* Luke 4:16-30 (and related verses in the lesson) as our springboard for three weeks ... the centrality of Jesus for Gospel faith. Pondering anew the nature of the Jesus we seek to follow.

Week 2 --- "Jesus' Central Teaching --- The Kingdom of God"

* Luke 4:16-30 (and related verses in the lesson) ... "the acceptable year of the Lord" as the focus of Jesus' Nazareth synagogue experience ... "Jubilee" as a Kingdom vision.

Week 3 --- "Jesus Rejected --- Costly Grace"

* Luke 4:16-30 (and related verses in the lesson) ... Jesus rejected in his Nazareth hometown ... the reasons for their rejection ... foreshadowing Jesus' continual experiences of rejection and Jesus' words about His forthcoming suffering and death and the disciples' "taking up their cross."

Week 4 --- "The Table to Let You In"

* Luke 14 (and related verses in the lesson) ... Jesus and table fellowship ... Jesus offering and accepting table fellowship ... the implications for Jesus' destiny and our mission

Week 5 --- Jerusalem --- Holy Week

* Luke 19:28-44 and the Gospel Holy Week narratives ... Jesus' fateful decision to go to Jerusalem ... Jesus' entry ... each day of Holy Week, leading to Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and beyond ...

Introduction --- The Obvious Centrality of the Historical Jesus for Gospel faith

* Mark 1:1 --- the first verse in what is almost universally considered to be the earliest written Gospel: "this is the beginning of the Gospel OF JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God." The new genre of Christian Gospels is centered upon the person and work of Jesus.

* 2 Corinthians 4:5 --- "for we do not proclaim ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as servants for Jesu' sake."

* Martin Luther --- Christian faith is *sola Christus* (Christ alone).

* Dietrich Bonhoeffer --- "Jesus is the only content. There is no other content besides Jesus. He himself is it" (DISCIPLESHIP).

LESSON 1 --- "Who Is Jesus Christ for Us Today?" --- Luke 4:16-30

* Dietrich Bonhoeffer --- THE question for the Church is "who is Jesus Christ for us today?" (LETTERS AND PAPERS FROM PRISON)

* Jesus in His hometown Nazareth synagogue. This moment immediately after Jesus' baptism and temptation as He begins His public ministry. This Jesus experience considered by scholars as central to Jesus' self-understanding and our rightful understanding of Jesus.

* Consider the scene

* The scroll from the Prophet Isaiah (specifically 61:1-2). Jesus saying, "today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus applying the historic prophecy to Himself: "This is me. This is who I am and what I am about."

* Going through the text:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" ... what are other moments of Jesus' relationship with the Holy Spirit?

"because He has anointed me" ... the titles "Messiah" and "the Christ" both mean "the anointed One" ... the Hebrew kings were anointed with oil in their inaugurations. The kings were sometimes called "the anointed ones". The belief developed in an anointed "One," the Messiah, who would carry out God's special mission among God's people."

"to" ... the importance of the following infinitives ... result: "I am anointed with the result being" ... and/or purpose: "I am anointed for the purpose of" ...

"preach Good News to the poor" ... Who were the poor then? Who are the poor now?

"to proclaim release to the captives" ... Who were the captives then? Who are the captives now?

"and recovery of sight to the blind" ... Who were the blind then? Who are the blind now?

"to let the oppressed go free" ... Who were the oppressed then? Who are the oppressed now?

* What does Jesus' self-identification with the Isaiah prophecy say about "Jesus according to Jesus?" The identity and mission of Jesus? The person and work of Jesus?

* What does this say about Christian Gospel faith? Jesus' grace-love-redemption-salvation-reconciliation-liberating ministry among, with, and for hurting and

broken people?

* What does this say about our relationship with Christ? About our following Jesus and learning from Jesus as disciples?

"to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Week 2 --- a Jesus' Kingdom of God vision grounded in the historic scriptures).

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Disagreements and even controversy concerning the nature of Jesus were present throughout His life and contributed to His crucifixion. The disagreements continued within the New Testament writings and subsequent Christian history to today. Some Jesus understandings have been heretical, dangerous, and deadly, especially "the Aryan Jesus" of Naziism. The centrality of Jesus for Christian faith requires our continual Bible study, reading, discussions, and prayer seeking to know Jesus as Jesus was, is, and shall be, not as we want Jesus to be.

A closing word from Albert Schweitzer from his majestic study of nineteenth century biographies of Jesus in *THE QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS*. The final paragraph in this 403 page book:

"He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lakeside. He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me!" and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is."

For Albert Schweitzer, as essential as Bible study, reading, discussions, and prayer are, it is in actually following Jesus that we learn Who He is. Schweitzer read his own book. Schweitzer followed Jesus to medical school and then to Africa as a medical missionary. Jesus' call is ever before us, "come, follow me," and in so doing, we may just learn Who He is more than ever.