

Wed Night Study: Freeing Jesus by Diana Butler Bass
Chapter 2—Teacher
September 27, 2023

Opening Prayer

Lectio Divina: *John 13:12-16* After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had reclined again, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?”¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, slaves are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them.

What word or phrase jumps out?

What image or picture comes to mind?

What is God saying to you and/or us in this passage?

Diana Butler Bass remembers being a little kid—and the whole world was like a school with rules and lessons---she was learning from teachers--at school, at church and at home!

Do you think of Jesus as Teacher? Why or why not?

Out of 90 times that Jesus is addressed in the Gospels, 60 times he is called Teacher, Rabbi, Great one or Master.

Most of his actions in the Gospels involve teaching—in the Temple and beyond. The only story of his childhood, he is teaching. He even taught on his last night! Bass says “he lived and died a teacher”.

What kind of teacher was Jesus, according to Bass?

The title Rabbi—didn’t mean Jewish clergy, but was about teaching with spiritual authority—Jesus was innovative and challenging.

Bass talks about the ‘different’ rules she learned—those of Jesus and those of the Methodists, and she noticed how people did not always follow the rules of Jesus!

Jesus was a parallel to Moses as Teacher, but didn’t replace Moses (that is antisemitic), rather he reimagined and expanded the law of God, especially when he taught commands and ‘rules’—like in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere.

SMALL GROUPS:

- **How much do we think of church as a place to learn?**
- **What does it mean to think of Jesus as Teacher?**
- **Which teaching of Jesus is most compelling or attractive to you?**
- **Which is the most challenging or frustrating?**

Jesus taught in **parables**—open-ended, mysterious and challenging stories with a myriad of endings. They are ‘both-and’ stories, where Jesus comes alongside and turns our lives upside down. We all want to have neat explanations of the parables, even the Gospel writers tried to explain the parables, but they bring more questions than answers!

Bass talks about the Bible—and our temptation to ‘worship’ the Bible as a literal document. We also misunderstand John 1 The Word as The Bible, instead of Jesus himself. Sometimes the Bible is treated as a 4th member of the Trinity. The Greek word Logos (John 1) means more than a text, it is word or speech, with expectation. If we worship the Bible, we can miss who Jesus is.

Some people have disliked the idea of Jesus as teacher, because it diminishes his divinity. Some say the title “Teacher” is too shallow. But a great teacher raises new questions and surprises. A great teacher gives instructions and then sets the students free.

Jesus was more of a **Sage**—a wise teacher of a way, or a path of transformation, not just a teacher of right beliefs and morals. Sages set people free. Sages are teachers that change lives.

Bass ends her chapter with a children’s sermon where the Pastor asks ‘Where is God?’, and a small child brings his Sunday school teacher up, by the hand, saying: “Here is God!”

SMALL GROUPS:

- *What kind of teaching is a parable?*
- *What kind of authority is the Bible?*
- *How is that different from Jesus as ‘Word’ in John 1?*
- *What do you think makes a great teacher? How is Jesus a great teacher?*
- *How can we learn more about and from Jesus?*

Closing thoughts

Closing Prayers