

“Freeing Jesus” Brown Bag Bible Study---Introduction
Sept 13, 2023

Lectio Divina: Matthew 16:13-17

¹³ Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ And they said, “Some say John the Baptist but others Elijah and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do YOU say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, ^[G] the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven.

- *Word or phrase----image/picture---what is God saying to you in this passage?
- Who is Jesus to you, in a word or phrase?

Our Book: “Freeing Jesus”---Who is Diana Butler Bass?

A mainline Protestant Christian writer, speaker and teacher who has an online community called *The Cottage*, and has written 11 books, including “*Christianity for the Rest of Us*”

See excerpt pg. xiv.

Bass begins with a story of the voice of Jesus asking her to free him from the Washington National cathedral, a painting above the altar!

What might Jesus need to be freed from?

What does it mean to you to ‘set Jesus free’?

We tend to put Jesus in ‘boxes’—we can get stuck with certain images, and that can limit how we see God showing up for and with us.

“Freeing Jesus” means finding and rediscovering who Jesus is in our lives.

9/10 Americans believe Jesus was real

But only ¼ attend church regularly.

People tend to have some relationship with Jesus if not the church (even though the body of Christ is the church).

Small Group Discussion:

- What might Jesus need to be freed from?
- Have you put Jesus in a box? What does it mean to you to ‘set Jesus free’ in your life?
- How do you understand people wanting Jesus, but not the church?

Bass lays out three different terms for understanding Jesus:

Jesus of History—the historical Jesus, the Jesus Seminar

Christ of faith—the Jesus of theology and doctrine

Jesus of Experience—the Jesus of our hearts and lives

When Saul is blinded, he asks: “Who are you Lord?”

And Jesus replies, “I am Jesus, who you are persecuting”.

Paul himself introduces different ‘faces’ of Jesus—light, gift-giver, wisdom, deliverer, radical

Bass has experience with 6 different Jesuses:

Jesus the **Friend, Feacher, Savior, Lord, Way, Presence**.

Think about which one of these Jesuses resonate with you.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8),

but we change over time, and Jesus walks with us through that change, our ever-companion.

Small Group Discussion:

- Which one are you more familiar with, and why—Historical Jesus, Christ of faith, or Jesus of experience?
- Which resonate with you: Jesus as **Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way or Presence**?
- What has been your understanding of Jesus? And how has it changed?
- How can sharing our stories of Jesus help us understand one another more?

Summary of our Discussions

Closing Prayers

Next week’s Study on 9/20—Pastor Diane Ford leading at FPC Matawan
“Jesus as Friend”