

Jesus of History

Opening Prayer

Good and gracious God, open our hearts and minds, that we might grow in our knowledge of you. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother who lives and reigns with you in union with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Two Natures

- Discussion:

List the attributes of characteristics of God and list the attributes or characteristics of humans. How are we different? What sets us apart? What –if anything – do we share in common?

- God is Transcendent, yet also Immanent

- **Transcendent:** outside of our world and experience
- **Immanent:** in the world (through Jesus)
- God has broken into our world so that He can be touched and encountered by us

- Christology: The Study of the Christ

- the early disciples knew him as a man, yet came to realize that he was also God (called him LORD)
- over many years and much debate, Christians tried to understand how he could be both God and man, leading to the **Doctrine of the Incarnation:**
 - fully human (100%) → but not less than God
 - fully divine (100%) → but completely human

- ▶ **Communion:** Jesus as the perfect union of the divine and human

- ▶ “human” as we were originally supposed to be (*Jesus = without sin*)

- Why is our understanding of the relationship between Jesus’ humanity and his divinity important? Why do we care? Why do we worry about it?

Influences how we think about the relationship between humans & God and between God & the Creation:

- Is flesh “bad”? Should we reject the physical world in favor of spiritual things?

Your answer will affect how you think about asceticism (e.g., fasting), celibacy, etc.

- Can you have a personal relationship with God or do you need to go through a mediator (because you are “impure” or “corrupt” or “unclean”)?

Your answer will affect how you think about your own self worth (“I’m not worthy”), whether God intervenes in the world (“miracles”), priests, saints, etc.

Jesus of History

- Several non-Christian sources of information attest to the execution of Jesus and the existence of a movement that he founded.
- What do we know from the Bible about most of Jesus' life? **NOT MUCH**
 - born to a Jewish family around 6 B.C.
 - lived in Nazareth in Galilee until he was an adult, and became a traveling preacher and wonderworker
 - was publically executed for claiming to be God's son (or God)
- Discussion

What do you know about Jesus' life? What would you like to know?
- Jesus in the 4 Gospels of the New Testament portion of the Bible:
 - Birth
 - Childhood
 - Ministry:
 - Baptized by John the Baptist at the beginning of his ministry
 - What kinds of miracles did he do?
 - What did he teach?
 - How did he teach?
 - Who did he proclaim the Gospel to?
 - Who criticized and opposed him? Why did they criticize him?
 - ▶ Sadducees: focused on worship in the Temple and only believed in the Torah: *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*
 - ▶ Pharisees: focused on following the laws given by God, and accepted the authority the Torah and other books (Judges, Isaiah, Daniel, etc.)
 - Death
 - Resurrection

There were several religious leaders of rebellions around the time when Jesus lived. To the authorities, Jesus and his movement probably looked much like one of them.

Why so many rebellions? In part, probably because people were looking for the Messiah: Daniel 7 speaks of the rise and fall of 4 kingdoms before the arrival of the Messiah, and Daniel 9 takes Jeremiah 70 years and makes it into 70 weeks of years or 7×70 years = 490 years, around the time of Jesus.

Concluding Prayer

Jesus, we desire to be messengers of your Good News.

In your humanity, you have walked with us, felt the pains and joys of living.

In your divinity, you are our source of substance and transformation.

*Give us the courage to share you with the world through our lives,
to be a source of peace and healing. Amen.*

The Birth of Jesus: stories are told in only 2 of the Gospels

Gospel of Matthew:

1. Genealogy (Abraham to Jesus)
2. Joseph has a dream.
3. Magi come to King Herod, follow the star to a home in Bethlehem.
4. Family flees to Egypt. King Herod has children of Bethlehem killed.
5. After king dies, the family returns to Judea but goes to live in Nazareth.

Gospel of Luke:

1. Angel visits Mary. Asks her to be the “God bearer.”
2. Caesar Augustus declares a census so he can assess taxes.
3. Family goes to Bethlehem, the city of Joseph’s ancestors, to participate in the census.
4. There is no room in the inn, so Jesus is born in a manger.
5. Angels announce His birth to shepherds.

Childhood: only 1 story - left behind in the Temple in Jerusalem

“Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:48-49)

Baptized by the John the Baptist

“John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me...I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 1:4-8)

Teachings, Miracles, and Opposition

While he was going through a field of grain on a Sabbath, his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. Some Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Have you not read what David did when he and those [who were] with him were hungry? [How] he went into the house of God, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions.” Then he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if he would cure on the Sabbath so that they might discover a reason to accuse him. But he realized their intentions and said to the man with the withered hand, “Come up and stand before us.” And he rose and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” Looking around at them all, he then said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so and his hand was restored. But they became enraged and discussed together what they might do to Jesus...

A great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.

And raising his eyes toward his disciples he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for the kingdom of God is yours. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who are now weeping, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice and leap for joy on that day! Behold, your reward will be great in heaven. For their ancestors treated the prophets in the same way."

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

But woe to you who are filled now, for you will be hungry..."

"But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them...love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful."

"Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven..."

And he told them a parable, "Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? No disciple is superior to the teacher; but when fully trained, every disciple will be like his teacher. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove that splinter in your eye,' when you do not even notice the wooden beam in your own eye? You hypocrite! Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye."

"A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit...A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks..."

A Pharisee invited him to dine with him...Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee...Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who...saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know

who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.” Jesus said to him in reply, . . . “Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days’ wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?” Simon said in reply, “The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven.” He said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss . . . You did not anoint my head with oil . . . So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” The others at table said to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” But he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” (Luke 6:1-7:50)

Why was Jesus executed? What was his crime?

“They led Jesus away to the high priest, and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together. . . (they) kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they found none. Many gave false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree. Some took the stand and testified falsely against him, alleging, ‘we heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands.’” Even so their testimony did not agree. . . Again the high priest asked him. . . , “Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?” Then Jesus answered, “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.’” At that the high priest tore his garments and said, “What further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?” They all condemned him as deserving to die.

As soon as morning came, the chief priests with the elders and the scribes . . . handed him over to Pilate. Pilate questioned him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” He said to him in reply, “You say so.” The chief priests accused him of many things. Again Pilate questioned him, “Have you no answer? See how many things they accuse you of.” Jesus gave him no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now on the occasion of the feast he used to release to them one prisoner whom they requested. A man called Barabbas was then in prison along with the rebels who had committed murder in a rebellion. The crowd came forward and began to ask him to do for them as he was accustomed. Pilate answered, “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” . . . But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate again said to them in reply, “Then what [do you want] me to do with [the man you call] the king of the Jews?” They shouted again, “Crucify him.” Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” They only shouted the louder, “Crucify him.” So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas to them and, after he had Jesus scourged, handed him over to be crucified.” (Mark 14:53-64)

Resurrection: 4 versions of the story

“When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him...they saw that the stone had been rolled back (from the tomb); it was very large. On entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a white robe, and they were utterly amazed. He said to them, “Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold, the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.’” Then they went out and fled from the tomb, seized with trembling and bewilderment. They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” (Mark 16:1-8)

“...but when they entered (the tomb), they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were puzzling over this,...two men in dazzling garments appeared to them...They said to them, “Why do you seek the living one among the dead? He is not here, but he has been raised...” Then they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven and to all the others. The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James;...but their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe them. But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened.” (Luke 24:3-12)

“...Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb...And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, approached, rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing was white as snow. The guards were shaken with fear of him and became like dead men. Then the angel said to the women in reply, “Do not be afraid! I know that you are seeking Jesus the crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples,...” (Matthew 28:1-7)

“...Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning,...and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb...When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place...Then the disciples returned home. But Mary stayed outside the tomb weeping...she turned around and saw Jesus there, but did not know it was Jesus...“Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni,” which means Teacher.” (John 20:1-16)