

International Christian Fellowship of Oulu Worship Meeting / Message



Date & Time: Sunday, 21.12.2008 at 15.30
Place: Chapel of St. Luke
Topic: The Life of Jesus
Author: David Mathew

The Life of Jesus

Even if we only considered His earthly life - from His birth until His death on the cross - we would find that it was truly unique. His resurrection and ascension to heaven crown His perfect life & prove that He is who He claimed to be - the Son of God.

Journey with me and take a look at the exciting life of Jesus.

Firstly the birth of Jesus. As prophesied in the Scriptures, the Virgin Mary gave birth to her child in Bethlehem and on that night, the Father in heaven sent His angels to proclaim to mankind the good news of Christ's birth and sing heaven's song. They surely had something to sing about! This time, God had not sent a mere prophet but His own Son, the promised Messiah and Savior of mankind. The shepherds who witnessed this sight in the sky and heard the declaration & song of the angels, rejoiced in wonder and searched out the child who was born that night. Months later, the wise men from the east came to the land of Israel earnestly seeking for the child. Their journey began after they noticed an unusual star, which they claimed to be His star! The splendor of Herod's palace did not quench their desire which was fulfilled only when they found the child. It's interesting to note that they were not playing with the child but instead worshipped Him and presented gifts to the King. Can you imagine the wonder that Mary's heart experienced as she watched their reverence to her Child? Certainly, He was no ordinary child.

Exemplary in submission & obedience, He must have been a pleasure to be with. As Jesus grew, He became a carpenter just as Joseph was. I wonder if Jesus was a quick learner or did He already know everything? Did Joseph always wonder as He watched Jesus working so skillfully? Could he foresee that Jesus would one day bleed to death on a tree?

Next scene - Watch Him as a 12 year old boy talking to the scribes & doctors of the law, in the temple at Jerusalem. Could a young boy's ramblings hold the rapt attention of men who had spent a lifetime in understanding the law? Yes Jesus was in their midst, asking them questions. They all marveled at His understanding and answers. It must have been a memorable experience for those learned men and as their conscience was awakened, did they realize that He was indeed the Lawgiver?

Watch Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist and as He comes out of the water praying to the Father, heaven opens and the Spirit descends like a dove. The Father publicly acknowledged His beloved Son by saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased". The baptizer John, was in no doubt that He was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

For our sakes, Jesus willingly submitted to Satan's temptation. Until then, all men had fallen to the craft of the wicked one, who approached Jesus with great ambition. But through it all, Jesus emerged victorious and Satan could not dent the purity of Christ! Satan left Jesus having nothing to accuse Him of. John writes that the Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Freedom from Satan was finally coming.

Watch him as He journeyed the length and breadth of Israel with the 12 disciples. The 12 year old who once captivated the learned men in the temple grew into a teacher loved and respected by the masses. He preached repentance and spoke of God as a loving Father waiting to receive us. He spoke of great rejoicing in heaven over every sinner who repents & comes home. He spoke about hell as a place prepared for the devil and his angels. He described it as a real place where there would be unquenchable fire, gnashing of teeth & worms do not die. Jesus who knew best about heaven and hell said that no price on earth was too much to pay for escaping hell. According to Him, it was better to enter into life maimed than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched. The people heard Him gladly as He spoke with authority and compassion. The way Jesus expounded the Law amazes me, for unlike the scribes, He brought out the real intent of

the Law. In the course of preaching & healing, there were times when He had no time for food yet doing His Father's will was His meat.

In His own words,

He came NOT to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. (Remember that it would have been easier for Him to condemn the world than save it.)

He came NOT to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many.

He came NOT for the righteous but to call sinners to repentance. (I'm so glad that He came for me.)

What did He claim to be?

Light of the World

Bread of Life

Good Shepherd - who lays down His life for the sheep

The WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE

The resurrection and life

The True Vine

Greater than Jonah

Greater than Solomon

Before Abraham was I AM.

To have come from above.

I and my Father are one. He who has seen me has seen the Father.

Do you think the disciples were tired of listening to His preaching? I don't think so. When most Jesus' followers left Him because of His hard teachings, some continued following Him. Peter confessed saying, "To whom can we go? For you have the words of eternal life". Jesus promised them His own peace and joy while they lived in a world where they would face various trials. He promised to take them to Heaven where He'd prepare mansions for them.

He taught many things that are contrary to popular notions

- While most philosophies attempt to make man good from the outside, Jesus said that it is from the heart that all evil comes forth. He said that except we are changed from within, that is by being born again, we would never see the kingdom of God. When we come to God in faith, His Spirit alone is able to carry out such a work inside of us. Nothing that we do can change us from the inside.

- While man in today's materialistic world, thinks that it is goods (possessions or stuff) that make up life, Jesus taught that man's life does not consist of the things that he possesses. The Giver of life, who understood life the best, could not have been more correct.

- If we asked Him about wise and safe investments, His answer would be, "Rather lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Heaven is a real place that is not affected by any global financial crisis!

- **While the Jewish rulers were obsessed with keeping the nitty gritty of the law, Jesus summed up the Law in this that we should love God with all of our heart, mind and soul and that we ought to love others as ourselves. What really mattered in God's sight was not merely the outward observance of the Law but a heart where God was the King.

- While men think that enjoying sin is absolute freedom, Jesus taught us that those who commit sin are slaves to sin. Only the Son (that is Jesus) could set us free.

- The kingdom that Jesus brought in has values quite contrary to the worldly kingdoms. Here love is the law. The poor in spirit, the merciful, the meek and the peacemakers are blessed.

- Jesus taught us the value of the soul. He said that if a man gained the whole world and yet lost his soul, then he has lost everything!

Jesus loved children & welcomed them to His presence and blessed them saying that the kingdom of God belongs to anyone who would accept it as a child. As a man, His prayer life was extraordinary and he never compromised on His time with the Father, no matter how busy His day was. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, and gave sight to the blind, set free those who were demon possessed, healed the broken hearted, raised the dead, exercised control over creation and forgave sins. Unlike the gurus of today, Jesus performed His works in public and not in a secret corner. No one who was healed had to go back to Him for a second round of healing. His work was perfect. In today's age of advanced medicine, we don't find anyone who has mastered everything about the human body. Scientists have now discovered how complex the human body actually is. If He was not our Creator, how could He completely heal people with all kinds of sickness? He could read the thoughts of men and even see into the future. He prophesied about the future of Jerusalem and the end times of the world. There was no need that Jesus could not meet. His miracles were not an attempt to gain cheap popularity but to meet a need and open people's eyes to a spiritual truth. A man with such words and deeds would surely have had a great following but Jesus was not giving into the desires of the

crowd. (In simple words, all this did not go to His head). Instead, He called for sacrifice and denial on the part of those who would choose to follow Him.

He was perfect in word and deed. He only spoke that which His Father taught Him. All His works proceeded from the Father. He preached publicly and yet never had to recant or apologize for His words. He taught that men will give an account of every idle word that they utter. As for Jesus, He spoke nothing but the truth. Referring to the Old Testament, He could say, "Search the Scriptures for they testify of Me". Which Jewish man in His right senses could make such an astounding claim? The more I look into the OT, the clearer the picture of Christ emerges.

Seeing the multitudes follow Jesus, many religious leaders envied Jesus and hated Him. He once cleaned the temple at Jerusalem of robbers and the goods that they sold. The (Pharisees) who claimed all rights to spiritual leadership, felt threatened as Jesus claimed the temple as His house. They questioned Jesus about His authority and were always watchful to find something to accuse Him of. Yet for all their misplaced hatred, Jesus challenged them if they could condemn Him for any sin. And this is the challenge He throws at all of mankind. They encountered Jesus on many different occasions hoping to catch Him in word or deed. But all their attempts seemed futile as Jesus spoke with such wisdom and performed works that were unparalleled. He told them very clearly that if they would not believe that He was the Messiah, they would die in their sins. All the external show of piety would count for nothing before God who looks instead to the heart. Jesus had hoped that they would recognize Him as the perfect man who is God incarnate. The demons recognized the sinlessness of Jesus and cried out saying, "Thou Holy One of God". His enemies as well as His disciples recognized it too. John who was one of His disciples wrote that in Him is no sin and Peter wrote that He did no sin. What a testimony! He alone fulfilled the Law. I wonder how the disciples coped with such an extraordinary person - who knew everything and had power to do anything. I am sure that they would have felt unworthy at times of such company and yet at other times, would have been completely confused as they witnessed the simplicity and humility of Jesus.

At the grave of Lazarus, He wept as He shared in the grief and pain of the family. Watching over Jerusalem, He wept. Not for the sufferings that He would undergo but for the city's unwillingness to take shelter under God Almighty. Do our rebellion, pride & life of sin make Him weep? Was it our ultimate judgment (being consigned to the flames of hell), that made Him come down as a Savior before He takes His place as the Judge of all mankind?

As He took part of the Last Supper, I tend to think that the disciples would have been stunned as He offered them bread saying that it was His body that was to be given for them. And as He blessed and offered wine, He spoke that it was His blood in the New Testament, shed for them. He was fully aware of the sufferings that lay ahead of Him. He repeatedly spoke to the disciples about His death, but they could not understand it then. He even taught the people that no one could take His life but that He would lay it down of His own. Who would have thought that One as popular as Him - a teacher and such a great prophet would suffer such a horrible death. He knew that Judas would betray him, Peter would deny Him and others would abandon Him. Yet His love and mercy for them never ceased (as can be seen after His resurrection). I am confident that even Judas would have been forgiven if only He had known Jesus well. Sadly, Judas thought of himself as smarter than all others and even seemed to think that he could make some money by betraying Jesus. In the end, Judas realized his error and instead of turning to Jesus, he bought the lie - suicide as a way of escape from life. Yet when we see Jesus, we find that He never made any attempt to run away from that situation. He could have if He wanted to but He had come to the earth for this very hour.

Dragged from one court to another, the Judge of all mankind was condemned by sinful men. The time had come for the sacrifice of all ages where in a way that we cannot fully understand, God took our sins and laid them on His Son Jesus, the Lamb of God to make it possible for us to receive forgiveness of sins. Imagine having to pay for crimes that you never committed! But because He loved us, He owned our guilt and paid the price. He suffered abuse and cruel mocking from the people (His own creation) yet He had only words of forgiveness for them. He took the sinner's place and uttered the prayer of a forsaken sinner addressing His Father as God and saying "My God My God, why have You forsaken me?" While on the cross He refused any intoxication that would ease His suffering. He chose to consciously bear everything out of His love for us.

The thieves who were hanging by His side, ridiculed Him until one of them realized that Jesus was not only innocent but that He was the King. And when He turned to Jesus, he was welcomed with the most assuring and gracious words that he'd ever heard. "Today you will be with me in paradise!". I wonder if that thief carefully watched Jesus suffering silently. Even the centurion, who was in-charge of the crucifixion, exclaimed that truly He was the Son of God. Arrested, forsaken,

rejected, mocked, tortured and finally executed, His suffering is truly beyond our comprehension and it tells me that if there was any other way that mankind could be saved then Jesus would not have died. It also tells me how costly sin is and that if we reject the offer of forgiveness given to us in Jesus name, then we would have to pay for our sins all through eternity.

After He died, He was buried and on the third day, to everyone's surprise, He rose again just as He had foretold. The Roman seal and watch could not prevent Him from rising again. Death and hell were defeated as Jesus rose victorious. He spent forty days with the disciples – teaching them & preparing them to witness. There was no more doubt about the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus then ascended into heaven with the words that He will be with all of His children always even to the end of the age. The frightened disciples were transformed into bold witnesses for Christ. Jesus promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ.

He is coming back again just as He promised. But this time He won't come as a helpless babe but will appear as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. The head that once bowed under the weight of our sin and was crowned with thorns will adorn the brightest crown. The face that once was spat upon would be the most precious face ever known to man. And the mockery of men would give way to glorious praise offered by angels and those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior. Every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I look forward to the return of the Son of God and to be forever with the One who loved me and gave Himself for me. To know more about Jesus, read the Bible (especially the 4 gospels). And as you read it, you will meet the risen Savior, your Creator and Redeemer. We need to realize that we deserve God's judgment because of our sins and that without Jesus, we are completely lost. When we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus as the One who died for our sins on the cross, we receive eternal life. Jn 3:16. We become God's children by welcoming Jesus into our lives. Jn 1:12. Our sins are forgiven and God gives us His Holy Spirit to live inside of us. Though we deserve hell, yet because of His grace, we are promised heaven. What a hope!