



JESUS THE TEACHER

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We heard recently the way Jesus shatters our illusions in how we see life and how we live it out. Where we skilfully over many years erect various types of spiritual illusions to safeguard ourselves from the real truth that Jesus confronts us with. Shattering our false illusions is part of Jesus job to get us to see past ourselves and to focus our attention on him.

Great teachers not only dispel myths and shatter illusions; great teachers make you think; whether you want to or not.

One of the qualities that many of us tend to gloss over when we think about Jesus is the fact that he was a truly great teacher.

In fact he was the greatest teacher who ever lived. He taught in ways no one had ever heard before. And what he said touched people deeply. If we cast our minds back to primary school or secondary school days whether its 5 years ago or 65 years ago I have no doubt that we can all remember a teacher who impacts upon us for good or for ill through their teaching.

In my experience some were excellent and some; well they could do much better.

In Belfast we had a French teacher who would be lying down on top of his desk with a pillow under his head, casually staring up at the ceiling, and greeted each one of us in French as we entered the room. 'Bonjour Alain, Bonjour Henri', and so on. Then he would go outside for a quick smoke and proceed to teach us as he inhaled on some Russian cheroot.

Or some of the art teachers. Art was great fun; because some of the teachers just let you go ahead and express what you feel on canvas. So it was all a bit random without any structure.

We had a maths teacher Mr Steele and when I think back he was more of a philosopher than a maths teacher.

Any way one day the class was misbehaving and by way of punishment he got a glass bowl filled it with water and put a pen in the bowl.

Then he told us for the rest of the period to write down 20 observations of the bowl, the water and the pen.

Well you can imagine for a 14 year old it was mental torture.

I have no idea how many observations I noted down. But the one thing I learnt much later on was that a persons Mind is influenced by how much they observe and understand truth.

In order for us to function effectively as Christians and think clearly, our Minds must be Cleansed, refreshed, and renewed so that we can receive deeper transforming truth. Jesus as the greatest teacher who ever lived was a master at mind renewal.

He knew that the mind is the gateway through which we process and apply truth. But truth is accessible only to the receptive mind. The key being; A person must be willing to learn. In other words they must be open to the truth.

An old Chinese proverb states: when the person is ready, the teacher appears.

But how do we know if we really want to learn.

Are we ready for the mysteries of God's kingdom and what it means to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind.

Like youngsters learning to read; when will we be done with basic picture books and be instead ready for things that will stretch and challenge our minds spiritually. For many Christians we go a certain distance and then we put the blockers on and go no further.

Jesus as a great teacher used parables as mind renewing tools to stretch and challenge our thinking.

He used parables to make people think differently about God's kingdom and to test whether they wanted to enter into his kingdom.

He knew exactly what he was saying, how he would say it, when he would say it and to whom he would say it and he could literally read a person's mind.

He knew their thoughts and he knows our thoughts of each person in church this morning. So when Jesus spoke to the people he did so for a reason; not to confuse them; but to get them to use their minds; their logic; their powers of reasoning.

Test and see what I am saying. He said; 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked through the dough'.

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field'.

'Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.'

These sayings brought light and insight to the eyes of those seeking God; but cast a veil of darkness and mystery over critics and cynics. Nothing has changed. For many people their minds became dull; because their hearts have become hard.

They miss the opportunity to look beyond themselves and the obvious.

Jesus goes on to say why he speaks to people in parables.

'This is why I speak to them in parables otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts; and turn, and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.'

Words spoken by the great teacher in Matthew 13.

There you have Jesus message of the good news in three words;

Firstly To Understand, To Turn and be To be Healed. This is the process of how change generally speaking comes in a person's life.

Salvation comes to those who allow their minds to be open in the first place; in order to change their heart so that they understand the message; and who turn away from their misguided illusions, to God.

So first you must ask yourself this question; am I ready for such a turning away from myself, to God?

Because when all is said and done Salvation involves belief in God and a heart felt turning away from sin.

And the point where we must all start from is being totally honest with yourself and know your failings and sinfulness.

When we do not love God with all our heart mind and soul we sin. Which means that I constantly sin against God because I do not love him with all my heart mind and soul.

I want to but I can't, because there is still part of me that wants to do my own thing; without God. Maybe others feel the same way.

And who of us can honestly say that we love our neighbours as ourselves.

Is my mind prepared to be Open and then pierce through the layers of illusion, confusion, doubt and cynicism, like stripping away the layers of skin around an onion.////////

There is only one way to find out. Through your mind think carefully to what Jesus is saying; is the hidden truth breaking through.

If so will you allow it to shape your thoughts and renew your mind? And If the truth does Not appear before you and remains difficult to find; all is not lost; unless you give up the search.

My advice to you is; don't give up the search. With Jesus treasure hunters become treasure finders.

The seeker is rewarded; but the cynic goes home empty handed.

One difficulty that people encounter is that they claim they cannot find God.

They say: I want to find him, but I can't; or he simply isn't there.

Well, we are told in the bible that God is omnipresent; meaning he is everywhere. So if he is everywhere why can I not find him? God of course can hide himself from us if he wants to and one of the reasons he does that is because of our sins. So we need to get that sorted out. Our sins get in the way of us growing in our faith. It doesn't mean however that God has disappeared.

David tells us in Psalm 66; if I have cherished sin in my heart the Lord would not have listened.' Cherished here means to aim for sin and to look forward to it. It doesn't mean the actual presence of sin in our lives, because sin is always present in our lives at some point.

But there is a huge difference a gulf, between the element of sin and actually looking forward to sinning; cherishing and holding on to it.

Proverbs 8 tell us; those who seek me find me.

And Jeremiah in chapter 29 puts it well when he says; you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. 'I will be found by you', declares the Lord.

Sometimes our search for God may grow cold and we think that, that's it. The search has ended. But then something miraculous happens. One day God taps us on the shoulder and he says; its me. I'm here now.

You were looking for me and now I'm here. So what are you going to do.?

The reality is of course that God was always there but he has chosen to come to us at this particular point and time in our lives. This happened with countless people in the bible when God turns up unexpectedly.

One such incident happened with Mary the teenage mother of Jesus.

The angel Gabriel was sent to Nazareth to speak to her when she was engaged to be married to Joseph. Gabriel knew her name; do not be afraid Mary you have found favour with God.

You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus.

After listening to all this, what was Mary's reaction when God turns up right before her eyes.

She said, I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said. God appears taps Mary on the shoulder using an angel. Mary had no idea this would happen or the full consequences of what Gabriel had outlined. God turned up unexpectedly with Mary, but always at the right time in a person's life.

She was a good virtuous Jewish girl although she wasn't necessarily seeking God.

As a good Jewish girl she knew of the existence of God. She knew that he was omnipresent. She knew that he was the maker of heaven and earth; but She didn't expect him to turn up in the way he did.

This can be a very sobering moment in a persons life; God turning up and whispering your name; and you know that its him. But what happens next? What did Mary do? She accepted God at his word and believed it to happen.

She had the opportunity to keep her mind shut and convince herself that this was all a bad dream and things like this don't really happen. But she didn't.

In submission to God she turned to him not away from him.

Or little Zacchaeus who climbed up the sycamore fig tree to see Jesus passing through.

His situation was different from Mary's in that he was looking for Jesus although perhaps not in a deep spiritual way; more in a casual way.

He went looking for him among the crowd of on lookers and found him. How did he react when he found Jesus; he told everyone that he would give back the money he acquired to the poor in fact he would give back four times he needed to.

I have no doubt that Zacchaeus was a happier man giving money to the poor than taking it from them; because Jesus in those few moments with Zacchaeus had turned his life around.

Both Zacchaeus and Mary had allowed the great teacher to open their minds and heart and turn towards him. The truth was in front of them; they could see it and they knew it to be true.

So whether we are seeking God like Zacchaeus or not expecting God like Mary what will be your response?

You see the scary thing is that God is still around. I think we all know that and accept that.

But what happens if and when he turns up in our lives and we know and hear him speaking the truth. Jesus speaks the truth and we know deep down he is right.

Jesus can turn up most unexpectantly. Are you prepared to allow your mind and heart to be changed by him? He may turn up just the once and give you that one opportunity.

Who is teaching you how to live your life rightly? Yourself; your boss, your friends, your family. Can they be trusted? Can they be always trusted to have your interests at heart?

Alan Wilson is a Presbyterian Minister in Northern Ireland, where he serves a large congregation, supported by his wife. Before he took up the call to serve Christ, he was in the Royal Ulster Constabulary for 30-years. He has two children and two grandchildren and enjoys soccer, gardening, zoology, politics and reading. He voted for Brexit in the hope that the stranglehold of Brussels might finally be broken. He welcomes any that might wish to correspond with him through the [Contact Page](#) of The Postil.

The [photo](#) shows, "Christ and Nicodemus," by Fritz von Uhde, painted ca. 1896.

