

THE JESUS DIALOGUE

A Primer on Jesus' New World, A Beautiful Revolution

Jesus' New World was modeled by Jesus in the Shared Table.

Jesus walked the earth as the radical, extravagant, and “dangerous,” “favor of God” not just for us, but for our enemies, too. He practiced a boundary pushing, Torah challenging, line crossing, Pharisee infuriating radical table practice.

Jesus' new world causes us to radically rethink everything, whether it be economic, social, political and even religious. It's a new way of structuring human society that causes us to rethink all of the scripts we been giving. It's a beautiful revolution.

It's not about going to church, but about being the church.

It's about loving like Jesus, and thereby putting on display what a world changed by Jesus looks like.

Jesus' teachings, his values and ethics, are the focal point of this new world. Therefore, we are committed to a Jesus-story-centered approach to our sacred texts. The Shared Table becomes the primary context in which we read our sacred texts. And the Shared Table is where we learn, together to discern and apply the implications of the Jesus story in following Jesus in our lives today.

Jesus is our example, teacher, liberator, and friend. His teachings are the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle, for our understanding of church, and our engagement with society. We are committed to following Jesus.

Western culture is slowly emerging from the Christendom era, when church and Empire jointly presided over a society in which almost all were assumed to be Christian. Whatever its positive contributions on values and institutions, Christendom seriously distorted the Jesus story, marginalized Jesus, and left the churches complicit in matters of oppression and exclusion, and in most cases, misrepresentative of Jesus in this post-Christian culture. As we reflect on this, we are committed to learning from the experience and perspectives of movements of Jesus followers that have gone before us and that rejected standard Christendom assumptions and pursued alternative ways of thinking and living.

Churches are called to be committed communities of liberation and healing, places of friendship, mutual submission and accountability, and multi-voiced learning. As we eat together, sharing bread and wine, we sustain hope as we seek Jesus' new world together. We are committed to nurturing and developing such communities, in which young and old are valued, leadership is consultative rather than hierarchical, roles are related to gifts rather than economic status, gender, orientation, or race.

Jesus modeled a preferential option for the poor, as well as ALL who were oppressed and marginalized. Jesus indicted systems that benefit the wealthy and impoverish the many. In a world where economic injustice is rife, we are committed to finding ways of living simply, sharing generously, working toward a world where there is enough for everyone, not out of Charity, but because of the way this new world is put together. It involves a radical redistribution of wealth, privilege and power.

“That the world may be healed.” — John 3.17

All Texts Quoted from the NRSV Unless Otherwise Noted

Enemy Love is at the heart of the gospel. As followers of Jesus in a divided and violent world, we are committed to finding nonviolent alternatives and to learning how to restore Justice between oppressors and oppressed, marginalized and privileged. We reject the practices of privilege pyramids and exclusive circles and embrace in their place Jesus' shared table. It's not about conquering enemies, but restoratively loving and winning them too to the Shared Table. It's neither a permissive Grace nor a retributive Justice, but a transformative Grace and restorative Justice. Mercy and Justice kiss, as Mercy becomes the means of establishing Justice and liberation for all.

As Jesus followers we are a community that freely embraces solidarity with all God's children who are oppressed, remembering that Jesus himself defined humanity's liberation in the context of what happens to "the little ones." There for we embrace the cause of the oppressed in the fight for justice not because of some philosophical principle, but because the Jesus-encounter lays upon our own life-style, a claim that connects the word "Christian" with the liberation of all who suffer.

Lastly we are people of the resurrected one. We do not look for the living among the dead. He is not there; he has risen! Yes, the domination systems of oppression and exclusion executed him—but they couldn't stop him. They crucified him and buried him in a rich man's tomb. But imperial lynching and a tomb couldn't hold him. He's still loose in the world. He's still out there, still here, still recruiting people to share, to participate in his mustard seed which he subversively planted in "the garden," his heaven which he placed within the dough, his pearl-of-great-price revolution of a radically new social order that he called 'the Kingdom of God'—a transformed world here and now. We no longer need to fear the consequence of our engagement with systems of injustice, for we stand in the victory of Jesus over all injustice, oppression and violence. A victory symbolized by an empty tomb.

Luke 14.25-33—Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

1 Corinthians 3.3-9, 21-23—You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere human beings? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are God's co-workers; you are God's field, God's building. . . . So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

1 Corinthians 4.6—Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "DO NOT GO BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN." Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

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