

## Lent Lecture 1 – Who and Why?

### Introduction

We live in a society deeply infused with the Christian story. But it is often claimed that in recent years the reasons why Christianity has traditionally followed certain patterns and rituals have become blurred and misunderstood, as life has become busier and more complex and with more distractions. There is much evidence to suggest that underlying elements of belief have begun to be eroded and confused, not just in the wider world, but also for many self-confessed believers and churchgoers. It is often claimed that one example of this is the way in which so many cease to recognise the importance of committing themselves and their families to regular church attendance. Some commentators also claim that even for many who attend church regularly do not necessarily do so for reasons of faith and the reasons for coming have become confused, with many attending more because of a social network of friends, a love for an ancient building or because they wish to be 'entertained': the seeking of entertainment poses a significant barrier since church may sometimes provide moments of spiritual elation, but at others times of emptiness, this is more to do with one's own internal situation as much as anything else, so if one comes simply for entertainment, then that poses problems all round. But some of these things may explain why some churches struggle to change, adapt and grow. One has only to look at the Sociology of Religion section in any theological library to find a vast array of evidence and commentary on church decline.

But there is cause for hope. Attendances on occasions such as Easter and Christmas show a huge increase in recent years, especially in Cathedrals and Civic Churches, where liturgy and symbolism is done well. Also, many young people who have had no association with church, seem to be spiritually curious. They express a craving for spiritual things, but they are looking for meaning and integrity in faith. If our churches can begin to present church in a more coherent and symbolically meaningful way, then there is much hope!

The routine cycles of the Church help us to walk the journey together with hundreds of other Christians locally, and billions of other Christians worldwide. We cannot do it alone. We need the Church community, just as much as the Church community needs us.

Nowhere is walking together in love more transformative for us, than during Holy Week and Easter. The events of Holy Week and Easter are central to Christian faith. They also transform our understanding of life itself. Over the next few weeks, these lectures will look to unlock some of the richness to be found within the events of the last week of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. We will discover how they suggest a living God whose care and

compassion for the world is so immense that he is willing to put himself in harm's way in order to offer humanity a chance of a richer way of being. A way of living freed from the tyranny of sin and death, with the ultimate promise of eternal life.

During this, our first lecture, we will look at who Jesus is claimed to be and the backdrop to his coming. We will explore, albeit rather too briefly, the importance of the Old Testament narrative to our understanding of Christ. For without this, the meaning of the Last Supper, the Cross and the Resurrection is lost.

In our second lecture, we will then move to look in more depth at the Last Supper. Why does Christ convene this rather strange banquet just moments before he knows he will be arrested and killed?

In the third of our series, we will take a look at the sacrifice of the cross and what it means for us. We all have to die, so why is Jesus death special and what can it tell us about how we are to live a good life? And as important, how may we die a good death?

Then in our final lecture, we will look beyond the grave and reflect on the Resurrection. Such an unbelievable event, what can it possibly offer us today in a world where we think we hold all the answers, except maybe one – what happens after we die? How can Christ's resurrection transform the way we view the world and each other?

These lectures will not look to be apologetic; that is, their main purpose is not to convert. Their intention is to simply present the facts as they are commonly known, reveal some of the pillars of Christian belief and look at why the Church has traditionally offered the rituals it has during Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday; known as the Sacred Triduum. Three days of immense sanctity and awe.

It will be helpful for each person to have the accompanying sheet of references to hand. At some moments I will make direct reference to them, but at other times I will not, depending on how much detail I consider necessary for the wider discussion. Either way, they will provide you all with some greater depth and underlying evidence for the claims I am making.

### **Who was Jesus?**

So, having got the introductions to these lectures out of the way, let us briefly start by thinking about who Jesus was. Was he even a real person?

There is a huge amount of evidence to suggest that Jesus lived and that the events we read about in the New Testament actually took place. In fact, there doesn't appear to be any

substantiated historical evidence to suggest that Jesus wasn't a real person. Interestingly, there is more evidence that Jesus lived than for many of the Roman emperors! In the New Testament and the writings of the Early Church, we seem to have evidence for Jesus' life from a huge variety of individuals and a good proportion of this evidence seems to originate from eye witnesses who lived at the time of Jesus himself.<sup>1</sup> But the evidence for Jesus' existence is not only from Christian sources, but also reliable Jewish and Roman ones as well. These include Tacitus, an eminent Roman historian, Pliny the Younger, a Roman governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor, and Josephus a respected Jewish Historian. You can see their testimonies on the reference sheet. These individuals all view the Christian faith as a threat and whilst they are not always very complimentary about Christians as a group, their evidence adds huge weight and validity to the claim that Jesus actually lived and died in the way holy scriptures describe.<sup>2</sup>

So I think it is reasonable to say that Jesus was a real person. But who was Jesus and what was so special about him?

Jesus' teachings regularly challenge cultural norms. He was a controversial figure at the time of his ministry, just as he is today. He tells us to love poverty and simple living whilst the world teaches that to be rich and accumulate possessions is to succeed;<sup>3</sup> to forgive sinners when the world would much rather we condemn them;<sup>4</sup> to love and forgive our enemies and all the time the world encourages us to attack, subdue and overcome those who stand in our way;<sup>5</sup> to seek stillness and silence with God, when the world teaches us that we are rewarded through our busyness.<sup>6</sup>

On the face of it he is very a complex figure too. One minute he is a radical turning over the tables of loan sharks and money changers in the Temple because they are bringing God's house into disrepute;<sup>7</sup> the next he is the conformer, teaching that his disciples should pay taxes and obey the law.<sup>8</sup> He teaches that he comes not to bring peace but to bring the sword, detailing how those who follow him will find themselves at odds with the authorities, their families, friends and communities.<sup>9</sup> Then, even though he is about to be arrested and

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<sup>1</sup> As well as the four Gospels and letters of the New Testament, see also the earliest writings from the Early Church. See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.1

<sup>2</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.2

<sup>3</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.3

<sup>4</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.4

<sup>5</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.5

<sup>6</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.6

<sup>7</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.7

<sup>8</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.8

<sup>9</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.9

tried for blasphemy, he tells Peter to put his sword away because violence is never the answer.<sup>10</sup> Of course, I over simplify things to prove a point, but you get the picture!

As complex as it might seem, Jesus is above all a reconciler and it is perhaps from this perspective that anyone wanting to understand Jesus better should begin. Jesus understands his calling on earth to be primarily about helping the human race to live the way it is designed to. In simple terms, that means being as least destructive to our environment and each other as possible; shrinking our footprint, if you will. Jesus shows us that to properly live is to make things grow and blossom: such as putting our energy into making relationships flourish with both those we love and hate, reordering our lives in order to nurture the living things around us, setting aside proper time to develop and grow our relationship with God our Father.

But Jesus doesn't allow us to collude with those who act in unjust ways in order to avoid conflict. Quite the reverse, he demands that we promote the dignity and equality of all and stand up to those who would distort the world for their own ends. That doesn't sound very peaceful, does it? And sometimes it isn't. But neither does it mean being an anarchist by speaking or acting in an aggressive or unthinking way towards anything or anyone that annoys us.

Notice how Jesus challenges hypocrisy and unfairness in the Gospels. He is very careful about the battles he chooses and the words he uses. He speaks out about important issues in a balanced way. The outcome is always to return dignity to the person most afflicted. He usually accompanies this by good works. He gets stuck into setting a good example and showing a better way of going about things. And then he doesn't just leave the individual there to return back into the same messiness that they have come from, he poses them a challenge. "Do not continue as you have been, change and walk more in tune with God. Here, I have shown you how"... Or words to that effect. A really good example of this is the story of the women caught in adultery we see documented in John's Gospel.<sup>11</sup> Notice how he challenges and nurtures in equal measure.

But the moral teaching and good works that Jesus encourages are a part of something much bigger than just showing human beings how to be kinder to each other. It is all a part of a much grander aspiration. Jesus clearly felt that he had been given a responsibility to return humanity back to God the Father – to mend the broken relationship. The moral action he teaches is a part of this. He shows us that being kind to each other is one aspect necessary

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<sup>10</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.10

<sup>11</sup> See 'References to read alongside Lecture One', pt.11

to repair that relationship, but there is much more to it than just that. The testimony from the time, both from within the Jewish tradition and outside of it, all points to a widely recognised fact – that Jesus and his followers felt sure that he was God’s son, the Messiah, sent to free God’s people from their oppression and to show humanity what it meant to live life the way it was designed to be lived, in full relationship with God.

The final days of his life, death and resurrection prove pivotal to this. The circumstances of, and way he responds to, his greatest earthy trial is extremely significant. But we will come to that in a later lecture.

For now, it is worth noting that modern scholarship has challenged us to think hard about Jesus’ situation. The eminent Roman Catholic scholar, Brant Pitre, reminds us; ‘Jesus is firmly rooted in his Jewish religious situation. Jesus was a Jew. He was born to a devout Jewish mother and received the Jewish sign of circumcision. He grew up in the Jewish town of Galilee. As a young man he studied the Torah (Jewish scriptures), celebrated the Jewish feasts and holy days and went on pilgrimages to the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. When he was thirty years old he began teaching and preaching in the Jewish synagogues about the fulfilment of the Jewish scriptures and proclaiming the kingdom of God to the Jewish people’.<sup>12</sup>

So Jesus was certainly a Jew, and a devout one at that. In other words, Jesus was religious. And as we study Jesus’ words and actions more closely we see that everything Jesus did seems to be intentional to the wider project. Not a single word or action is lost as he gives the human race the perfect human example that it has been waiting for, and reveals the purest route back to God, the Father. We are left with no option, then, but to conclude that rituals and religious observance were as much a part of Jesus’ example as his teaching and other actions. This is a point that many modern teachers of the faith often seem to skirt. Maybe this is because they deem it to be at odds with what our secular culture wishes to hear. Nonetheless, it is an essential point to make, and one we can’t make often enough. Jesus could not have secured our salvation without being completely obedient in his observance of the traditional ritualistic Jewish faith. We will begin to recognise this more fully in our second and third lectures, when we come to looking more closely at the events of the Last Supper and Crucifixion.

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<sup>12</sup> Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), p.1

## **The People of Israel**

For now, it is enough to recognise that the whole of Jewish history has a part to play in the reality we see unfolding in the person of Jesus Christ. We cannot come to understand the significance of Jesus more fully without first understanding the journey God's people had been on prior to Jesus' arrival on earth. So I will now attempt to describe that journey as succinctly as I can so that we may arrive where we need to in good time. I will ask you to forgive the fact that, because of the pressing urgency, I am unlikely to give nearly enough attention nor do justice to some of the most significant parts of the Old Testament narrative. I hope you understand that I am attempting to give you a brief overview, enough to see the main trajectory of the pre-Christian biblical narrative only, so that we don't become overly side-tracked from our main investigation.

Anyhow, it goes something like this. Following the calamitous events in the garden of Eden with Adam and Eve, humanity started a journey of new discovery as it was forced to come to terms with the full weight of being fully conscious and aware of its environment and existence. Their intimate relationship with God had previously afforded them comfort and protection from the woes that full knowledge of the world would bring. But that protection had been broken by their disobedience and suddenly the new burden hit them like a battering ram. The moment Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit from the tree of all knowledge, they fell from grace. Thus this moment has become known as 'the Fall'.

It gets worse, because following the Fall humanity seems incapable of resisting sin. It starts with Cain killing Abel, his brother. And then with each new generation it gets worse and worse. So humanity, generation by generation, entrenches the separation from their God who gives them life, by continually choosing the path of rebellion and sin. Thus they choose to walk a path towards death. God loves his people, no question, but each individual must love Him in response if His love is to be fully realised. There must be a response if they are to be redeemed. Thus the Old Testament from then on is a narrative of God revealing himself little by little, through his prophets and authors in order to present his people with olive branches to repair the brokenness.

At various moments throughout the biblical narrative, God intervenes in order to turn his people back towards his loving care, where they will be safe. Sometimes this is subtle and

sometimes less so. The story of Noah and the Flood,<sup>13</sup> Abraham,<sup>14</sup> the events of the Exodus and the Passover ritual,<sup>15</sup> and the Commandments and the Law<sup>16</sup> are all such occasions.

We will return to the huge significance of the Passover meal for Christian belief in our next session when we explore the Last Supper in more detail. For now, it is enough to note, the Passover meal is an essential part of all that follows at the Exodus, since it marks out God's faithful people so that they may be spared. This is a significant part of God's interaction at the Exodus as he saves his people from the tyranny they are facing in Egypt. He then marks that in the nation's long-term collective memory by instigating the Passover Meal as an annual ritual that is to be celebrated on the same day each year. This is to remind the people of Israel of the truth that God is faithful even when they are not. God saves!

But no sooner are they saved, than the people begin their disobedience once again. They repeatedly turn in the opposite direction, further entrenching the separation. Laws are given to them to try and keep them on track, but they begin abusing and manipulating them for their own ends. So disordered do their desires become that, rather than return to God's goodness, they produce idols for themselves to alleviate their longing for Him.<sup>17</sup> Thankfully each generation has its prophets and righteous people who keep the candle of faith burning.

A tabernacle is erected so that the people have a visible representation to remind them that God is with them, and a structure for sacrifices and offerings is developed so that the people have tangible rituals to encourage their rebuilding of relationship with God.<sup>18</sup> Offering gifts to God helps them remove the consequences of sin and offers to them possibility of a relationship with God that is not overshadowed by guilt. Aaron and his sons are consecrated priests to oversee the ordering and conduct of this ritualistic observance.<sup>19</sup>

God eventually leads them to new their own home. But even that isn't enough for them. They soon demand an earthly king, someone who will do what they want. This represents a huge betrayal of God's kingship over them. Not only is their demand foolish in God's eyes, it reveals their arrogance and lack of obedience to God's design for his people. But, as it is their wish he gives them a king, in the person of Saul.<sup>20</sup> When King Saul ceases to be obedient and the

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<sup>13</sup> Genesis 7:1 – 9:end

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 12:1 - 25:end

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 13:1 – 18: end

<sup>16</sup> Exodus 31:1 – 31:end

<sup>17</sup> Exodus 32:2-10

<sup>18</sup> These are detailed most precisely in the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers

<sup>19</sup> Leviticus 1:1 – 10:end

<sup>20</sup> 1 Samuel 8:1 to 10:end

kingdom is crumbling around their ears, God presents them with a new king, an obedient king, called David.<sup>21</sup>

Now David does not exhibit many saintly attributes on first glance, he repeatedly commits grave sin. But David understands that without God he is nothing. He is continually repentant and laments of the damage he causes and that is enough to keep his relationship with God on a decent footing. The kingdom flourishes under David. In the end it is his obedience to God's ordinances that makes him the great king that becomes so well-regarded in Israel's memory.

David is succeeded by his son, Solomon.<sup>22</sup> Solomon gains great wisdom and in the early years he is devout and obedient. So the kingdom continues to flourish and under his just leadership the whole of Israel becomes increasingly conscious of their blessed place under God. But then Solomon loses his way and from that moment forward the seeds of the kingdom's destruction are sown.<sup>23</sup> Then with various generations things ebb and flow, and things deteriorate as Israel slowly move further and further away from their God.

God stands with his arms wide open longing for their return. But they are so confused and blinded by evil that Israel find it harder and harder to even recognise, let alone receive divine goodness. Nonetheless, in each generation there are still a faithful few prophets and teachers who keep the candle of faith burning through a combination of their obedience, their calls upon the nation to repent and their prophecies of what will unfold in the future.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, the majority of God's people flaunt their own identity under God and do not heed to the challenging messages the prophets bestow. Eventually Jerusalem falls and Israel find themselves exiled once again, this time into Babylon.<sup>25</sup> More prophets rise up and they associate Israel's woes not with a lack of military prowess or earthly power, but Israel's refusal to be faithful to God and follow His ordinances.<sup>26</sup> Israel are accused of having used the rituals of faith as a way of justifying their disordered lifestyles. Their plight is directly related to their lack of support for their widows and orphans, their refusal to care for those in prison and refugees; their self-centred living and above all their lack of concern for God. God's protection is no longer assured because they view Him as an inconvenience. Thus, it could be said there are some strong parallels with today's society. But in the midst of all this, God continues to

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<sup>21</sup> 2 Samuel 2

<sup>22</sup> 1 Kings 1

<sup>23</sup> 1 Kings 11:11-13

<sup>24</sup> e.g. Elijah (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 2), Elisha (2 Kings 2 –7), Isaiah (some academics consider Isaiah to be the work of a few prophets at different periods of Israel's history), Jeremiah etc...

<sup>25</sup> 2 Kings 25; Jeremiah 52

<sup>26</sup> e.g. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel,

speak words of hope to Israel through the prophets; most significantly that a Messiah will come to set them on the right path and ultimately free them from their plight.

Come the time of Jesus, Israel are once again back in their homeland, but this time they are ruled by an invading force, the Romans. Once again they feel oppressed and enslaved in their own land. Some become convinced that the old prophecies about a Messiah will come true, but many either forget or misunderstand all that the earlier prophets had said about this person coming to realign their own disordered perspectives and battle the spiritual forces within them that are so set upon self-destruction. They believe the Messiah will come according to their own earthly agenda, with force and thunder to rid their land of the invaders. How wrong they were!

### **Christ, the Saviour of the World.**

Thus, God, having felt displeasure at the state of creation, offers restoration through Christ who is able to reverse humanity's course towards self-destruction. And as with the prophets of old, he does this through his faithfulness and obedience, no matter where that may lead. This Messiah comes in the most unlikely of ways.

So God comes in the person of Jesus Christ, born of a teenage mother into a household of extreme poverty. A baby refugee whose family flee to Egypt to escape the clutches of an evil tyrant king. He grows to show concern for the beggar and the sinner, and not for the elites in the temple or the palaces. He shows that God is to be found, not in material richness, comfort and power, but comforting the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged.

This Messiah is not doing what the elite expect or want! He challenges their comfortable ideals. They can't stand it. God must have made a mistake. The trouble is, his relationship with God the Father is unshakable. He is able to perform miracles, precisely because he is so obedient and sinless. Nothing like him has been seen before and the world desperately want to stop him, but they don't know how. Nothing the authorities and the people can throw at him changes his course. Even at the point of unfair, humiliating death, he refuses to retaliate in anger, he simply loves them.

It would seem that in him, for the first time, God's true nature is revealed. The God Jesus shows is compassionate, caring, merciful, forgiving – ultimate love. A God willing to die upon a cross so that humanity may be saved from its own messiness. A God who lets his true nature be seen in human form so that we may rebuild our relationship with Him once again.

*R .T. Parker-McGee 2020*



## Lent Lectures 2017

### References to read alongside Lecture One

#### 1) Early Church Writings

- a. The Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, 1<sup>st</sup> Letter of Clement of Rome, The Shepherd of Hermes, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp all offer valuable insights. They can be viewed here: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/churchfathers.html>

#### 2) Jewish and Roman Testimony

- a. Reporting on Emperor Nero's decision to blame the Christians for the fire that had destroyed Rome in A.D. 64, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote:

*Nero fastened the guilt ... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of ... Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome....*

- b. Pliny says that he needed to consult the emperor about this issue because a great multitude of every age, class, and sex stood accused of Christianity. At one point in his letter, Pliny relates some of the information he has learned about these Christians:

*They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.*

- c. Perhaps the most remarkable reference to Jesus outside the Bible can be found in the writings of Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. On two occasions, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, he mentions Jesus. The second, less revealing, reference describes the condemnation of one "James" by the Jewish Sanhedrin. This James, says Josephus, was "the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ." F.F. Bruce points out how this agrees with Paul's description of James in [Galatians 1:19](#) as "the Lord's brother." And Edwin Yamauchi informs us that "few scholars have questioned" that Josephus actually penned this passage.

As interesting as this brief reference is, there is an earlier one, which is truly astonishing. Called the "Testimonium Flavianum," the relevant portion declares:

*About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he ... wrought surprising feats.... He was the Christ. When Pilate ...condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared ... restored to life.... And the tribe of Christians ... has ... not disappeared.*

Material compiled from [www.betinking.org](http://www.betinking.org)

3) **Love Poverty and Simple Living**

- a. 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money<sup>□</sup> to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'  
*Matthew 19:21*
- b. 'Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven'.  
*Matthew 19:23*
- c. 'But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.'  
*Luke 14:13*
- d. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,'  
*Luke 4:18*
- e. And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."  
*Luke 3:11*
- f. 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'  
*Matthew 25:40*
- g. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh".  
*Matthew 6:20-21*
- h. And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."  
*Luke 12:15*

4) **Forgive sinners**

- a. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.  
*Matthew 6:13-14*
- b. 'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.'  
*Mark 11:25*
- c. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. <sup>4</sup> And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, "I repent", you must forgive.'  
*Luke 17:3-4*
- d. for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
*Matthew 26:28*

5) **Love and forgive our enemies and those who hurt us**

- a. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,  
*Matthew 5:44*
- b. "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,  
*Luke 6:27*
- c. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the

tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

*Matthew 5:43-48*

- d. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

*Luke 23:34*

6) **Seek stillness and silence with the Father**

- a. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

*Mark 1:35*

- b. "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

*Luke 5:16*

- c. "Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them."

*Luke 6:12-13*

- d. "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come..."'

*Luke 11:1-2*

- e. "When Jesus heard what had happened [that John the Baptist was beheaded], he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns."

*Matthew 14:13*

- f. "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself."

*John 6:15*

- g. [Jesus] said to [his disciples], 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."

*Mark 6:31-32*

- h. Jesus said to his disciples and a crowd of people: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

*Matthew 11:28-30*

7) **Turning over the tables in the Temple**

- a. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. <sup>15</sup> Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!'

*John 2:14-16*

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

*Matthew 21:12*

8) **Disciples must conform**

- a. Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to

them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

*Matthew 22:15-22*

- b. 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets'.

*Matthew 7:12*

- c. 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

*Matthew 5:17-18*

9) **Expect opposition, even from your own family**

- a. 'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.' 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

*Matthew 10:32-39*

10) **Do not retaliate with anger and violence, even when threatened with death**

- a. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?'

*Matthew 25:51-24*

- b. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

*John 18:11*

11) **The women caught in adultery**

- a. While Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one

condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

*John 8:1-11*