

# Who is Jesus?

## Sinless Human Being

One of the biggest misconceptions about the Christian faith is that being a Christian means resigning oneself to a life of boring days, lackluster relationships, missing out on anything that's truly fun, and focusing on the future instead of enjoying the present. I became fully aware of the fear that Christianity might be incompatible with the *carpe diem* mentality last spring when over lunch a friend remarked to me that her biggest problem with Christianity is all the rules. She mused aloud that it didn't sound very fun to her to try and follow rules that would prohibit any kind of deep relationships, passion or adventures. It also seemed to her that Christian ideas about sin and any kind of consequences or rewards in heaven encourage people to disengage from the present to hold out for a future life. "And isn't life supposed to be about finding the beauty in the disorder around us?" she asked. "About the journey and not the destination?"

Thankfully, Christians are not instructed to live a life absent of joy or passion, to avoid anything that's messy or complicated, or to disengage from what's going on around them in the present moment in order to focus on the future. In fact, quite the opposite. One of the central doctrines of the Christian faith is that Jesus Christ, completely divine in nature, came to earth in fully human form. He lived on earth for over thirty years, fully God and fully human at the same time. Being entirely human meant Jesus had everything in common with the people for whom He came to offer eternal life. Except for one important detail: despite going through intense trials and temptations, Jesus never did anything wrong. Because He never sinned – not once! – Jesus' life serves as a model for how we as humans should try to live, an example of what a perfect life looks like.

In looking at Jesus' life on earth, there is no evidence that Christians, in modeling their lives after His, are supposed to have a colorless, unexciting existence. Rather, we see that Jesus lived a more thrilling, joyful life than any human who ever has walked or ever will walk on this earth. Historical accounts of Jesus' life tell us that Jesus enjoyed long dinners with friends, delicious food and lots of laughing. He traveled, served the community, engaged in passionate debates, played with children and loved to fish. Jesus appreciated beauty – when He wanted to be alone, He went to a garden or hiked on a mountain to enjoy nature. In addition, Jesus embraced complicated people with painful pasts; He spent much of His time helping people no one else wanted to be around: lepers, prostitutes, and unpopular government tax collectors. Jesus had deep friendships with people whom He loved unconditionally, even when they betrayed Him. And He got messy – one of the most powerful moments of Jesus' life, as described in John 13, occurs when Jesus, the Savior of mankind, kneels to the ground and washes His friends' dirty feet.

In addition, Jesus did not live for the future, but was fully engaged in the present. Throughout His life, Jesus spent hour after hour helping the poor, healing the sick, and having long discussions with ordinary people about what was going on in their life. The fact that Jesus had an eternal perspective was precisely what motivated Him to give Himself fully to the present moment. Indeed, Christian ideas about sin and heaven do not encourage disengaging from the present, but require each person to throw themselves into living each day to the fullest. As C.S. Lewis points out, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."

And here lies the irony. While it might seem that trying to follow all the "rules" of Christianity is a recipe for a boring, wasted life, God does not ask us to turn away from sin because He wants us to miss out on fun or feel miserable. He asks us to try our best to avoid sin so that we can have a better relationship with Him and with the people around us and subsequently a more joyful, richer life. The absence of sin in Jesus' life did not lead to dullness or detachment. Rather, not sinning allowed Jesus to lead the most vibrant, rewarding life any human could ever hope for. Unlike Jesus we are not divine, and no matter how hard we try not to sin we will always mess up. But the greater our effort to seek God and to turn away from sin, the more we will enjoy the world around us. Our jobs will feel more fulfilling, we will have a greater ability to love and to be loved, the sunset will be more beautiful.

It is by modeling our life after Jesus' life that we will truly be able to live as my friend suggested we should in that conversation last spring: giving our all to the present moment and experiencing true and complete *joie de vivre*. There is beauty in chaos. But that's because God is there. And turning away from sin is one thing that makes it easier for us to see Him. God is in a tear-stained smile. He is in a skinned knee. He is in the wind. He is in a Panera sandwich, even if the bread is stale, even if it's eaten alone.

And He promises that if we look for Him, we will find Him.

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