

God's Son

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Young Jesus Teaches in the Temple

Amongst all people who ever lived, Jesus Christ was by far the one with the most special, privileged relationship with God whom he referred to repeatedly as "Father." Many Christians hold Jesus in such high esteem that they view him as God Himself or as God's only Son who pre-existed the Creation.

The most important thing that Jesus brought with him was the undeniable reality that he was God's Son. And the painful discovery that Jesus grappled with throughout all of his life was his profound understanding that not only he but every single human being is God's child. Yet Jesus knew that humankind lived in ignorance of their noble identity.

It was not only Jesus' mission but his unending desire to awaken and rekindle hearts that had been compromised and scarred by the human fall, an historical tragedy which had deprived humankind of oneness with the Creator. Jesus, we are told, tried to reason with the scribes through the Holy Scriptures when they accused him of blasphemy:

"We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I have said you are "gods"? If he called them 'gods,' to whom the word of God came -- and Scripture cannot be set aside -- what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son' (John 10:33-36)?

Jesus understood his identity as God's Son and he knew that he was called by God to bequeath that identity to all of humankind. Jesus was clear when he told the Pharisees, "I know where I came from and where I am going (John 8:14)."

For those who could receive it, he wished to guide them to inherit not just his words but his identity as God's true child. Jesus understood that, even in the best of the people who surrounded him, there was something demonic that blocked them from rebirth. He castigated his critics:

Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God (John 8:47)."

Jesus' task was to return humanity to God. When Jesus gazed into any person, Jesus detected a spark that reminded him that this was indeed God's own Son or God's own daughter, who had been alienated and separated, whom he had to bring back home. Jesus, the one true human being in the midst of a blinded society of people pretending to be "holier than thou," came to allow us, like the prodigal son, to return to God.

Jesus wanted to awaken the spark in every human being that would allow her or him to harmonize with the Almighty and find life, hope and inspiration in their fellow human beings. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus would beseech his listeners, saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matt 5:8)."

Jesus' pure heart allowed him to see God. When he gazed into the eyes of those who received his word even just for a passing moment, he saw how the healing words of God that he shared transformed them and made them truly human. Witnessing how their humility allowed those who joined him at the Sermon to be liberated spiritually, he uplifted them, saying:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:14-16)."

Jesus also taught his followers to free themselves of distractions, free themselves of all the petty rivalries that prevent people from understanding that their true value does not dwell in a title, in the position where one is seated or in a financial reward. He called upon them to go the extra mile:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor 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? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt 5:38-48)"

For Jesus, value resided in the confidence of knowing who one is and in using one's gifts to help others to discover who they are as well -- not only believing but knowing and experiencing one's own identity as God's child.