

Mission Of Christ Lesson 2 – The Message of Jesus

1. Grasp the Issue:

Focus:

They say we live in the “Information Age”. Every day, we are flooded with information from a multitude of media sources. Sound bites, slogans, brand names and catchy jingles are continuously tossed in our direction with the hope of catching our attention. We have millions of words instantly available at our finger tips. Wikipedia boasts of 2.4 million articles (the English articles only), and a Google search of “Teaching of Jesus” returned over 763,000 hits. Information is so common and comes so readily that in our day, words seem cheap.

Yet in the fullness of time when God chose to reveal his son to the world, he did not reveal him through the power of natural disasters, or the royal authority of an earthly king, or in the might of military triumph. Rather Jesus appeared and then revealed himself as God through the spoken word. Jesus taught and used words to reveal the mission and plan of the father for the redemption of mankind. Just what were those words? What was it that Jesus taught? As we read and reflect on his message we gain insight into the mission of Jesus. This is the topic that we hope will capture your imagination in this lesson.

Sound Bites: (These are statements that may or may not reflect biblical truth, but represent a variety of common statements you may here in our culture on the topic. The purpose is to get you thinking about the lesson topic.)

- I thank God for the honesty and virility of Jesus religion which makes us face the facts and calls us to take a man's part in the real battle of life.
Henry Van Dyke
- If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today.”
Mahatma Gandhi
- “The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought.”
H. G. Wells
- "Teachings of Jesus are of love and acceptance of all people. He accepts us as we are."

Jean Preslan

- I am pretty sure that we err in treating these sayings as paradoxes. It would be nearer the truth to say that it is life itself which is paradoxical and that the sayings of Jesus are simply a recognition of that fact.
Thomas Taylor
- “And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them...”
St. Matthew

2. Study the Scriptures:

Read through the gospel of Matthew. As you read, we are going to focus on the words and teaching of Jesus. A red letter bible may be helpful here. As you read, construct a short outline (6 to 8 points) that summarizes the flow and change in Jesus’ teaching during the various phases of his ministry. Also make a list of recurring themes and topics that Jesus addresses. Be prepared to share your observations during the discussion session. Feel free to include references of Jesus message taken from the other gospels (Mark, Luke or John).

3. Discuss the Issue:

1. Explain how Jesus’ words changed during the various phases of His ministry. What was Jesus’ purpose in these various episodes? (ex. Consider the parables in ch. 13. What was his purpose here and how does this seem to differ from the sermon on the mount in ch 5-7)
2. Describe the language and kinds of illustrations Jesus used. What does this indicate about his mission? (ex. Were his words like royal decrees, an intellectual treatise, religious dogma or other?)
3. Describe Jesus’ tone as he spoke to or about various people groups. What does this indicate about his mission? (ex. Compare his instruction to the disciples in chapter 10 to his dialog on religious leaders in ch 23)
4. Contrast Jesus’ words of love and forgiveness with his description of judgment and hell. Is one of these themes more dominant than the other?
5. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus frequently speaks on the theme of the kingdom of heaven. A kingdom is a relatively foreign concept in democratic America. How is the concept of the kingdom like or unlike our contemporary gospel message of salvation?