

Sermon Synopsis
Sunday, September 5th, 2021
Salisbury United Church
Rev. Britt L. Aerhart

It is sometimes hard to remember that Jesus had a life. An actual life.

2,000 years is a long time ago. And a lot has been said about Jesus over the years, not all of it consistent with what we do know about him from the scriptures. And trying to imagine what his life was like before he went public at the age of 30 or so, which is where the New Testament mostly picks up his story, is a challenge. Very little is known about the first 30 years of his life.

We can guess some of it. He didn't become who he was overnight. He too grew up, had parents and belonged to the community he was born into. That means he was steeped in the stories and scriptures of Judaism and grew up in a Jewish community. We know he came at life from that Jewish foundation and even went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem when he was a young boy. He also came at life from the way he was raised day-to-day by Mary and Joseph, his mother and adopted father. He carried with him into adulthood his early experiences as their son, about which we know this much from the scriptures – he became a refugee in Egypt for a time with his family and returned to live in Nazareth where his father worked with his hands in a workshop. The tradition says Joseph was a carpenter but the Jewish word could also mean stonemason. Jesus' beginnings were humble and it was those humble beginnings that he carried with him as he met all kinds of people in the world from all kinds of circumstances.

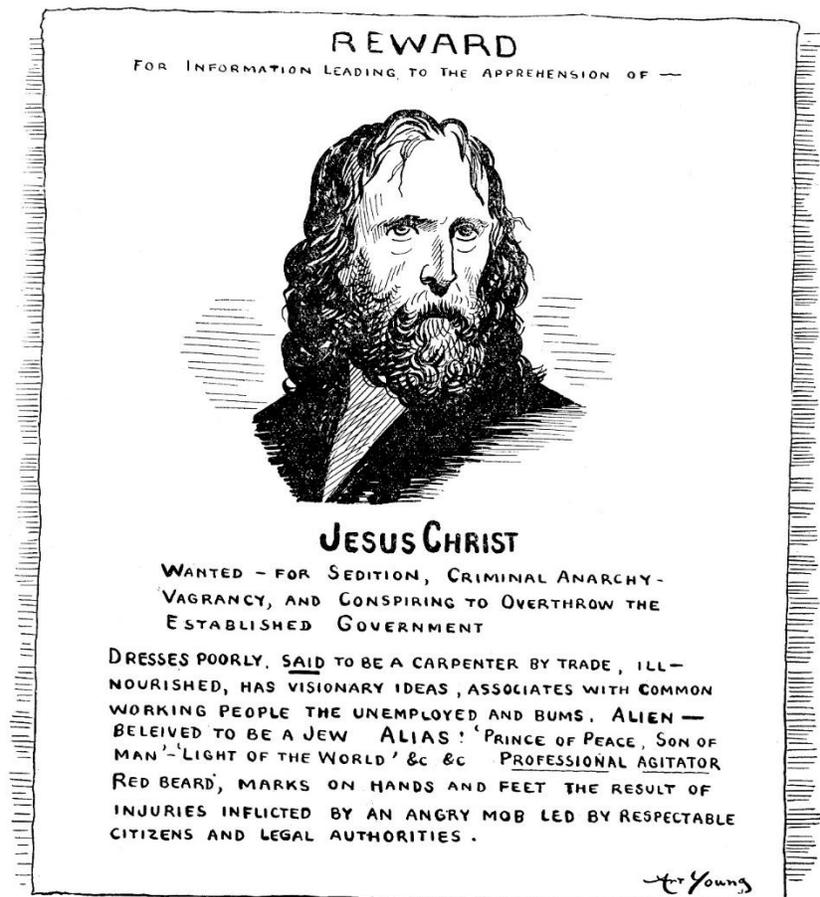
Jesus was never interested in or impressed by people's social statues, their wealth or their religious credentials. What mattered to him, and what he preached and taught and lived, was a kind of compassion that broke through the barriers people placed around their hearts and transformed their understanding of what was real and true and honest. He drew people to himself because of that compassion, and it is tragedy that so often over 2,000 years those who follow him have preferred a Jesus who is rigid and judgemental and narrow as opposed to one who was radically compassionate. That tells us that we are still trying get to know the Jesus of the scriptures even after all this time. That we need to get him all over again, even and maybe especially now, when compassion between people is skating on thin ice, when lines are being drawn in the sand during this pandemic.

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And it doesn't matter what side of the line you stand on or what age or stage of life or of faith you are in. You can always get to know Jesus again. In fact you may find that the Jesus you thought you knew is not really the Jesus of scriptures at all but some other Jesus altogether. You may find that there is much to surprise you about Jesus now that you start to get to know him all over again. You might be surprised by what motivated him, how he looked at the world, what he was here to be for. In fact, I suspect that if we put together what the scriptures have to say about him, we might find that in that he is more likely to be found on a wanted poster or an online alert as anywhere else.

A long time ago I found a copy of a church poster about Jesus from the early 1920's and I chuckled because it reminded me that in every age and for every generation we must meet Jesus again as if for the first time. In every age and every generation we must let him speak to us in our age and to our age's situation.

Pay attention to what one artist thought Jesus might be accused of if he appeared on a wanted poster in the 1920's. I wonder what he might be accused of today if he appeared among us now?



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