

March 10, 2019

Mark 8:27-30

Who do you say that Jesus is?

Leslie prepared a handout: childhood memories and adult understandings

We all have an image of Jesus

I find my image growing and changing

Who is Jesus? Why does it matter? Does it matter?

Fairly early on the Christian movement got formalized into the Christian church

They tried to codify an experience, and this codification has changed some over the millennia, but much has remained the same

Who Jesus is and why this is important has developed two main Jesus images over time, which Marcus Borg illustrated well

One is Jesus as savior –

- Son of God,
- who saves us by dying for our sins,
- and now all we have to do is believe in this truth, believe in Jesus, and our faith will set us free

The other image is Jesus as a great teacher, follow what he tells you to do and you will be made whole.

Borg calls one a Fideistic (faith) image, the other a Moralistic image

I have for a very long time struggled with the first image. Belief in Jesus

As if it is magic – just believe, be saved, get to heaven

It is all because of a troublesome preposition – in

This preposition could just as easily have been translated of; we are not to believe in Jesus, to have faith in Jesus, but have the faith of Jesus

For years my image fit more with the Moralistic image Borg outlined. Just follow Jesus' teachings and you will enter God's realm, God's kin-dom

In fact, I was certain all we had to do was do what Jesus told us to do, and everything would be great. (For those versed in Luther's theology, how is this not a "works" theology?)

This image of Jesus no longer works for me,  
even though I do believe Jesus was a great  
teacher

Like Borg, as I have grown in my faith, grown  
in my faith journey, I have come to  
understand Jesus in a new way

My encounters with other faith traditions –  
especially through Buddhist meditation  
immersion and my Hindu Swami friend,  
Yogatmananda – I have a radically different  
understanding of God; God is much more  
spirit than material; part of everything, yet  
independent of everything; still knowable,  
yet indescribable.

I believe this is the God Jesus is trying to  
connect us with; help us develop a  
relationship with

If this is so, then who Jesus is and what he is  
trying to do requires a whole new image

Over the next four weeks, we will be  
examining, with Marcus Borg's help, four  
different aspects of Jesus that will not only  
help us better understand who Jesus is, but –

and more importantly – what this means for  
you and me

I hope you will join me in this exploration, as  
Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time in  
this way is becoming very transformational  
for me. I am hoping it will be for you also.

Amen.