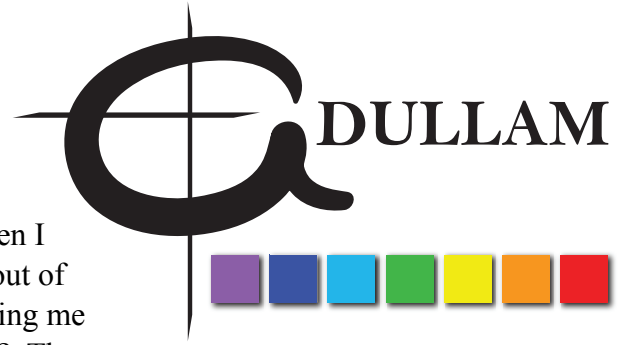


# Who is Our Jesus?



Who is our Jesus. I've known several Jesus' in my life. There was the Jesus I saw when I was not quite three years old, after I was taken out of the swimming pool, and some firemen were giving me CPR... hmmm maybe that's what made me gay? That Jesus lived in a land with puffy clouds, a street of gold, and go figure he was white and looked exactly like the Sunday school material.

I learned about another Jesus soon after, one who was an extension of my mother and father, we called Him heavenly father, because apparently we don't care about teaching kids good trinitarian theology. This Jesus could tell my mom and dad everything I did wrong, I didn't know if He would rat me out all the time, but he was always there to make me feel guilty whenever I did something wrong. This Jesus was also really good at helping me when I hadn't studied. I would sit down pull out my pencil, and I'd explain to Him that I really should have studied but I was really busy playing Mario World, so if He could help me out, I'd appreciate it. This was also the Jesus who I would try and manipulate so I could find clean socks in the laundry room. "If you are real, then you'll find me socks!"

Eventually I heard about a Jesus who loved me. Now this Jesus was kinda a push over, see He loved you no matter what, and He was always with you, whether you were good or not. But you should be good, because quite frankly He's gonna drive you nuts till you start being good. But this Jesus, you could talk to like He was your friend, it was OK to just say hi. This Jesus actually had answers to questions that were important. Actually He had every answer, you just had to take a scripture passage out of context, to show that apparently the writer of Job knew that the world was a big ball that floated in space. But the nice thing about this Jesus is, He listened, He cared, He actually cared. This was how I understood Jesus when I first really met him.

In my travels I've met a few other Jesus' through other people. There was the Reformed Baptist Jesus, who had your entire life laid out for you, and quite frankly you were just along for the rather painful and pointless ride. Just wait it out, and eventually He'd hand you your crown, and you'd be a good and faithful servant on a string.

There was the Christian and Missionary Alliance Jesus, who you needed to avoid making eye contact with, otherwise he'd send you off to missions in Africa.

At Prov I met the Mennonite Jesus, who was concerned with you getting married, so you could have sex and have babies, because that was how you kept the Church full. This Jesus didn't really tell other people about Jesus, because everyone who was important was already in the Church, this Jesus was your heavenly cousin twice removed, on your mom's side.

There was the emotional orgasm Jesus who I was introduced to through several very attractive and very zealous worship leaders who played "the heart of worship" ad nauseum.

There was the Pentecostal/Charismatic Jesus, who was actually Satan in disguise, who convinced people to speak in different languages, and got people to argue about things, instead of focusing on the important part, which was telling people about the Reformed Baptist Jesus.

There's this guy, we'll say his name's Steve, and he's my friend Colin's boss. The first time I saw Steve across the bar, I felt like, wow if I could just get him to notice me all my problems would be solved. I mentioned this to Colin and he laughed and said, you know you probably don't really want that. I said maybe but every time I saw Steve something in me wanted him to notice me. Then one day, I heard him talk with his friends, and it all fell apart. You see, Steve has the most gay voice you've ever heard. He's like a gay valley girl. The instant I heard him talk, everything changed, and I realized, I hadn't really gotten to know him at all.

And so it was with Jesus. I remember one night, I was at a bible study for our youth group. My youth pastor near the end joked that he was going to have a friend hack my iMac and see what I was hiding on it. Now, I didn't realize what my pastor meant was porn. See this one in particular, was always convinced I was looking at naked women... he wasn't too bright. Of course I wasn't, I know what you're thinking, naked men? Nope, but I did have a pirated copy of Photoshop 3. And this as I understood it, was sin. I was so scared my pastor would find out, I went home and deleted it, and got rid of any evidence I knew of.

The next night, is when I really heard Jesus for the first time. See, I told Him, that I really did want to do what was right, I really did want to do what honoured Him, but that was hard. It was funny, because I told Him too, that I really liked Photoshop, and if it was at all possible I'd like to be able to have my own copy some how if he would work that out for me. I didn't really see that happening though since the software cost in the area of six hundred dollars.

But either way, what was important was that I honour Him. And for the first time, Jesus talked back. I can't tell you exactly what He said, but for the first time my words didn't get stuck at the ceiling. God reached down, and my heart leapt at his touch. I started singing, and laughing, and telling God any and everything and wondering why nobody told me that there was a close Jesus.

By the way, within two weeks, I found out that there was a version of Photoshop available at a price I could afford, that fit all my needs, and I had the money for it soon after. I'll leave the cynics to dismiss that.

In the Hebrew Bible we are told that Elohim created man and woman in God's image. Cameron Mackenzie my first year at Prov taught us about idolatry. The notion where people would take an object and carve it into the image of their god and worship it. They understood that the god was not in the object itself (typically) though they did see it tied to a certain geological area. But people used object to let them know what their idea of their god looked like. The Torah, the Ketuvim, Nevi'im, the Gospels and the Epistles, all make it clear, idolatry is bad. Now why was this? "God said it so I believe it right?" Well if you wanna have a shallow faith, and if that's how your zeal leads you, I'll leave you to God.

Cameron explained to our class however, that the reason idolatry was a sin, was because we already had an image of God that wasn't graven in lifeless stone. God carved Himself onto our hearts, and into our lives. Some people have this rather deistic approach to how they view God, that he wound up the clock and took off. I think Scripture makes it clear, God wound up the clock and then dove into it like an artist with clay.

The Jesus I learned to know in my college years, was a Jesus who paints, and sculpts and sings. Far away from my deterministic, heavy handed, binary Jesus, this new one seemed to enjoy the lives of people I couldn't stand. And this new Jesus could be seen almost weeping on souls that refused to actually willingly accept the changes he wanted to make to their hearts. This Jesus was a whole lot more vulnerable, this Jesus was a whole lot more human.

Now back to our question, who is our Jesus?

37"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

... 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

I once heard a man who I consider to be one of the greatest influences on my life tell me that he was trying to learn to identify with the suffering of Christ. I thought that sounded brilliant and far beyond me. Two years later I was hurled out of the closet, against my will and not at all confident in how I should view myself. But I learned a bit what Gethsemane must have been like. At that point I think I met most fully another Jesus, one who I'd started to know in high school, and who I became very acquainted with as I came out of the closet and dealt with my next year at Prov. This was the Jesus who at night when my pillow was soaked with tears, and people who I thought would never turn their backs on me were no where to be found, fell on me with the simple knowledge that He was with me. This was the Jesus who kept telling me He wasn't done with me when I couldn't understand how I could still do anything with my life as a pastor.

So who is our Jesus?

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these sisters of mine, you did to me.

Our Jesus is broken, hurt, and alone. He doesn't know if anyone loves Him, and She's pretty sure they shouldn't. She doesn't know why she's in the situation She's in, and He's pretty sure nobody is interested in helping Him. He might be on the corner drunk out of his mind, or she might be sitting in her room in Tuxedo wondering why money feels so cold against her skin. Our Jesus may not even know if you should call Them a He or a She. Our Jesus still suffers. Our Jesus is in this room with you right now, and you can see Him on each other's faces. Maybe

this week you didn't feel like the least of these, but I know I did. Our Jesus has left His finger prints in the lives of your friends.

16 Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.'

19 "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.'

20 "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'

21 "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

22 " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.'

Tonight Jesus says, go out into the city, bring in the young and the old, the Jewish, the black, the aboriginal, bring in widows, bring in orphans, bring in good church kids who are dead inside. Bring in the drunks, the sketchy. Bring in those who aren't safe, those like me. Bring in the dykes and the fags, suffer yourself to even bring in a straight person. But make my banquet hall full, and don't tell Him it's someone else's job.

For what you refused to do for the last of these, my brothers, and my sisters, you refused to do to Me. Jesus says, the love that you refused to His beloved, you refused to Him.