

14-5-17

ICEBREAKER: What have you been putting off recently?

READING: Matthew 1:18-25

THEME - JESUS: MAN or MYTH

SERMON

- If Jesus was a man in history, we have to take a look at his claims and his actions. If Jesus wasn't a man in history, then it is ultimately just a story and can be disregarded.
- How do we know what we know? New Testament – four gospels providing eye witness accounts which build up a picture of Jesus. A huge number of manuscripts, more than any other ancient document.
- Outside the Bible, other references to Jesus by Roman historians, and a Jewish historian.
- Is it that simple? A man called Jesus existed but Jesus in the gospels was a product of the early church – not objective reporting. The gospels are a developing tradition handed down and they are history remembered and metaphorized – and accomplished Christian scholars widely disagree as to the degree of each.
- Where does this leave us? If the wedding at Cana is actually a symbolic narrative or the Sermon on the Mount several sermons put together, does that change our faith? The Jesus and his message brought to us by Spirit- inspired writers of the gospels is as important as the actual, factual steps of the man Jesus in 1<sup>st</sup> century Palestine isn't it?
- What do we mean by Jesus? We are recognising 2 different aspects of Jesus, known in different ways. We can know Jesus by history and by faith, a pre- Easter Jesus and a post- Easter Jesus.
- When we talk about the pre-Easter Jesus of the NT, we are talking about a flesh and blood figure of the past. When we talk about a

post-Easter Jesus we are talking about the Jesus of tradition and experience. The one that followers in both the 1<sup>st</sup> century and today experience as a living, spiritual and ultimately divine reality.

- Jesus - Man **and** Myth? Jesus was a man in history.
- Add Jesus the “myth” (an interpretation of events and circumstances, providing pattern and structure for beliefs and meaning) **Together** we gain a fuller picture of Jesus. Yes, he is the Rabbi of the past, the healer and teacher. Yes, he is our intercessor, guide and brother today.

QUESTIONS

1. How confident would you feel about declaring that Jesus was a man in history and to give reasons to support that to a non- believer?
2. What is your answer to the question Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?”
3. How do you react to the idea of Jesus being both Man and Myth?
4. When have you been aware of Jesus' presence today as friend, guide, helper etc?