

HIS STORY—Part 2

I and the Father are one.... He who has seen me has seen the Father.

(John 10:30; 14:9)

Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

(1John 3:2)

IN HISTORY, HE'S THE STORY

- Jesus gave God skin; he brought God near
- Jesus was a window through which we see God
- Jesus was a window in which we see ourselves

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF HIS STORY

- EXAMINE the stories
- ENTER the stories
- ENGAGE the stories
- ENCOUNTER the Story

QUOTES OF NOTE

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. Until He was thirty, He worked in a carpenter shop and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He wrote no books. He held no office. He never owned a home. He was never in a big city.

He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did any of the things that usually accompany greatness. The authorities condemned His teachings. His friends deserted Him. One betrayed Him to His enemies for a paltry sum. One denied Him. He went through the mockery of a trial.

He was nailed on a cross between two thieves. While He was dying, His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He owned on earth: His coat. When He was dead He was taken down and placed in a borrowed grave.

Twenty centuries have come and gone, yet today He is the crowning glory of the human race, the adored leader of hundreds of millions of the earth's inhabitants.

All the armies that ever marched and all the navies that were ever assembled and all the parliaments that ever sat and all the rulers that ever reigned—combined—have not affected human life upon this earth so profoundly as that One Solitary Life. (Dr. James Francis, *One Solitary Life*)

We do not enjoy a story fully at the first reading. Not till the curiosity, the sheer narrative lust, has been given its sop and laid asleep, are we at leisure to savour the real beauties. Till then, it is like wasting great wine on a ravenous natural thirst which merely wants cold wetness. (C. S. Lewis, *On Stories*)

If we are really to understand the Bible record, we must enter into our study of it on the assumption that the experiences recorded there are basically of the same type as ours would have been if we had been there. Those who lived through those experiences felt very much as we would have if we had been in their place. Unless this comes home to us, the things that happened to the people in the Bible will remain unreal to us. (Dallas Willard, *Hearing God*)

All the great literature offers entrée into the story we find ourselves in—through stories of good and evil, love and hate, pride and repentance, fear and courage. Sometimes, we become so familiar with the primal sacred story of the Bible that we need some fresh takes on it, telling us the same thing in different ways, or giving us some new vantage points to see what was always there, things we'd missed before. (Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*)

The task of thinking as a Christian...is always a conversation between our faith and our culture, a dialogue between our stories and God's story. (Catherine Barsotti & Robert Johnston, *Finding God in the Movies*)

For prostitutes, the call of Jesus was to leave their story of men who pay money for love, and to enter the story of God, who in love pays for us with his own life. For Pharisees, it was to leave their story of religiosity and superiority and rigidity and judgmentalism, their story that was exclusively focused on their own narrow little sect, and instead to enter God's broader and deeper and better story of grace and compassion and mercy and love for all people. For Zealots like Simon, it was to leave the political story of violence, to stop slitting Roman throats, as if that would bring the story to its desired end, and instead to enter God's spiritual story of peace for all people, to risk persecution for justice and to prefer suffering over causing others to suffer.

For tax collectors like Zacchaeus or Matthew, it was to stop collaborating with the Roman Empire, and profiting in the process, and instead to collaborate with the kingdom of God, and sacrifice in the process. For the rich—like that young ruler Jesus met—it was to abandon the hollow story of acquisition, and instead to enter God's better story of generosity. For farmers and shepherds, it was to realize that there's more to life than just planting seeds of wheat or tending flocks of sheep; instead, Jesus invited them to enter into the bigger story of planting seeds of truth and seeking lost men and women, every one of whom is loved and counted and missed by God. For fishermen like Peter and Andrew and James and John, it was to trade in their story of catching fish for a bigger story of fishing for men and women, inviting them into God's story of ongoing creation and redemption.

For the middle class, who want nothing more than to create a little social aquarium so that their biological families can experience something they call 'family values,' it's a call to care about the families of their neighbors too, especially the poor, to see them as family too, as children of Adam and children of God. (Brian McLaren, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*)