Jesus, God who became Man

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This is the first of several articles about the person and character of Jesus as a human being. He is fully God and fully man. It can be helpful for people in counseling to study the perfect life of Jesus as man and Lord. It makes God less abstract when we see Him in the soul, that is, the personality of Jesus. This study also underlines the differences between Jesus and Buddha or Confucius. Of course, Jesus can only be known by the Holy Spirit and through the spiritual laws and ordinances, as they are also expressed in the Bible. He is the God, Who became man, the image of God the invisible One. Or as the letter to the Hebrews (1:1-3a) tells us: *“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature”*

**Jesus is courageous and strong**

Jesus was and is a strong man. He was a courageous man. His enemies attested to this: "We know. . . you aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are" (Matt 22:16). He is the king of truth (John 18:37). He has such a strong sense of truth and reality that he was able at any moment to stand up for what was right. Although he knows that breaking the Sabbath carries the death penalty (Ex 31:15), he provokes the powerful Pharisees by healing on the Sabbath (Luke 14:1-4). He even tells the man with the shriveled hand to "get up and stand in front of everyone" and then asks: "which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil?" (Mark 3:3,4 and Luke 6:8,9).

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees were beside themselves with fury and discussed how they could kill him. In a different passage, some insincere Pharisees and Sadducees tell him they will believe in him if he shows them a sign from heaven (Mark 8:11-13). Without fear, Jesus walks away from the very people who, humanly speaking, have his fate in their hands. When they pretend to ask his advice about whether it is right to pay taxes to Ceasar, he calls them hypocrites in front of all the people and he fearlessly denies their right to revolt, even though this crushes the people's hopes and could lead to serious consequences for himself (Matt 22:18-21). The strongest, almost incredible evidence of his courage can be found in Matt 21:31 where he confronts the hight priest and the elders about their unrepentant hearts and tells them that the tax collectors and the prostitutes will enter the kingdom of heaven before them. At no point in his life and ministry was Jesus led by fear. He did not manipulate people.

What you see is what you get. He risked his popularity by entering the house of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5), and calling a tax collector to be his apostle was a heroic act (Matt 9:9). Whenever Jesus is invited by a Pharisee for dinner, he knows they will watch him closely, but he still doesn't participate in the ceremonial hand washing which was considered an important religious ritual (Luke 11:38). He is always himself, even at the risk of being called a drunk or a glutton (Matt 11:9).

He speaks his mind. He utters the harshest words, the strongest reproaches, the most serious accusations without any reserve or fear for his own safety. He does not mince words, not even in front of king Herod (Luke 13:32). Some people might call him easily angered, but what he said was simply heartfelt. Jesus, unlike Buddha, had no fear of suffering. Jesus was willing to die. He proved his courage on the cross, up to his very last cry: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). There are people who appear courageous, but who in reality are simply not fully aware of the danger. Jesus knew every danger and took it into account, but it never preoccupied him. It is remarkable how Mark describes the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Jesus marches ahead, bravely and publicly, knowing the terrible suffering that awaits him.

The disciples follow him hesitantly. Jesus very deliberately takes the next step (Mark 10:32). Jesus' whole ministry was characterized by manly, brave, and courageous attacks on the forces of evil. He never acted aggressively, however, and he wasn't out to simply save his own skin. He said: "He who is not with me is against me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters" (Matt 12:30). He confronted Pilate with teh same choice (John 18:37). Jesus had a perfect nature, and he was prepared to do battle to destroy the works of the devil (Matt 10:34). He was kind and loving, but he could also be tough and uncompromising; he is the only person in the world who lived out what it means to fear God and God alone. He was prepared to die.

He was able to unmask Judas courageously and then burn his bridges by telling Judas to go and do what he was about to do (John 13:26). He spoke up where others remained silent (John 18:20), and he was silent when silence was called for (John 19:9). He proved, while enduring the most terrible suffering that any human being has ever undergone, that he was in control of himself. At the very moment when it looked like his life had turned into one big failure, he cried triumphantly: "It is finished!" There was never a moment when he was discouraged or depressed, like Moses or Elijah (1 Kings 19:4). When was he ever thrown off-balance?

**Radical statements**

Jesus' manly character and his strong will also had consequences for his disciples. A few examples:

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26,27).

"If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. . .

and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away." (Matt 5:29,30)

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matt 10:28)

There should be no hesitation in joining him, even if it means missing your own father's funeral (Luke 9:59).

We should be willing to be hated on account of his name, even when it breaks up our family. (Matt 10:35).

These are the words of a courageous man. People today are looking for genuineness and transparency. Well, Jesus is nothing if not genuine and transparent! Paul also exhorts believers to live like Jesus: "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong." (1 Cor 16:13) In his letter to the Ephesians we are exhorted to strive for” unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

Jesus' willpower was one of the pillars of his personality. When he got angry, he did not sin. It is not hard to imagine how he how he chased the merchants out of the temple with a loud voice and fire in his eyes! Jesus was often deeply moved, but his feelings always stemmed from love. Our feeling is usually at least partly based on selfish motives, but Jesus' emotions were consumed by zeal for God. Our anger is about issues; Jesus' anger is about his Father. The only thing that sets him off is sin, like hypocrisy and hardness of heart. Sometimes his anger burns (Isa 30:27) because he loves righteousness (Psalm 11:7). A true biblical portret of his strong, manly, flawless personality is called for to counteract the many false, weak, and sentimental images of Jesus presented throughout the history of art and theology.

**Jesus, sensitive soul**

This forceful personality is also a very sensitive person, however. He has a delicate sensibility. When Lazarus died, he saw how Mary and the Jews who were with her mourned. He was deeply moved. . . and he also began to weep (John 11:35). When he sees a widow walk behind the coffin of her only son (Luke 7:13), he has deep compassion for her, just as he did when he realized that the people who had followed him into the desert had nothing to eat. In the middle of a hard-hitting sermon about the last days and terrible threats, he is filled with sadness when he thinks about the women who will be pregnant or nursing their babies when they have to flee Jerusalem during those fearful days (Matt 24:19,20).

 We can only wonder what he felt when children he didn't even know wanted a hug from him (Mark 10:16). He was moved not only by other people, but also by his own fate: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matt 8:20). In the garden of Gethsemane, he asks his disciples to "stay here and keep watch with me" (Matt 26:38). Jesus never suppressed his feelings or exhibited stoic indifference. He knew that he would rise again after three days, but that didn't prevent him from wrestling with deep pain and bitterness in his human soul.

**Jesus' kindness**

Jesus' kindness, which came from deep within, characterized his whole life and added depth and color to his ministry. The first occasion where Jesus showed that he is the great giver of blessings and joy in good times is at a wedding (John 2:11). Even when times are rough, he retains his sunny disposition, which flows from a deep, quiet joy, and people responded to that: one women in the crowd calls out to him: Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you" (Luke 11:27). It's not very likely that a grouch would attract such a crowd of followers.

The same goes for Jesus' preaching: it is just as serious as the preaching of John the Baptist, but he presents it in more appealing terms: a wedding feast, a sumptuous dinner, a treasure in a field, a pearl of great worth. Jesus and John both die martyrs' deaths, but the difference is that Jesus knew about it beforehand. Jesus never talked nonsense or made jokes at the expense of others, and his kindness was never tainted by sin. He was extremely sensitive and open to all kinds of impressions. When was he ever indifferent when others showed compassion? Jesus sometimes sighed deeply when he encountered hypocrisy, stubbornness and malice (Mark 8:12), and at other times he became very angry (Matt 12:34; 23:13). Jesus had nothing in common with the unperturbed calm of Buddha, who desired nothing and was free forn anger--and the ability to love. The way Jesus acts always has something refreshing about it. The depth of his heart and the richness of his emotions are limitless. He shouted for joy (Luke 10:21) and cried in anguish (Mark 15:34) as no one ever has. Another aspect of his personality is that he was always receptive to people, unhurried, and free from anxiety. He was always himself, even when he knew that the harvest is plentiful (Matt (9:37) and that the night is coming (John 9:4). Again, he was moved with compassion (Matt 9:36), but never stressed or traumatized; he was always completely genuine.

**Harmonious contrasts**

One of the striking things about Jesus is the contrasting nature of his personality. Jesus is open, talkative, he expresses his needs, he shows concern and is transparent in his joy. There is nothing reticent about his character. At other times he is lonely and solitary as he stays up and prays through the night. Jesus exudes thoughtfulness and peace. He is gentle yet serious, a man of courage and gentleness.

His vision is for the reconciliation of the world, yet he speaks into the life of an ordinary woman as if his purpose in life is to save this one soul (John 4:17). He keeps the big picture in mind while he pays attention to the small things, as well. The way he appeared on the outside reflected exactly who he was on the inside. He worked almost ceaselessly, yet he was always at peace. He is both an optimist and a pessimist. The world lies in darkness, but he has overcome the world. His vision is large, yet he primarily concerns himself with his disciples. He is far above the prejudices of the people, yet he limits himself to the boundaries of his nation (Matt 15:24). Nationalists claim Jesus as a kindred spirit, but so do groups with an international focus. He retains his dignity even when being ministered to by a sinful woman (Luke 7:37). He is in every way a man of the people, accessible to all, to the shouts of a leper (Luke 17:12) and the cry of a beggar (Matt 20:29). He chats with a woman drawing water (John 4:9), yet he is so reserved at times that he will not answer a king (Luke 23:9).

He spoke in simple terms yet possessed deep wisdom. Sometimes he is down to earth, sometimes full of enthusiasm. He is a fighter at heart, yet he spends much time ministering to the sick. Most people acknowledge him as one of the greatest thinkers in history, yet he was a man of action. He never married, but he was one of the first to stand up for the rights of women. Sometimes he uses a whip to vent his anger, and at other times he voluntarily puts up with disgrace. He makes demands that cause even his disciples to pale, then speaks tenderly to a woman condemned by everyone else (John 8:10). He confidently states in John 4:21 that "a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem", while also making it clear in Matt 5:18 that "until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not he least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Unlike Buddha, he is able to act and work, and also to suffer and accept.

He makes the most unheared-of statements (Matt 10:37), yet he is not rude. He is innocent as a dove and shrewd as a snake. He wants to draw the world to himself, yet he sometimes poured contempt on the world. Jesus gives himself to people, but not at the cost of his holy character. Sometimes he seems willing to respond to someone's emotions, while at other times he seems to withdraw into himself. Both individualists and socialists can quote him. The man Jesus rests in God and can work for him at the same time.

He is superior to others in every way, but he never stands on his dignity. His life was beyond reproach, but he spent time with "drunks" and "gluttons" (Matt 11:19). There is nothing he hates more than sin, but he is not repulsed by sinners. He enjoys the good things in life, but he is not addicted to them. He feels as comfortable at a rich wedding feats as he does in the desert with sober penitents (Matt 4:1). He offers his love to the least in society and to the ones in the highest positions (Mark 10:21). He radiates nobility and authority but draws people to him with his diffidence. On the one hand he has a way of attracting people, while on the other hands even his disciples sometimes feel alienated from him.

His thinking has a depth not found in even the greatest mystics, yet he is fully alive to the world around him, like children playing in the marketplace (Matt 11:16). He overflows with love, but he stays far away from manipulation and spiritual exhibitionism. Jesus' activity and his receptiveness beautifully complement each other, just as his modesty. He is convinced that his life and his work will bring about the fulfillment of the ages, while remaing humble in heart (Matt 11:29). He is noble as a king and unpretentious as a farmhand.

He does not differentiate between races. He is a Jew; the Samaritan woman recognizes him as such (John 4:9), but he also relates to non-Jews. He is "oriental" in his imagery, but also "western" in his logical thinking. Oriental peace combined with western business. In his calm wisdom he is an example for Germanic peoples, and in his passionate fight for what is right he is a good example for Latin peoples. All these aspects form a harmonious whole. He is the ideal human being in diversity and unity. Jesus sometimes had a fiery temperament, but he also calmed down quickly (synchronization). His personality exemplifies the harmonious contrasts within a variegated whole. His perfect inner peace never faltered. Even at the end of his life he did not become gloomy, bitter, or hardened. In our next installment, part two, we will focus on Jesus' talents, and in part three on his joy and trust in God.

**Jesus with His incomparable wisdom**

Many great people have lived, who, due to their high age and wisdom, have influenced an entire era. However, Jesus did not only influence an era or culture, but changed the whole world. Muhammad had 22 years for his work, Buddha even 45 years. Jesus did not work longer than 3 years. Among His disciples were the most common craftsmen, who however were characterized by one spirit. Jesus died shortly after his thirtieth, but His influence on people and world history is inimitable. Jesus has an extraordinary astuteness and a special eloquence. This has been demonstrated many times in the endless discussions with His opponents. He was asked numerous trick questions and it was thought that this 'simple carpenter's son' would soon be exposed.

For example, there was the centuries-old discussion about large and small commandments. "Lord, what is the greatest commandment in the law? (Matt. 22:36). Jesus quotes Deut. 6: 4-9 with an inimitable accuracy. *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"*(Luke 10:27). He adds a second one: *"Love your neighbor as yourself".*These two commandments are the foundation of all that is written in the Law and the Prophets. It is known that He is a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Now they drag an adulterous woman before Him and ask:

*"Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act when she committed adultery. Moses tells us in the law to stone such women. What do you think of this? They said this in order to test him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him"*(John 8: 4-6). But Jesus makes a dazzling move by playing off Moses against Moses on the chessboard.Deut. 17:7 reads: *“The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.* “With an inimitable sharpness, Jesus says in John 8:7: *"Whoever of you is without sin, let him first cast a stone at her”!* The result?

The woman, abandoned by everyone, stands alone before Him. We may remember that in another situation Jesus said: *"But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."*(Matt. 5:32). Now the question is put to Jesus as to whether He can maintain such a ban on Moses words (Mark 10:2-9). Again, Jesus parries in an unparalleled way by having Moses to answer Moses. Jesus says: *"He has written this down for you because you are so heartless and stubborn"*(Mark 10:5) and indicates that the second rule is set by Moses because he has succumbed to the harshness of human hearts. In Matt. 22:15 ff. the Pharisees send some people to Jesus to ask if it is allowed to pay taxes to Caesar or not. Jesus estimates the situation in no time.

A 'no' makes him an agitator of authority, a 'yes' a despiser of God's government in Israel. But in verse 19 He responds decisively: *"Show me the coin used for the poll tax"*. They brought Him a denarius. He asked them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this? (And in that way He let them answer for themselves) They replied, 'From Caesar’s’. Then He said to them, *"Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render to God the things that are God’s”.*

The Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection and see only Moses as the authority of God's Word, ask Him the following trick question about a woman who marries seven times with brothers who die one after the other: *"In the resurrection therefore, which one’s wife will she be?"*(Luke 20:27). In a phenomenal way Jesus makes Moses to give the answer to the question with a passage of Moses *"about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him"*(verses 37 and 38).

Even the opponents of Jesus were full of admiration and astonishment: *"Master, what you say is right"*(v.39), and no one dares to ask Him a trick question anymore. In His answers, Jesus often used the 'either-or' construction in a special way, in which there was no room for a third possibility. *"What can one do on Sabbath: good or evil? Saving or destroying a life?"*(Mark 3:4), *"By whose command did John baptize? Did it come from heaven or from people?"*(Matt. 21:25). Did His exorcisms come by Satan's help or, if that's nonsensical, wouldn't it be God's finger? (Luke 11:18, 20). *"So, if David calls Him Lord, how can He be his son?”* (Matt. 22:45). The answers that Jesus gave, have something amazingly simple. Common sense agrees immediately, for example: "*It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.*" (Luke 5:31).

That is clear to everyone, isn’t it? "*Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?*" (Luke 14:5). So obvious that even His opponents give up their nit-picking (John 7:23).

You might even feel sorry for them. Jesus is never surprised by the unexpected. He never needs a long time to think. He is always sure about what He’s doing. He never has a 'hidden agenda'. He is open and transparent. This has been given to few who have made world history. Often the opponents of Jesus were silent by acknowledging that He was unbeatable in discussion (Matt. 22:46, Mark 12:34; Luke 20:40). He did so without any scientific training or background (John 7:15). He effortlessly brought His thoughts forth from His own creative power.

**Jesus as a public speaker**

Jesus is also the best public speaker ever. Everyone is surprised by His words.

Even the bailiffs of the Jewish Council are conquered by Him and return without success with the words: "Never before has a man spoken like this" (Jn 7:46). It often happened that many thousands of people gathered and are crowded around Him (Luke 12:1). In the wilderness in His words, He stayed with Him for thousands of people stayed with Him for many days to forget even hunger and thirst (Mark 8:2). Again, and again the people were convinced that the speeches of the Scribes are a disappointment when they are compared to those of Jesus (Matt. 7:29).

There were often large numbers of people around him (Mark 3:31 ff.) or they were on the banks of the river, while Jesus spoke from a boat (Mark 4:1). Galilee was not an unimportant hinterland as some historians typified it, but rather an important transit area for wholesalers. It was full of merchants, retailers, all kinds of officials and soldiers. It had the essential advantage of a bilingual culture, which made almost everyone in Galilee to learn Greek as well.

Jesus went through large cities and small villages and preached with great eloquence in the synagogue and in the open air. He spoke on the shores of Galilee Lake, but also on the mountain slopes, and everywhere with the same effect: people were deeply impressed by His speaking. The written word in the Bible gives only a weak picture of the effect of His spoken word, but even in the written words of Jesus we can clearly read how great His rhetoric is, compared to that of Muhammad or Buddha.

Jesus was able to adapt to all kinds of listeners and had the wonderful ability not to be too simple or too difficult for anyone. He mastered all speaking techniques: the quiet tone of persuasion and teaching, the soft tone to comfort, the inviting tone of a meek person who attracts others. But He could also quote the Old Testament prophets through the "Woe those who ...” or get furious and angry. Jesus was a master in addressing people. He could turn away from His opponents in a devastating way (see all "Woe to you in Matt. 23:13 ff.).

He could also address the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the agonizing words:

*"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling"*(Matt. 23:37). He had a gift of speech for young and old people (Matt. 5; Matt. 13). He could easily reach the hearts of the listeners (Luke 11:27). In all these excellent speeches, we don't read anywhere that Jesus prepared His speeches. At His first overwhelming speech in His hometown, He speaks off the cuff. The scroll that is presented to Him for reading is handed over by the synagogue official. He stands up and speaks about the place He found in the Scripture (Luke 4:17). Just as we read about no preparation in His speeches, there is nowhere to read an increase in development and strength. As soon as He acts, He is ready. Everyone was amazed by it (Luke 4:22).

**Jesus in conversation with the individual**

In addition to discussion and folk speeches, we also read about Jesus in conversation with the individual. With the woman at the well (John 4), with Nicodemus in the night (John 3), with the young man who meets Him in the street (Mark 10:17). He reaches people where he finds them. From what we would call 'small talk' He effortlessly and surprisingly switches to important and weighty matters (John 4:7 ff). In a few words, Jesus answers people in a way that they quickly forget the world around them and only see Him. He will always be the "one who gives" whether He is a guest of a tax collector (Luke 5:29; 15:1 ff) or with someone of high status (Luke 7:36). Nicodemus, a scholar, is confused by Him because of the complete shift in the position that he took in the conversation, and then has to surrender blindly to His guidance. (John 3:3 ff). At certain moments Jesus knows how to give a cautious turn to a conversation, always taking into account the person in front of Him. In Mark 10:19 Jesus meets a rich man and, instead of dictating him the 9th and 10th commandment, He says: *"You shall not cause any harm to anyone, deprive somebody of something due to him”.* Compare this with Deut. 24:14: *"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy”.*

**Jesus as a poet**

The eloquent Jesus is certainly to be counted among the greatest poets of world history. Of King Solomon is said: He wrote three thousand proverbs, he spoke of trees, the cedar trees in Lebanon up to and including the hyssop, the plant that grows out of the walls. He spoke of the cattle, the poultry, and the crawling animals and the fish (1 Kings 4:32 ff.). Jesus did much more! Let us list some of the animals that were used meaningfully in His proverbs: camel, wolf, fox, serpent, dog, ox, ass, sheep, calf, swine, fish, eagle, hen, chick, dove, sparrow, mosquito, scorpion, and so on. Jesus completes almost every thought by a proverb, precisely defined, without the need for further explanation.

Each word can be seen as a gemstone, which sparkles in different colors in the constantly new context in which the words were illuminated by Jesus, making them of great value. One of the many examples of proverbs can be seen in Matt. 7:2, where Hebrew parallelism comes forward in a simple way: "*For in the way you judge, you will be judged*".

In Luke 14:11, parallelism becomes a contradiction: *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted”.*

In Matt. 10:40 the thought in the parallel (second) paragraph is continued: *"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me”.* As a result, certain puns give a new meaning to proverbs, as in Matt. 10:39, in which similar words are used in different meanings (loosing and to loose). *"He who has found his life will lose it, but he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”*Other proverbs are very special, although they sometimes have a semblance of one-sidedness (Matt. 7:7 ff), of wonder (John 9:39), of exaggeration (Matt. 12:30), and even of contradiction (John 5:31 compared to 8:14). They often aim to deliberately emphasize one side of the truth.

As an Easterner, Jesus often thinks in proverbs with a lively vivid clarity. Many of these proverbs are often surprising in the normal everyday life: a log in the eye, a camel going through the eye of a needle, the swallowing of a camel, stones shouting, mountains moving, etc. (Matt. 7:3; 17:20; 19:24; 23:24). There are statements that emphasize important things, such as: *“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth'. I did not come to bring peace, but the sword!"*(Matt. 10:34). *“But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”* (Matt. 10:30) *“And what you hear whispered in your ear, preach on the housetops”* (Matt. 10:27). His catchy language and great art of poetry are evident everywhere in His speech.

**The parables of Jesus**

When we speak of the poetic qualities of Jesus, we should certainly mention His parables. If only that one parable of the prodigal son would have been preserved, then the Lord Jesus would certainly have received the 'grand prize' for using parables, but there is much more! Jesus taught the scribes the use of parables. They knew this form, but Jesus surpassed them by far. Jesus had the privilege and the ability to see things. He saw in 'ordinary things' what was meaningful and typical. No one before or after Him had the capacity for such an intuitive sense of reality as Jesus. He paints His words without much frills or embellishments. How a decadent son brings his money to the whores (Luke 15:13), how a deceitful steward is too lazy to work and too prominent to beg (Luke 16:3), how a man gets his way if he just persists enough (Luke 11:8).

Jesus knows and paints it openly and honestly how in the east the many unemployed people are hanging around and listening to fairy tale tellers or sleeping in the grass (Matt. 20:3). How a judge first unjustly ignores the complaint of a poor widow who has no money (Luke 18:2 ff.) and how the lord and master in his terrible cruelty let his slaves be cut into pieces without mercy (Matt. 24:51). Jesus had been able to create naturalism and realism long before it became a reality in the history of poetry. Jesus sees things. He descends to the street and sees the simplest life relationships. He speaks of a new piece of cloth that the tailor puts on the old garment (Matt. 9:16) and of the filthy net that the fishermen pull up from the lake (Matt. 13:47). Of the leaven that the woman mixes with the dough from the baking trough (Matt. 13:33) and of the bridesmaids who fall asleep tired at the front door (Matt. 25:5). From the gentleman who stayed too long at the wedding and only comes home in the early hours (Luke 12:38). Besides the fact that Jesus saw things through, He also had the masterly gift of telling things. Who does not know the parable of the Good Samaritan? In a few words very recognizable things are put down. Where has the father's heart ever been painted better than in the parable of the prodigal son?

What poet has described the fatherly generosity in so few words in such a poignant manner? Not a word too much or too little. There is nothing contrived or exuberant about it, only a noble simplicity and quiet grandeur. The special parable of the Good Samaritan is told directly by Jesus as a spontaneous reaction to a question from a scribe (Luke 10:29). Jesus has never been concerned with pasting together all kinds of philosophies and doctrines that Muhammad was concerned with, or with the intellectual speculations of Buddha.

**Jesus as a philosopher**

Does Jesus have a place of honor among the poets (although He Himself would never have desired it), we must also place Him among the greatest philosophers who have ever lived. Besides the use of analogies in the laws of nature, He also proved to be a master in this use of analogies when it came to spiritual laws. Jesus was the first to compare the divine laws in nature with those of the spiritual world. In parables He paints the necessity of divine laws in an excellent way and highly accurate (read e.g. Matt. 13:3 ff.).

He shows some important constitutions in the kingdom of God. In the parable of the sower, the seed experiences obstacles in the condition of the soil. However, this also applies to the Word of God, in which the state and condition of the human heart is important (see also Jn 12:24). Jesus points out the law of life of becoming and perishing, whereby spiritual death is the beginning of a new life. According to the laws of nature, the branch that is separated from the vineis doomed.

This is also the case in a spiritual sense (John 15:6). The growth of the seed is gradual: first the culm, then the spikes, then the fruit in it. This is as clear as it is in the development of the kingdom of God. In nature, the small mustard seed grows into a huge plant. The same goes for the smallness at the beginning of the Kingdom of God, but it grows into something powerful (Mark 4:31). Jesus also spoke powerful thoughts about the hope of resurrection, developed from the widely used expression "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (Matt. 22:32).

Jesus intensifies the words of Moses, for example in the seventh commandment: "And I even say: "*everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart*" (Matt. 5: 28). The fact that Jesus emphasizes the first commandment, was already made clear by Moses (Deu. 5:4-9). But the fact that He also formulated a commandment similar to this, is unique (Matt. 22:39). The two commandments were well known, but Jesus united them together through (divine) love and emphasized them in addition to the hundreds of other commandments in the Old Testament.

**Jesus as a Psychologist, Educator and perfect Man**

Every psychologist should speak of Jesus with respect. There is no one who can so easily and flawlessly fathom the human soul and spirit. Think of the way He describes the heart of man as a field (Matt. 13:3 ff) or of His observations when He sat next to the sacrificial box (Mark 12:41). And how wonderful did He describe the child's soul (Matt. 18:3; Mark 10:14) as the essence of a child being analyzed by Him. Not only psychologists can learn from Jesus, but also educators. From Him they can learn how to teach in a visual way (Matt. 18:2; 22:19 ff.), how to get from something close to something far away (Jn. 4:7,10), how to get the attention with a little trick (Jn. 8:6).

With Jesus you can learn how to make a questioner answer his own questions (Luke 10:29,36) and how to hide very difficult and new things from ignorant people and finally guide them in such a way that they will later find the answers to their difficult questions themselves. This is especially about Jesus' reluctance with regard to giving a testimony of Himself. It is said in the Lord’s Prayer: *"Forgive us our trespasses as we have forgiven..."*(Matt. 6:12). In this way Jesus does not teach us to make cheap promises but shows that God's children must always see the need to come to terms with their debtors before they themselves seek forgiveness.

Also the biologist and the natural scientist can learn a lot from Jesus. What a magnificent perspective of nature did He have! Also in this respect He was far ahead of His time. For example, His statement in Matt. 6:28-29: *"Observe how the lilies of the field grow. ... I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory, clothed himself like one of these”.* Jesus did not want to be a social reformer (Luke 12:14). He has never lifted a poor person out of poverty by a miracle. He cured the sick servant / slave of the centurion but did not require him to release him first. The whole old world has never overcome the contrast between lords and slaves.

Jesus terminated that contrast with one sentence: "*But the greatest among you shall be your servant.* (Matt. 23.11). Jesus refrained from making any demands on social life, and yet, by saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself", He stirred up a great deal in society. What an insight does Jesus have into history? While Paul makes a clear distinction between pre-Christian times and Christian times, Jesus also sees the imperfections of earlier times, but through His life He only wants to bring to a good conclusion what already existed and was in effect under the Old Testament dispensation. For Him, the whole history of the world is one great revelation of the Father's love. Someone once said about Jesus that He saved the world from theologians. He didn’t look much like a theologian and yet no one has ever spoken more profoundly about God and divine matters than He.

In two simple words He ‘uncovers’ God's mercy and majesty: "Father...in the heavens...". Many theologians were driven by the currents of their time. This was not the case with Jesus. The disciples had to accept this as well. If they didn't want this, they had no part in Him (John 13:8). For the rabbis it was considered the highest when you did not quote other teachers, but the original.

When did Jesus ever call upon another person? On the contrary, He often said: "*You have heard that the ancients were told…., but I say to you”* (Matt. 5:21).

It is worth remembering that Jesus grew up as a carpenter, without any significant schooling. What gifts He had and developed to be at the "peak" of mankind. And yet, all these things only concern the "forecourt" of His personality. If we analyze the heart, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, our worship for Him becomes even greater. In the next article (on the pure heart of Jesus) we hope to pay attention to this, God willing.

**Jesus’ relationship with God**

For many of us, God is a distant God, especially if we all try to know Him from our thinking. Jesus has never drawn the conclusion that God exists through contemplation of natural phenomena. He has never looked for the cosmological evidence or found God by searching for the truth. No, He stood with God in a life community and "experienced" Him, and that was enough. He felt that His soul was guided by mysterious, profound forces. His knowledge of God stemmed from His relationship with God.

When He spoke of God, He spoke in full awareness of God's presence. He never knew the "and yet" of faith. It is not true that He had to practice a heroic faith, despite all the opposition He had to endure. No, for Jesus, God was not something doubtful. He was constantly aware of the presence of God. The simple clarity with which Jesus always saw and experienced the heavenly Father, His being, His will, is sky high above everything that resembles Him in history. Jesus' characteristic was the spiritual perception of things. Jesus did not see nature and God as two completely separate things. His teaching was that God in His creation of nature is in charge. The 'natural' blessings and suffering do not make nature come upon us, but God.

God is the center of nature. No sparrow dies without His will (Matt. 10:29). No sparrow will fall to the ground without the Father (Matt. 10:30). Rain and sunshine are governed by none other than Him (Matt. 5:45). Jesus met God strongly and powerfully everywhere. *"My Father is working until now,"*and Jesus was able to see things through in such a way that He saw the Father through these things. He saw God the Father when people handcuffed him: "The Son of man is delivered into the hands of sinners". Through all that He experienced in nature, in His surroundings and in Himself, He "saw" God.

He never had to investigate the will of God. It was His calling to do so at every moment when He was aware of God's will. Jesus was not one of the many people who were looking for God, He did not know any 'experience of God' through mystical ecstasy and/or asceticism. He did not know the beginning of divine revelation. He never had to leave His earlier ways of conception, never had to struggle through all kinds of difficulties, objections and obstacles in order to enter into fellowship with God. It was much more a part of His being to be in such a relationship with God. He alone knows the Father (Mat. 11:27).

Everything has been entrusted to Me by My Father, and no one but the Father knows who the Son is and who the Father is; only the Son knows this, and everyone to whom the Son wants to reveal it. Through His original unity with the Father and through the uninterrupted communion of life with Him, the knowledge of the Father has developed naturally in Jesus. And as the one who revealed God, He met mankind by saying to everyone: *"Learn from me"*(Mat. 11:29), for with Him it was not a question of thoughts and images that He had made, but a matter of ‘knowing for sure’ (Jn. 12:49 ff. Mat. 11:27), a matter of ‘having seen’ (Jn. 8:38). Undoubtedly, with this knowledge of God, He was the only one of all people.

Only He possessed it, others can only receive it from Him. That is why He also spoke of *"My Father"*and *“Your Father”.* He had a very different relationship with God than other people. "No one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. (Matt. 11:27). But what is it that He brought from God to the world as "news"? Jesus possessed a strong awareness of originality and majesty of God. Heaven is His throne and the earth the footstool of His feet (Matthew 5:34; 23:22). God is the Lord of heaven and earth (Matt. 11:25). His omnipotence is unlimited (Matt. 19:26). He can destroy body and soul, reason enough that the whole world should fear Him (Matt. 10:28). These are all statements from the Lord Jesus.

But what is it of all this that Israel had not known before that time? That is without doubt the knowledge of God, that He is the One who loves as a Father. His being is being a Father. Certainly, also in the Psalms God is considered to be a father (Ps. 68:6; 103:13). But that aspect of the essence of God had not yet penetrated deeply. The fatherhood of God is the foundation, the essence of God. In Judaism, God had become alienated from the world and unapproachable: the author of the law, who in the hereafter weighs up debit and credit in a painfully accurate manner. The kindness of God is more than human justice. In this sense, religious affiliation was pervaded with fear in Jesus' day, both among Jews and Gentiles (Romans 8:15).*"For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”*What the natural man knows of God, is His law.

If he does not dissociate himself from God, he is in a relationship of fear to God. Now Jesus comes with an unprecedented new message: The most inner being of God is that God loves as a father. Like a father, He cares about the individual needs of each creature. Yes, even in the smallest details (Matt. 6:26 ff; 7:11; 10:29 ff). Forgiving love is as self-evident to Him as it is to an earthly father.

He loves especially those who are estranged from Him (Luke 15:6,9,24) and He gives all the same wages, because it is good (Matthew 20:15). That doesn't mean that the Father is a powerless greybeard. No, there was no way that Jesus met with any kind of weakness of God. He knew no Father without holiness and seriousness. In the Old Testament, the religious relationship between God and man (People of Israel) existed as an agreement. At that time, the covenant for Israel and the keeping of God's commandments was characterized by the "payment of wages. Now everything is dominated by grace and few great demands of God remain. Jesus has revealed that the essence of God is an essence of fatherly love. Only He understood this.

**Jesus’ godliness**

If we compare Jesus with other prominent believers, there are some interesting differences. First of all, Jesus lacked the thankful feeling of a gifted sinner.

Jesus did not know what it means to be reconciled with God. The greatest gift that faith brings is forgiveness of sins, and He didn't need that forgiveness. He never had to think about the salvation of His own soul. What’s often the case with us to be the final goal of our devoutness, the unity of the will with the Father, was with Jesus at the beginning of the road. He has never sought the Father's love but has always possessed it. That is why Jesus, in the deepest sense of the word, lacked submissiveness, the humble mind towards God.

The feeling of dependence was not the most fundamental character for this devoutness, as the philosopher Schleiermacher claims, that it must be with us, nor the deep and joyful knowledge that God alone is the Mighty and Living One. Much of what Jesus has said in this respect has been spoken to educate others. It was not a symptom of His own life when He said, *"But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell* (Matt. 10:28) or when He taught that they must fear God as Judge (Matt. 12:36). There was no fear in Jesus' faith in God. Nor did He know the fear of Judaism at the time to sin against the third commandment (Matt. 6:24, 30).

With Jesus there was no fear of God in the raging storm on the sea (Matt. 8:24), this in contrast to for example the godly people in the Psalms. Jesus was, when God's hand was at work, much more full of peace and security. For the first and only time in history, the scripture 'You will love Me with all your heart' came true with Him. His being as Man was evident from the fact that He knew all emotions, including fear! Matt. 26:37: The fear of God-forsakenness, death (agony), cf. Heb. 2:15; 5:7, 8.

**Jesus’ joy**

The core of His godliness was His loving joy in God. Jesus' godliness did not desire anything from God, as is so often the case with our godliness. In that sense there was no development in the life of Jesus. He always rejoiced in God being His God. In this God He rejoiced, when He lost His soul to God and merged into Him. He was happy with God when He worked with Him. Jesus' lust was the reign of His Father in the world. The joy of Jesus was closely related to the trust in God.

He never defied God to help Him, never claimed God's protection in pride or rage. Such an attitude, which He saw as tempting God, was rejected simply and with dignity by Him already in the wilderness (Matt. 4:7). In accordance with this, He did not shy away from avoiding danger and bringing Himself to safety (Matthew 4:12; 12:15), even in secret (John 7:10), until the very end. He had the certainty that He would die nowhere but in Jerusalem (Luke 13:33) and that His hour had not yet come (John 11:9).

All these things never caused Him to have a boastful or reckless attitude. He was sure of His Father's protection. *"I am not alone; the Father is with Me.”*That awareness never left Him. To His awareness, everything, man and nature, including even the sparrow on the roof, are in God's hand (Matt. 10:29). He was convinced that even the hairs on our head were all numbered by God (Matt. 10:30). In this confidence in God a strong and courageous character, and a great rest was growing. For Jesus there was work and rest, in the alternation decreed by God. Just as the farmer who gets up by day and goes to bed at night and allows the seed by itself to sprout and to grow (Mark 4:27), so He Himself has also acted in calm confidence, that God Himself takes care of the harvest.

He had never been shocked by His confidence in faith. He gave the last evidence on the cross. For a person it is not easy to look up to God from a suffering. Jesus cried out in the ultimate suffering: *"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit"*(Luke 23:46). And even when God seemed to leave him, Jesus wouldn't let go of Him. Eli, Eli, My God, My God. It was with these words that He clung to the Father with strong confidence, even in the darkest hour of His life (Matt. 27:46).

Jesus said to His disciples: *"Trust in God and trust in Me"*(John 14:1) and to Martha: *"If you believe it you will see the glory of God"*(John 11:40 ff).

He equated the confidence in His person with seeing divine glory. He also told His disciples not to be worried if they were to be led before the human judge, because He promised that He Himself would open their mouths and make them speak, and thus reminded them of the confidence in Him (Luke 21:14 ff.).

Jesus is so totally different from other humans. With Him, one gets the feeling that everything He says about trusting in God is said for the sake of others. In Himself, this trust is mixed with a considerable amount of self-confidence. All you have to do is read the history of the storm on the lake where He feels strong and secure on God's side. That is why it is not strange when He says in John 10:18: *"No one has taken My life away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.* “With Jesus, the relationship with God is much more a 'side by side' and yet 'one with each other', a great mystery.

**Jesus’ prayer life**

Just as our existence depends on the air that we breathe, so the soul of Jesus could only 'breathe' in fellowship with God. Even in the midst of the busiest commotion of his life, His "spiritual ear" constantly heard what the Father told Him, and his "spiritual eyes" constantly saw what the Father was showing Him. He never went beyond that unity with God in his actions, for His works were also done together with God. Jesus always had an alert mind, and like no other he had "sudden thoughts".

The fig tree, not far from the road, which with its rich foliage "deceived" the hungry ones, was immediately the subject of a moving parable for His observant soul (Mark 11:12 ff.). Luther spent much of his life in contemplation, in consideration of spiritual things, and finally came to the conclusion that working was also a way to serve God. Jesus didn't need that time. We have to work as long as it is day; in the night that comes, no one can work (John 9:4). Never has He elevated contemplation as the only purpose in life. Work sometimes prevented him from eating (Mark 3: 20).

Work sometimes caused Him to fall asleep from exhaustion on the ship (Mark 4:38). To Him, the works He did meant serving God. So, in the midst of the emotion of life, He remained fully in unity with the Father; an alert spirit full of inner mercy in the midst of all outward appearances. Doing God's works is something else than resting in the Father. Jesus' whole life was a life with God but praying is much more than that. In praying one has to be completely with God, because praying is speaking with God. When praying, man first enters the sanctuary of fellowship with God. Pray and work, that was always the case for Jesus, but first the praying. So, He was in a certain city where one needed His help, but He first took time for prayer (Luke 5:15 ff.).

The greatest compassion burned like a fire in His soul (Matthew 9:36) and He knew that His works would soon come to an end (John 9:4) but He never took anything away from that time that was meant for prayer. No one has ever lived such a balanced life in terms of the spiritual balance of giving and taking, a regular "breathing" between self-surrender and self-enforcement. When the world insisted on Him by seductive temptation (Matt. 4; John 6:15) or by its pressure (Luke 9:29, 22) or even by the many works of its turmoil (Mark 1:35, 34 Luke 5:16, 15), each time we get the impression that His prayer life became even more intense. It was time and time again the confirmation of the contact with the Father which the world tried to disconnect. At that time, the modesty of Jesus' prayer life was not common.

People preferred to pray where others could see them praying, for example on the corners of the streets or in the synagogue (Matt. 6:5). Jesus told the praying people to pray in their ‘inner room’. He rarely prayed in public. Often, He sent the people and His disciples away (Matt. 6:45; 14:32), sometimes He climbed up to a mountain top (Mark. 6:46) or went to a solitary place (Mark. 1:35), often in the night (Luke. 6:12) or when others were asleep (Mark. 1:35; Luke. 4:42); From Jesus we can learn that a man does not need spectators when he prays (Matt. 6:6). Nowadays there are many believers who look down on the formal prayer and prefer only the "free" prayer.

Luther knew prayers by heart, which he could always recite in a conscious, sincere way. Jesus even prayed on the cross from the collection of Psalms (Ps. 22:2). Jesus prayed out loud (Matt. 26:39). From the heart, spoken through the mouth. Sometimes Jesus prayed out loud so that others could hear it (John 11:42; 17:13). We always read about Jesus that He raised His eyes while praying (John 11:41); 17:1) or how He looked up to heaven (Mark 6:41; 7:34). When breaking the bread, He prayed the prayer of thanksgiving with His eyes on heaven (Matt. 14:9). Jesus did not hate a fixed external form of prayer.

It was certainly not the first time that He was laying on the ground praying when He did so in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:39). Thanksgiving for the bread was such a fixed habit for Him that the people of Emmaus recognized Him by it (Luke 24:35). However, never is the outside so important that He prescribes it to His disciples. He liked to climb a mountain to pray but knew that God's worship was not bound to a mountain (John 4:21). Although He looked up to heaven in prayer, He never imposed any gesture to prayer, as it was with Muhammad or with the Jews. He knelt down three times in the night of the betrayal, but never even recommended anything about the measure of prayer.

In this way He even wanted to avoid the appearance that external matters are important when praying. His daily work was carried by prayer. Early in the morning and in the evening, he knelt before the Father. At the table He folded His hands and at some healings He looked up to the Almighty. Sometimes the shortest prayers were the most fervent. But let's try to get a little deeper into the spirit of His prayers. For Jesus, praying first of all means to love.. How many intercessory prayers were there in His prayers? Just read the High Priestly Prayer in John 17.

How little prayer for Himself and how many fervent intercessory prayers? Think also of His prayers for the people who insulted and persecuted Him! (Matt. 5:44). Yes, He even prayed for those who crucified Him (Luke 23:34). But certainly He also showed His love for the Father out loud. His prayer also spoke of a praying need, but above all of praying love. Not an 'Uti Deo', the use of God, was the most important thing, but much more the 'Frui Deo', the delight in God. He wanted to rejoice in His God. And the darker the world became for Him, the brighter the love for the Father revealed itself: *"Hallowed be Your Name, Your kingdom come"*(Matt. 6:9); it was first and foremost about the glory of God.

He could pray praiseful prayers of thanksgiving for everything, including praying for the children (Matt. 11:25). Praising God is, after all, the overflowing of a heart filled with love and admiration. According to the teachings of the rabbis', Hezekiah did not become Messiah, because after he was rescued from Sennacherib's hand, he did not pray prayers of praise. Jesus began His journey to the cross with a praise (Matt. 26:30). Pascal makes God say to people somewhere: "You would not seek Me if you had not found Me". Jesus lived in close fellowship with the Father in such a way that He heard Him everywhere. That alone was important in His prayer as a necessary answer to love out loud in a consistent manner. And all this in such a tone of closest intimacy as has never existed in the world before. People had described God as Israel's Father and an ‘Our Father' prayer had also been prayed (Isa. 63:16), but Father in the sense of **my** Father (ABBA, Father), no one would have dared to say that …

**Praying and receiving**

With Jesus, praying also meant receiving. Jesus had the firm conviction that by praying with God one could receive much from Him (Luke 18:3 ff.). Jesus sometimes prayed for certain circumstances and people, for example that their flight would not be in winter or on the Sabbath (Matt. 24:20). He knew that God, Who had planted the ear, would hear (Ps. 94:9). Likewise, a prayer was also a cry for help that was heard and an allowing to be comforted with a love that goes beyond all understanding.

And yet He never prayed for Himself in this way, except in Gethsemane, but also with reservation. *“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”*(Matt. 26:39).

Besides, some verses further He assured those who were with Him that everything was possible for Him. “*Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?* He could do it, but did not. With Him, receiving in prayer was much more about the internal needs of His soul. He did not seek the gifts in the first place, but the Giver. Jesus has always given Himself by the offerings of God. In such prayers God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit. In that way He grew up spiritually from childhood (Luke 2:40, 52), united with the Father. It was the prayer that strengthened God's Son in the hours when He felt the unity with the Father becoming stronger and stronger. Here lies the actual source of His spiritual power. His praying was an action, a spiritual work. Through this contact with the Father, He knew at decisive moments which way He had to go. His spirit was willing at all times. In prayer He also became lord of His otherwise sinless weakness of the flesh. In the hours of temptation He prayed all the more urgently and persistently to preserve His undamaged soul (Matt. 27: 46; John 6: 15). The most active of all men is he who is the greatest in praying.

**Prayer as a sacrifice**

Besides loving and receiving, praying for Jesus also meant offering a sacrifice. In prayer Jesus sacrificed His own will. Yes, in prayer He declared Himself willing to be a sacrifice Himself. For example, the first proclamation of suffering was preceded by a prayer in solitude (Luke 9:18). After the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus thought that at that moment that His work did not bear much fruit and he thought of the coming crucifixion. In these circumstances He withdrew and sacrificed Himself again (John 6:15). In the most important part of the High Priestly Prayer

He prayed: *"Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son"*(John 17:1, 5), in other words: “Father, here I am” (Joh. 12:27 ff). Here, praying for Jesus was nothing more than sacrificing Himself. Until then, Jesus had known about this sacrifice, but now it is also a matter of bringing it to fulfilment. Under Gethsemane's olive trees He 'died' the first time. You could also say: When Jesus knelt in the water for the first time (to be baptized) and put Himself next to sinners (Luke 3:21), He prayed to make Himself available to the bearing of sin (John 1:29). Jesus already knew who would betray Him (John 6:64, 70), but He Himself did nothing to stop Judas. For Jesus, in this sense, praying was the hardest work for a man.

And then we also understand that after these prayers, up to three times, a glorification of Jesus by God was the result: namely at the Baptism, at the Transfiguration on the Mountain, and in the day of His Entry into Jerusalem (Luke 3:21 ff.; 9:29 ff. and John 12:28). Who doesn't realize that Jesus has been a model for real prayer in all respects? How much can He teach us about self-denial? And yet we would not do justice to Him if we only saw Him as an example. He was completely different, and we can't **just** walk in His footsteps. One might wonder why He never prayed with the disciples. He prayed a lot of intercessory prayers. As Lord of the house He also prayed for bread, and at the end of the Passover He prayed the prescribed hymns (Ps. 113-118) together with His disciples (Matt. 26:30). But we do not know of any prayer of Jesus in which His lonely Self is transformed into the intimate ‘we’. Nor is it the case that Jesus involves us in the sanctuary of His prayer life in the "Lord’s Prayer".

On the contrary, it was with the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ that He said: "Pray, then, in this way" (Matt. 6:9). He prayed differently, there alone in the opening words. But He did not distance Himself from His disciples.

However, there were some differences in the prayer. The tax collector had to pray: "O God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13). Jesus did not need that prayer. Even at the time of his death, He did not need that prayer and was fully aware that He was not equal to other men. And just as He never uttered a prayer of penance and repentance, He did not pray for His sanctification either, or that His faith would not cease.

The prayer at the ‘Lord's Prayer’ is an acknowledgement of having a need. This need is even found in the man who knew "that all things are given to Him from the Father" (Matt. 11:27). That's why He sometimes prayed differently from us. Thanks, praise and worship filled His prayer. And when He prayed 'differently', He prayed for others and knew that He was one with the Father (John 11:42). There was some royal power of authority in His word, when He assured Peter, in order to calm him down, "But I have prayed for you … (Luke 22:32), and now, Peter, it is enough". Jesus has interceded for many in the last hour. He was, after all, the High Priest, Intercessor and Mediator. Truly He **Himself** had the power to lay down or keep His life. However, he who has the power himself is not as we are in powerlessness, dependent on the help of others.

**Jesus and the Bible**

What we call "the Old Testament" was for Jesus the Bible. He lived in the Old Testament history. In His teaching He referred to Cain, Abel, Noah, the Flood, Abraham, Lot, Elijah, Naaman, Jonah, Zechariah, and many more (Mat. 6:29; 12:3 ff., 40.42; 23:35; Luke 4:25,27; 17: 26.29; John 8:40). Old Testament prayers and groans were spoken by Him in Gethsemane and on the cross (Ps. 43:5 (Mat. 26:38); Ps. 6:4, 42: 6 (John 12:27); Ps. 22:2 (Mat. 27:46); Ps. 31:6 (Luke 23:46)). Jesus was familiar with every letter of the Bible, even the smallest details, and in a way we can hardly imagine. This is reflected, among other things, in the many references He often made, which proved that He lived in the world of the Old Testament.

We see this when He speaks in John 18:11; Mat 26:39 about drinking the cup (see Isaiah 51:17); about the crying out of the stones in Luke 19:40 (see Hab 2:11); about condemning the evildoers in Mat. 7:23 (see Ps. 6:9) or about considering the ravens in Luke 12:24 (see Ps. 147:9) or about the desolation of one’s house in Mat. 23:38 (see Ps. 69:26; Jer. 22:5); or about the attitude of the people of Israel toward Him in Mat. 23:39 (see Ps. 118:26); about people commanding the mountains to cover them in Luke 23:30 (see Hos. 10:8); or about people trampling on snakes and scorpions in Luke 10:19 (see Ps. 91:13). Furthermore, in Luke 8:10 He speaks about those who can see but never perceive (see Isaiah 6:9 ff) or about whether Capernaum will be lifted to Heaven in Luke 10:15 (see Isaiah 14:13 ff); about a son being divided against his father in Luke 12:53 (see Micah 7:6) or about one kingdom rising against another one in Luke 21:10 (see Isaiah 19:2).

In many other places Jesus has shown an inexhaustible knowledge of the Bible through allusions, views and expressions. However, getting familiar with the Bible in this way is not as easy as in our time where the Bible is freely and digitally accessible. Only in the synagogue He could get access to the scrolls to read them. We read a lot about Jesus being alone, but never about being alone to read. Therefore, the Bible study must have mainly taken place before He entered the public domain. Then, after sowing and fighting, Jesus must have lived above all by the word that He acquired before from His memory.

Nowadays people speak rather disparagingly of learning by heart, but Jesus must have learned a lot by heart and practiced His memory in order to be able to use it again in the lonely days of temptation in the wilderness or in the turbulent time and battle in Jerusalem. Not least in His last days and hours, right up to the cross! It was a treasure that He collected in the good days, which served Him in difficult days as bread, water, shield and sword. Jesus' position in relation to the Bible was completely different from that of the Jews before that time.

For the Palestinian Jews, the Bible was a collection of valid statements, which had to be implemented by educated rabbis. For the Alexandrian Jews, the Bible was a collection of secret knowledge, into which they could insert their own philosophy. Jesus found God in the Bible, and when He read the Bible, He communicated with His Father.

For Jesus, the Bible was 'food' on a daily basis. He lived from every word. He read the Bible with great attention, certainly because of the testimony of God about Himself. He knew that He owed much of His knowledge to this book, because the will of God was revealed in it, and that God had spoken to Him many times through this book. That's why he had great respect for the Bible. In addition to prayer, the Bible was the element of His spiritual life, from which streams of life originated. He continually nourished His thinking and emotions with it and experienced the fellowship with God. He heard and asked (Lk. 2:46) already in His childhood about obtaining information concerning His Father.

He had direct insight (not via other people). His scriptural explanation is simple and clear, though infinitely profound (Mk 12:26 ff). He had never read something in the Bible that is repellent to Him, for He knew the power of God and also knew how to use it in the explanations that He gave Mk 12:24). He also knew the hardness of the heart that makes it difficult for men to accept the Scripture as the Word of God (Mat. 19:8). The Bible was for Him a sword and shield against Satan (Mat. 4:4,6, 10) and against men. His faith rested in “It is written”. It was the light onto His path. Above all, the Bible has comforted him. Can we really imagine how much strength and encouragement Jesus drew from this?

For example, from the text of **Isa.52:13 to Isa.53:12.** No one is allowed to misuse one single word. Jesus never did. He drew His knowledge and strength and consolation from the Word; For Him it had to be finished as it is written (Matt. 26:54,56). The fact that Jesus had read His Bible in His "good" days comforted Him in the "evil" days.

**Jesus is the fulfilment of the Scripture**

The relationship of Jesus with the Bible was unique in two ways. First of all, Jesus knew that He Himself was the purpose of the Scripture (Lk. 24:27, 44; Jn 5:39, 46). He knew this already in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk. 4:21). When He made preparations for His ‘royal’ entry in Jerusalem on the colt of a mule, He knew that Zechariah had spoken of Him (Zech.9:9). By the image that Isaiah had written about Him, the people had to be able to recognize Him (Mat. 11:5; Isa. 35:5 ff). And at places where it was not possible to write it literally, there are numerous examples and types in the Bible that had to be fulfilled in Him. Among these types are very special ones such as Joseph in comparison with Jesus. Joseph was sold by Judah for twenty shekels of silver to tradesmen, so he could be sold ‘at a profit’ in Egypt for thirty shekels of silver (Gen. 37:26 ff). Judas ‘sold’ Jesus for thirty shekels of silver (Mat. 26:16).

No one has ever read the Bible the way Jesus did. He knew that it was all about Him. He found Himself in the Bible, in the law, in the prophets and in the Psalms, for example as ‘a corner stone’ (Ps. 118:22). He often delivered the scriptural evidence to friend and enemy about who He Himself was. In the Old Testament it is hidden in many places that there is a God, who was going to redeem His people Himself (Mat. 11:10, cf. Mal. 3:1; Mat. 11:14, cf. Mal. 4:5,6; Mat. 21:16, cf. Ps. 8:3). However, there is another significant reason why Jesus was different from every other person in His relationship with the Bible. He Himself was somebody who shaped the Scripture, preached and developed it in new forms and even brought it to fulfilment. From Him flowed an independent source of knowledge and exactly for this reason He had the key to the real understanding of the Bible. Those who heard Him speak, had the impression that He spoke differently: namely as one having authority (Mat. 7:29; Jn. 7:46). For example, He counteracted the Old commandments with a definite *“But I say to you”*(Mat. 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44) or by saying: “I came to fulfil them” (Mat. 5:17). He boldly deviated from what the prophet asked about commanding fire to come down from heaven (Lk. 9:54) and He criticized Lamech’s statement: I shall be avenged seventy –sevenfold (Gen. 4:24; Mat. 18:22).

**Jesus as a Scribe**

People expected Elijah; He mentioned John the Baptist as His Elijah, who was killed by men (Mk. 9:13). He applied the description of the Messiah as a shepherd to Himself, but He gave a totally new substance to that description by adding the surrender of life to it (Eze. 34:23; Jn. 10:11, 15, 17, 18). He honored the Scripture but dealt freely and independently with them as God’s direct representative alone is allowed to do. He knew how to develop the Bible in its statements. Also in this respect He showed up as Lord of the Scripture, who dealt with it in whatever way He wanted.

He left unmentioned what he wanted to leave unmentioned (Ex. 30:13; Mat. 17:27). He used whatever He needed for the preaching. Sometimes He stated Scripture next to Scripture (Mat. 4:6, 7). He also explained Scripture with Scripture. He chose special portions from it. The Bible gave Him many examples to describe the Messiah, for example in Isa.60. And in1 Kgs. 17:13 a miracle for one’s own sustenance and for one’s own protection. He took the liberty to use the Scripture for His purpose. For example, by leaving out verse 4 from Isa.4-6 to substantiate His healings and Isa. 61:1, 2 to substantiate His preaching. And then the awesome merging of Dan.7:13 (The Son of men on the clouds in heaven) with Isa. 53, the suffering Servant of the Lord. It is difficult to imagine the extent to which the Scripture has shaped the thoughts of Jesus and the extent to which it was His source of knowledge. We often have the impression that He approached the Bible with a great asset of His own knowledge. After all, He would be able to expose the ‘golden veins’ of the Bible, that formerly remained hidden (Mat. 4:4, Mk 12:26). At the Sabbath issue (Matt. 12:7) He quoted Hosea 6:6 and further on about David who was hungry and the priests in service (Mat. 12:3,5) and derived from the works of His Father His own beneficial works by not disturbing the Sabbath rest (Jn. 5:17). In all things He has shown the He was the One that was promised by the ancestors (Num. 21:8, 9; Jn. 3:14; Jonah 1:17; Mat. 12:40, Ps. 110 and Mat. 22:42 ff).

**Jesus and the natural world**

How did Jesus relate to everything the world has to offer? The world has a lot to offer in terms of sensory stimuli, but also in terms of temptation. First of all, one could say that Jesus has been open-minded in all the things that are ‘for sale’ in the world. Even the garment that the Roman soldiers took from Him at Calvary was in a certain way a luxury item (John 19:23). And the anointing of His feet, six days before His death, a costly matter, He allowed Himself to enjoy it without protest. A narrow-minded person might have probably said that this money would have been of more benefit to the poor (Mat. 26:8 ff.).

We see that Jesus, during His life, enjoyed what the world was offering Him in an uninhibited way. He often took part in meals, celebrations and weddings, which were celebrated exuberantly in the east (Lk.7:36 ff, 10:38 ff, 14:1, Jn. 12:2). Slanderers could easily call him a glutton and an alcoholic (Mat. 11:19).

He was happy that feasts were organized for Him, also as a means of thinking about Him (Mat. 9:10, Jn. 12:2). The last undisturbed hour He spent with His disciples was a feast. And when He spoke of giving His life, He connected it after His resurrection with *"I will be with you in the kingdom of My Father, and I will again enjoy with you the fruit of the vine".* (Mat. 26:29). He has unhesitatingly compared the fruits of the present (Mat. 22:2) and the glory of the future (Mat. 25:1) Kingdom of God with the pleasure of a guest meal or compared even Himself with the Bridegroom (Mat. 9:15). His mother knew that she could come to Him quietly with questions about "they have no wine" (John 2:3). And He Himself knew that the old wine tastes better than the new one and that the people who drank the old wine no longer like the new one (Luke 5:39).

When Jesus, in His parables, pictured the joy, then the fattened calf and music and dance are not missing (Lk. 15:23, 25). He never denied the needs of the body. In hunger and thirst He sought satisfaction, also in the presence of a Samaritan woman; He could have waited until His disciples returned.

Yes, even on the cross. His last refreshment was a little bit of sour wine, which the workers and soldiers drank (John 19:29). He only refused it when He tasted the bad intentions of men (Mat. 27:34; Mk 15:23). At the beginning of His suffering on the cross He refused the sedative drink. On the other hand, as a matter of course, He gave in to use a pillow to rest. (Mk 4:38). He also did not argue with the people when they made it easier for Him to sit on the coats they laid on the colt that He was going to ride. (Mat. 21:7). He knew that a foot washing feels good. Just think of the foot washing of the disciples (John 13:4 ff).

He also allowed Himself twice to be pleased with the anointing of His feet (Lk. 7:38; John 12:3). He forbade Martha to serve Him in any way, even though she did it out of her love (Lk. 10:40). Muhammed did see something good in despising and hating wine. But Jesus even related the remembrance of Him to wine (Mk 14:23 ff) and obviously, He had no problem of leaving five hundred liters of wine as a wedding present for the young couple in Cana (John 2:6). Jesus certainly didn't preach asceticism; He took care of the people’s need in the wilderness (Mk 8:2 ff). He defended His disciples when they satisfied their hunger, even if by doing so they broke the Sabbath Commandment (Mat. 12:7(1)). To Him, fasting as a commandment imposed from the outside and without the right motivation, did not mean anything (Mk 2:19 ff). This is all even more important if you realize that in that way, He resisted the prevailing opinion at that time (Mk 2:18; Mat. 11:19) and even deviated from the practice of His predecessor John the Baptist (Mat. 3:1, 4). The world around us offers so much joy and pleasures. And Jesus has open-mindedly made use of it.

He must have had an excellent eye for nature. Jesus did - not like many others in His time - see different sea, mountain and landscape sceneries, and all this by foot, when nature covered itself in the oriental sunshine. It is for example known that on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho you can walk through different climate zones, which are normally thousands of miles apart, within a few hours.

Take the lovely picture of the landscape of Caesarea Philippi. A garden of the Lord with an abundance of water and trees. Alpine brooks and alpine meadows that are often covered with Veronica flowers and look like a blue flower carpet. Or you can descend from the east to the Lake of Tiberias. It goes through abundant high grass and colorful meadow flowers, where the bright red Opium Poppy flower and the deep blue iris grow, just like the anemones, the Amur Adonis flower, the carnation, the tulip and the veronica. And then suddenly there is the view from the 700-meter-high plateau over the shimmering lake. How beautiful are these colors in their glare and glow! And in the north, the snow-covered Hermon mount silently towers above all that. I think that Jesus has often enjoyed this. This can be derived from His talk of lilies, sparrows, mountains and hills, vines, lightning, puddle rain and sunshine, of good and bad trees, and of the morning and evening sunshine.

Now this admiration for nature is very common, just look at the book of Psalms, but Jesus had a special 'eye' for nature. As in Psalm 29, He admired the beauty of the thunderstorm with its effects on the lake, the high mountains or the dense forest. Jesus knelt down before the meadow flower and saw in a glance the beauty that makes even the beauty of Solomon pale (Matt. 6:29).

Yes, in the littleness of the birds (Mat. 6:26), even in the sparrows (Mat. 10:29 ff) Jesus found objects of admiration. Jesus had a joyful look at His surroundings, His heart opened at the sight of the green fields. For Him the ripening seed was not a sign that it had to be harvested quickly, but rather that wherever the sower walks by, the earth, whatever is entrusted to it, is ripened by God's sun into golden ears of corn (Mk 4:26-29).

And when in winter the ravens were crowing, it was not a matter of hunger and needs to Him, but of a rich God who even gives food to the ravens.

So did Jesus refresh Himself with a beautiful world under the glorious oriental sun and imbibed joy and not sadness from what nature had for Him to offer. For Jesus it was a sure thing that the earth is the Lord’s. Nature is to be enjoyed and is given to us by the Father. In 1 Tim. 4: 4 it says: *"For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude; for it is sanctified by means of the word of God and prayer."* Jesus had never been guilty of anything towards nature or of excess, which is why He was able to make use with great joy of all that nature had to offer. How different is He from for example Buddha? The ‘godly people’ in His days were afraid of too much happiness. They felt they had to reduce the mountain of their sins first.

Of course, it is also clear that Jesus had that joy because He is the Lord of nature. The world had no power over Him, neither through fear nor temptation. He rejoiced over the world, but when His Father came into question, the world was of secondary importance. For us, the world with all its temptations is a great danger. Jesus knew this, He said that He’d rather see that people would enter the Kingdom of God with one eye or one arm, than that they stay ‘healthy’ outside the Kingdom (Mat. 18:8 ff.).

**Jesus and marriage**

Jesus never needed that self-mutilation and never put it into practice, or did He? Has He ever called a woman His own? There is no doubt that Jesus saw much good in marriage. From the joy of marriage, which is perhaps the greatest joy there is, He derived several parables, comparing Himself as a bridegroom.

He never refused to be a guest at a wedding. He loved the children that came out of marriage (Ps. 128:3). In addition, He was very serious about marriage, despite the many divorces (Mat. 19:4 ff.). Jesus never belonged to those who forbid marriage (1 Tim. 4:3). It is even questionable whether Jesus would agree wholeheartedly with Paul not to marry in many cases (1 Corinthians 7:27, 38, 40). All the more the question remains why He remained unmarried, if He did not consider the unmarried status to be something 'higher'. Paul and also John the Baptist refrained from their natural rights to be married for the sake of the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 9:5). How much more did Jesus do, who had many tasks to fulfill. Jesus, who even corrected His mother in a certain way because He was the Lamb of God Who would take upon Himself the sins of the world. At that time when Jesus started the fulfillment of His tasks, the days when He would normally marry as a Hebrew youngster (around the age of 18) were already behind Him. But He already complied with the laws of the finished kingdom of God. For in Mat. 22:30 it is said after all: *"In the resurrection they do not marry nor are given in marriage".* In this sense, Jesus was unique (John 3:13). And no one has ascended to heaven except the Son of Man, who has descended from heaven.

**The true Jesus**

If we follow the life of Jesus, it is noticeable that He was above all true. He did not pretend to be different than He was. With Him, everything was sincere, simple, and natural. Undoubtedly there was also a majestic excellence in it, He had no part in any unfair means whatsoever. He didn't know the thing that we call opportunity, even if it might help His cause at that moment. In all things He was very ‘straightforward’. As the truthful One, Jesus was not ashamed of difficult situations in which He got into: *“How distressed I am until it is accomplished!* (Luke 12:50), *“My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death”* (Mat. 26:38), *“I am thirsty”* (Jn 19:28).

This is how He has expressed His suffering to friends and enemies. However, the 'wisdom' of that time was completely different. The Stoics wanted to keep up appearances under the misfortunes of life by saying that they didn't care. Jesus was totally different: “*But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son.”* (Mk 13:32), *“But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give”* (Mk10:40). Wouldn't it have been wiser not to mention that? However, He is the one who says of Himself: *“I am the Truth”* (Jn 14:6). The soul of Jesus was as transparent as a mountain spring. Someone once said: "There are many virtues to be found in many peoples, but nowhere does one find love for the truth".

Jesus wanted to forbid His disciples to make oaths (Mat. 5:34). He commanded them: “*But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’*. In our truthfulness we always find ‘little white lies’, often also to spare each other. Jesus was open, without sparing anything or anyone. In Mat. 21:32 He says: *“But the tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of God before the Scribes”.*

He said to the prominent Nicodemus that he had to be born again (Jn 3:4).

The world bows down for money and power. Jesus says in the presence of the rich man and the greedy Pharisees: *“Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury”* (Mark 12:43).

And having experienced in Samaria without having done a miracle there, that Samaritans, believed Him at His word (John 4:41 ff.) and, at another time, a Samaritan returned to thank Him, while nine Jews failed to do so (Luke 17:16), He did not mince His words with the likeness of the Good Samaritan, who appeared to have more charity than the Jewish priest and Levite (Luke 19:33 ff.).

He knew that salvation was from the Jews and that the Samaritans did not know what they worship (John 4:22), but nevertheless He told the Samaritan woman that one day they will worship neither in Jerusalem nor on Gerizim (John 4:21). Yes, He was truth and spoke truth, where someone else would cover it up in silence. No doubt He had the burning desire to win many. But He remained the honest one, who never unfairly made something easier for His disciples than for others. *"The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*(Mat. 8:20). Even in telling His parables, Jesus did not deviate an inch from the truth and reality. He knows, for example, the how and why the first hired workers became jealous of those who were hired in the last hour and received the same amount of money (Mat. 20:11). He knows the reason why blatant perseverance in the world has greater effect than humility and helpfulness. It is clear from Jesus' words that He was fully aware of the contradiction with the then prevailing ideals of life.

Mat. 20:25 ff says: *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.**It is not this way among you”.* In that respect, a Jew was about the same as a Greek. Prosperity, honor, prestige and power were very important. The Greeks had the ideal of the 'free man'. For Jesus it was very different. Most valuable were not spirit, beauty, power, strength, riches and prestige, but insignificance and humility, and voluntary service.

**Love, the bond of perfection**

Jesus knew one single purpose during His round trip on earth: to be a servant (Mat.20:28). He had a great deal of compassion for physical and mental problems. He often oversaw those immediately (Mat. 9:36 ff, 14:14). He got moved when He saw tears (Lk 7:13; 8:52). He was involved with every man; the whole miserable condition of mankind touches Him. Confucius said: *“Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.”* With this he recommended a righteousness that gives each one his own without sacrificing himself. Jesus went much further: *“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you”* (Mat. 7:12). Of course, Jesus knew that man’s desires were insatiable.

With Him however, love was so strong that He, who preferred to be with God alone, transferred into someone who has an utmost love for men. Never has love been just an impulse, never was self-sacrifice only the goal. His love was an uncompromising will, deed and service. It was an effective love of self-sacrifice. Night becomes day when Nicodemus comes. (Jn 3:2). He also forgot about His tiredness for the sake of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 6), sometimes He even had to neglect His need for food and drink (Jn 4:31 ff, Mk 3: 20). To live like this for others is incomprehensible to natural people, therefore people thought that He was out of His mind (Mk 3:21). His intention, however, was in God, where His anchor lay. Such love without reservation and without a bit of selfishness had never been found in any other human being. It was Jesus that said: *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you.*(Jn 13:34). But He also gave that commandment a new content. In Rome people had the saying: *‘A man is a wolf to another man’.*

And also, among the Jews, the term 'neighbor' had its limits at the barrier of the borders. While love for his fellow countrymen had been made lawful, the Jew often hated the stranger. Jesus answered the question ‘Who is my neighbor?’, which was asked by the Pharisees, with: “Don’t ask yourself whether someone is ‘further’ away from you but make every needy person your neighbor (Lk 10:36). What we often are only willing to do in our circle, Jesus did to all people. In Jn 10: 16 Jesus says: *“I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also.*” In the days of Jesus, love lost its border! The prophets often operated for the whole nation, Jesus continued, even after His resurrection, to consider the individual.

He made time for everyone, it always seemed as if He did not hurry, He stopped at the beggar who cried out to Him (Lk 18:40). Yes, He made efforts to make the deaf understand Him (Mk 7:33) and again and again His love went out to the whole world. Thus the 'father’s ear' and 'father’s heart' of God was made credible forever. “Love believes all things, hopes all things” as Paul assures us in the famous Song of Love. But in what view did Paul observe this hoping faith in love with Jesus? Jesus has highly regarded man in a certain way and respected him, for He believed in his future. Not what man is, but what he has to become, gives him respect. Therefore it is true that every human, even the little insignificant stupid man, has the same value as someone called Michel Angelo or Beethoven. Every man is of equal and high value. Thus, He believed all things and hoped all things. But that's why He could love and didn't die of a broken heart.

**Love and miracles**

If we look at the miracles of Jesus, His love becomes blatant. Why did Jesus do miracles? Without a doubt He did them also to make people stop and think and also to provide Himself with an audience. Once there were listeners, He was sometimes concerned that the time for healing was jeopardizing the time of teaching (Mat. 9: 27-31, first healing, then a caution not to tell any further). John calls these miracles ‘signs’ (Jn 2:11; 20:30) because the miracles are signs of what is happening in the spiritual life. Origen ever said that the miracles of Jesus were far beyond those of the heathen miracle doctors, because they were not sorceries, but they always served spiritual and moral purposes. In other words: they served His love. In this way, the work of miracles was intertwined in a completely peculiar way in the essence of His personality.

He healed and taught people, that is how the evangelists described His daily work. (Mat. 4:23; 9:35; Lk 5:15, 17). The misery of sickness and sin has many connections with one another; physical, psychological and spiritual needs are inseparable. Jesus always recognized all of those aspects. He was a teacher and a healer at the same time and His love reached out the most to the ‘least’ in both professions. And while He was teaching and healing, He radiated a glory that was full of grace and glorification. Power causes corruption. If there is one person who could rise above all others, it was Jesus, and yet, with Him, that very power led only to servitude. Many biblical heroes used their power for their benefit sometimes, with Jesus, however, all power was at the service of His holy love. And even in His last night He did not allow that a man would suffer loss because of Him (Lk 22:51). His miracles were mostly about healings, especially because people nearly always appealed to Him in that sense. But He also did many other miracles uninvited: in the wilderness, with the feeding of the five thousand, on the lake in the storm, at the wedding when they ran out of wine, with the dead in the house of mourning.

Again, and again it was His love that controlled Him, because He wanted to serve them. Love controlled His miracles. A special aspect of His love was touching the sick. At that time, a mute was more of an object of consternation than of compassion. Aristotle, who often had more insight than other people, said: "The deaf mute are unsuitable for the development of human civilization". How often have those who ask Jesus for the healing of a deaf-mute person been his tormentors first? Therefore, He took them aside (Mk 7:33). In Hebrew a leper is ‘a person beaten’ by God. After his healing there are atonement offerings needed. He was ostracized because the people did not want to become unclean themselves, and of course there was that justified fear of being contaminated themselves. It was a warm sun beam of unexpected love that these people experienced when they were touched by Jesus, a carefree warm touch (Mk 1:41). This touching by Jesus was deep and meaningful to the sick. We can understand a little bit what a loving touch could mean to a blind person who couldn't see the friendly eye of Jesus, just like with a deaf-mute person. And what must have gone through the minds of the dead daughter’s parents when Jesus grabbed its cold hand and brought the child to life? (Mk 5:41). In those days the touching of a dead person caused one to be unclean for the sanctuary.

**His love and His prophecies**

Apart from the miracles, the love of Jesus was also reflected in His prophecies.

While the old prophets, who often, even by the efforts for their own reputation, proclaimed threatening punishments with a flaming glance, Jesus pronounced the judgment to the city that kills the prophets, with tears in His eyes (Luke 19:41). For many, this was a last word of faithful warning. The prophecies He spoke to His disciples were also inspired by love. Why did He talk to them so often about His approaching suffering? Yet only for this reason, so that when that time would come, they would not be grieved without the awareness of it. But much more, He has known it in advance, and now it is a matter of understanding its meaning and purpose so that, when it happens, they may believe that it is Him (John 13:19). He had the same motivation as He spoke of the fall of the temple. His love made them flee from the danger in time, anyway. (Mk 13:14 ff). Or when He talked about His return, His love assured them that they would be comforted and that they had to be watchful (Mk 13: 28 ff, 23,33, 36 ff). Yes, His prophecies thus became a very special pastoral care. Yet, Peter was not saved from his fall, despite Jesus' prophecy (Mat. 26:34), but after this, a glance of Jesus was enough to bring him to repentance from that wrong path (Lk 22:61). And His disciples who ran away at least knew for sure that they would be reunited again (Mat. 26:31 ff). Thus, every prediction and prophecy have been an inspiration of His love.

**Jesus’ love and eloquence**

Whether it was addressed to the individual or to the crowd, His love was expressed in His way of communication. He spoke to His disciples as a loving teacher, to the people friendly and to the Pharisees sometimes with a fire and brimstone speech. And whoever heard him speak to the Samaritan woman (Jn 4) or to the Pharisee Simon (Lk 7:30 ff) or to the governor Pilate (Jn 18 and 19) could hardly believe that it was the same person speaking. To no one did He say too much or too little; in every special condition or mood or way of thinking, His special love was speaking. The measure of His speech was never He Himself, never His own knowledge, but always the human who stood before Him.

He adapted His way of speaking to the ability of that person’s understanding of things (John 3:12). In the beginning, He often withheld many of the things that His own people should know, such as His task as Messiah and the necessity of His suffering. Even on the night before His death, His love concealed many things, because His own people were too weak to endure it (John 16:12). On the other hand, He was never too tired of repeating the things that were not understood, as much as necessary, and often also of communicating in fixed equal formulas (Mat. 16:21; 17:22; 20:18), so that when the time was right, they would finally understand. Also, the fact that Jesus often emphasized the wages, is no different from bowing down to the weak. For Himself, the thought of wages did not play an important role.

Mockery, irony and satire could not be heard in His speech. This is in contrast to Elijah, who mocked the Baal priests (1 Kings 18:27). In the book of Isaiah, we sometimes find a satire which is loveless (Isaiah 41:6 ff.; 44:12-19; 58:5). Jesus was a master of "sunny" parables. He could sometimes strongly emphasize one side of something so that in the view His opponents He seemed to be exaggerating. For Jesus it was often about waking them up without running away at once (Mark 4:33). He even spoke this way in mysteries which in the beginning were, broadly speaking, often riddles to the disciples. Jesus loved parables. Through His eyes, the spiritual world was open and uncovered. He painted in such beautiful words from which much love spoke. The people were on the level of first seeing, then believing. That is why there was much visualization in His parables. He let somebody handed Him a coin (Mat. 22:19), He put a child in the middle (Mat. 18:2), he pointed His finger at the lilies of the field.

And further on the birds in the sky (Mat. 6:26,28), on the dragnet of the fishermen drawn up on the beach (Mat. 13:47) and on the sower that is sowing in his field (Mat. 13:3). With these examples He gave visual education.

His disciples had to learn that he who wants to be the greatest must be the servant of all. Jesus showed this by taking a towel and a basin and started washing their feet (John 13:14). They had to know that He was going to die: the bread is a symbol of His body and He breaks it in their sight (Mat. 26:26). They had to know that He was going to die for them and therefore He gave them the bread so that they would eat it (Mat. 26:26). They had to know where He would stay: He would go to the Father which is in Heaven and therefore He disappeared before their eyes in the direction of heaven (Acts 1:9).All the words about His death have not been understood, but love that was so strong, found a way here that made the understanding of His dying a security for the future: for you! Love bows down to be understandable.

**The sensitivity of Jesus’ love**

In the dining room of Simon, the Pharisee, a fearful woman slipped in. She throws herself at Jesus’ feet, she wets His feet with her tears and wipes them dry with her hair; she anoints them with an expensive anointment. Everyone in the dining room despises this woman, but Jesus treats her with the utmost sensitivity. He doesn’t speak to her; He doesn’t admonish her or praise her. He speaks gently about her and subtly tells Simon that he too is guilty before God, although he thinks he is ten times better than that woman. Jesus then made her the center of attention and said, *“For this reason I say to you, her sins,****which are many****, have been forgiven, for she loved much; …..“Your sins have been forgiven*" (Lk 7:36-48). At the well of Jacob, He meets a woman who's not much better. This woman's past is clear to him (John 4:18), and He doesn't scare her directly. He first comes to His goal in another way. In that way for example, He asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" instead of reproving him (Jn 21:15; Mat. 26:33).

It is almost by only repeating His words that the doubter Thomas is "punished" (Jn 20:27). Only afterwards, when it is possible to do it privately, the old man, who has been lying at Bethesda for 38 years without a cure, is reminded of earlier sins (Jn 5:14). Yes, even Judas, the betrayer is spared first when John asked about who was going to betray Him (Jn 13:26). Everywhere we meet the tenderness and sensitivity of Jesus. We know how former prophets have sat by the sickbeds of their kings relentlessly (2 Kgs 20:1; 1:6). Jesus knew the connection between punishment and sin as well. But during His walk, He always offered sympathy and pure love. He must have always radiated kindness and goodness.

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Translated by Ursula Moestapa