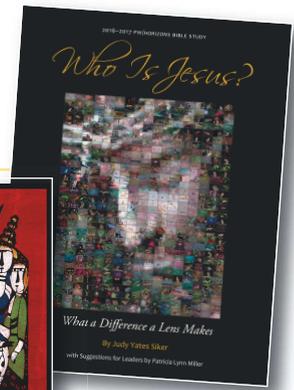


Consider the Source

BY KATIE MULLIGAN

For use with Lesson Three of the 2016–2017 PW/*Horizons* Bible study, *Who Is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes* by Judy Yates Siker



Scripture: Luke 4:16–22

“Is not this Joseph’s son?” the people in the synagogue said of Jesus in Luke 4:22.

Is this not Joseph’s son? Isn’t that old Mr. Granther—Grumpy Granther? Isn’t that just Sally who always complains? Isn’t that good-for-nothin’ Joe who drinks too much? Here comes María . . . probably with some more gossip; she’s always got something to say.

How often do we look past the message to the messenger? Without really listening (or perhaps without even trying to hear), we evaluate, judge, justify, dismiss and go on about our day. It’s probably more of the usual, right? “Consider the source!” my father always says. And so, if we don’t like, don’t understand or don’t trust the source, we can disregard the message, right?

Many years ago, we decided as a church to stop using the little glass cups for communion. To save time we would purchase the disposable plastic cups. The day came, and the little glass cups were boxed up and stuffed in a cubbyhole. Some months went by, and we forgot why we switched to plastic. We started washing the plastic cups. Our deacons just couldn’t bear the waste of throwing away plastic each month. It was years later before we found the little glass cups tucked away in a cubbyhole.

As we debated the wisdom of washing plastic, our efficient and faithful deacons cut the bread each month into little cubes. After communion,

we gathered the leftover bread into a freezer bag and froze it to be used the next month. Frequently we debated whether to cut a fresh loaf each month, but the deacons, ever faithful stewards, couldn’t bear to throw away the leftover bread.

Month after month we froze the bread, thawed the bread, added fresh bread, froze the bread, thawed the bread, added fresh bread.

One month I took the many-times-frozen-and-thawed bread and fed it to the ducks. Then on communion Sunday, there wasn’t enough bread. This was the source of great distress, so the pastor asked me to refrain from feeding the ducks our bread.

Then one Sunday, I sat between two young people in church. The communion plate came around, and we took a piece of bread each. Hungry, the girls popped the bread in their mouths. And then, the girl to my right spit the bread out and yelled, “Ewww! It tastes like pool!”

Out of the mouths of babes.

I froze, mortified, because everyone nearby heard her. I froze, mortified, because she was right, it did. There were murmurs around us. I wondered if I would be asked to reprimand her. I wondered if she was the only one who ever thought the bread tasted bad. I wondered if the church cared that the bread tasted bad. I wondered who would tell the deacons what had been said. Somebody did, though, with enough

grace that after that we had fresh bread every month.

A young person in our midst spoke the truth. And for once, we listened! It was just a small thing—just a little piece of bread—far short of good news for the poor. And yet, that little piece of bread was a tiny piece of hospitality, a small way we honored Christ in our midst. That small voice, from a young person, set us free to enjoy fresh bread.

Is this not Joseph's son? Isn't that the bratty teenager who yells things in church?

Who knows what could happen if we set aside our notions of who people are?

Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing! I wonder what unexpected place the voice of God lurks for you today. May you be so blessed!

Questions

1. Without thinking too deeply, who do you say Jesus is?
2. In what unexpected places or people have you found Jesus?
3. Take a few minutes of reflection and curiosity about where you have encountered God's voice recently.
4. How do these last two questions change your answer about who you say Jesus is? what is he speaking to you?

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