

One Solitary Life*

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then, for three years, he became an itinerant preacher.

He never wrote a book, never held an office, never went to college, never visited a big city, never traveled more than two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things usually associated with greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends abandoned him. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. Falsely convicted, he was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone. Today, he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of humankind's progress. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected life on earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

**Adapted from a sermon by Dr James Allan Francis in The Real Jesus and Other Sermons, © 1926 by the Judson Press of Philadelphia (titled "Arise, Sir Knight!").*

What's What Because of the One Solitary Life of Jesus?

List five things the life of Jesus has affected or changed.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



Infancy Narrative Points of Agreement

Matthew	Agreement	Luke
2:1	The nativity of Jesus is related to the reign of Herod.	1:5
1:18–25	Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus.	1:34
1:18, 20	Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit.	1:35
1:18	Mary is a virgin mother.	1:27, 34; 2:5
1:20–21	An angel announces the birth of Jesus.	1:28–30
1:16, 20	Joseph comes from the House of David.	1:27; 2:4
1:1	Jesus is called a son of David.	1:32
1:21	Prior to birth, Jesus receives his name from God.	1:31
1:21	Jesus is the one who will save and become the Savior.	2:11
1:24–25	Jesus is born after Mary and Joseph start living together.	2:4–7
2:1	Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus.	2:4–7
2:22–23	Jesus, Mary, and Joseph settle in Nazareth.	2:39, 51

The Kingdom of God

Jesus preached in a world where most ordinary people felt they were powerless in the face of the many forces that threatened human life and freedom. The political powers of the age had stamped out justice. Most diseases went unchecked. Superstitions abounded. Nature itself posed constant powerful threats to livelihood and well-being.

Against this background, Jesus came to announce something completely different: the Kingdom of God. The coming of God's Kingdom signals the ultimate sovereignty of God and the ultimate freedom of humankind. God's Kingdom is not destructive—not power *over*, but power *for*. It is reconciling, binding people not to superstition but to one another, to the goodness of creation, and to God. The Kingdom of God does not so much destroy the evil power of the world as it reconciles the whole of creation to itself and to its Creator.

Look up the passages below.

Match them to what they reveal about the Kingdom of God.

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|---------------------|--------------------|
| A. Luke 15:7 | D. Matthew 13 |
| B. Matthew 16:18–20 | E. Matthew 22:1–10 |
| C. John 12:31 | F. Luke 4:18 |

1. _____ The Kingdom of God is for everyone.
2. _____ The Kingdom of God belongs to the poor and lowly.
3. _____ Sinners are welcome in the Kingdom.
4. _____ Jesus' invitation to the Kingdom comes in the form of parables.
5. _____ The coming of God's Kingdom means the defeat of Satan.
6. _____ Certain authority—the keys to the Kingdom—was given by Jesus to his Twelve Apostles, particularly Peter.

What analogy would you use to explain the Kingdom of God to: homeless people? new immigrants? the elderly? kindergartners? politicians? people your own age?

Write your analogies on the back of this sheet. Begin each one with "The Kingdom of God is like . . ."

Without the Holy Spirit . . .

. . . God would be far from us.

. . . Jesus would be but a figure of history, and his Gospel would not be Good News.

. . . the Church community would be nothing more than a social club, never the Body of Christ.

. . . prayer would be talking to ourselves.

. . . our worship would smack of magic.

. . . living the Christian life would be a burden, not a joy.



What is one time you can recall experiencing the presence of the Spirit in your life?