

JESUS AND PREJUDICE

1ST PART

Jesus Fought Against Prejudice

*Adapted from the book of Fr. P. Ribes, s.j. "To be Like Jesus"
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Intent of these jottings

- ✓ *To study the mind of Jesus on prejudice.*
- ✓ *Jesus as a man free from all prejudices.*
- ✓ *Jesus unbiased vision*
- ✓ *Jesus priorities.*

Glasses and Lenses (A Story)

Many, many years ago, nobody knows why and how, people began putting "specs" on every newborn child. Some specs distorted the colours. Red looked like green, black like white, yellow like blue; worse still! Some lenses changed the very appearance of things and of people. Everybody's vision became distorted and vitiated.

As time rolled by, each country, each race, each social class, each religion began manufacturing and imposing their own brand of specs and lenses! Children, adolescents, youth, grown ups, men, women, everyone was compelled to wear his or her glasses at all times, and in all places. Nay, even the thought of taking them off was forbidden.

Tradition and authority rigidly enforced the rule: They shouted: What? Do you think of removing your specs? No! Not at all! You will never take off your glasses! It's forbidden. If you do so, you will be a traitor to our nation! You will be excommunicated from our religion! You will lose your caste!

And people conformed! At home, in the school, on the playground, in the temple, in the church, in college, in the bazaar, every body moved, lived, multiplied, and died with their glasses on. All, like sheep, toed the line. As a result, people saw things and others in different ways. The outcome was fatal!

Whites began shouting at blacks: "You blacks are lousy and dirty!"

Blacks retorted: "And you whites are exploiters and murderers!"

Brahmins yelled: "You, Harijans, are inferior to us, dull and worthless!"

Harijans screamed at the Brahmins: "You, Brahmins, are proud and self-conceited."

Atheists blew out their tops: "There is no God! You, believers, are a bunch of fools! How stupid you are to believe in a heaven up there, a pie in the sky!"

Believers rejoined: “Of course, there is God! Can’t you see the wonders of God’s creation? Have you no brains, you damn animals!”

Men sneered at women: “All of you women are useless! You are inferior to us! You are good for nothing! It’s we who work hard and built the world!”

Women snorted “Shut up, you big mouths. You, men, are selfish brutes! You exploit us, use us, and when you don’t need us any more, you ditch us!”

The quarrelling voices of humanity kept on increasing,
The yells, the accusations and counter accusations, rose and swelled.
All over the earth one could hear yells and cries:

The Poor are lazy!

The Rich are blood suckers!

Communists, Socialists, Republicans, all liars!

Westerners! Capitalists, all robbers!

Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Madrasis, Goans, Keralites, murdabad!

Employees, Politicians, Government, Police, Exploiters!

Priests, Sadhus, and Holy Men, fakes!

Away, away with them all!

Resentments festered! Hatred increased.

Wars broke out!

Blood was spilt! Innocent people were killed!

Wives were widowed!

Children were orphaned!

The law of the jungle prevailed. Death carried the day!

The world was strewn with graveyards!!!

Finally, Jesus was born in our divided world. He had the courage to pluck off his glasses and look at things and at people as they really are!

Yes, Jesus knew that all human beings are God’s children, made to His image and likeness, that all are basically good and alike in everything.

All have the same rights and privileges.

All have the same longings.

All suffer the same fears and anxieties.

All crave for affection and love.

All are good at heart but weak.

All are lovable and loved by God.

All have a common destiny.

All have the same God and Father, though they call Him by different names.

All are brothers and sisters and belong to one single family!

Jesus was shocked and heart-broken to see a hate-filled world.

A world steeped into prejudice and bigotry.

He grieved to discover that human beings were worse like wolves and at each others throats, at war with one another,

Man against man, family against family, country against country.
There was not love, no unity amongst God's children but hatred and violence.

With zeal and affection, Jesus began preaching his Gospel of love, peace, forgiveness and mutual acceptance. He strove to cleanse the minds and hearts of all, and remove the false "glasses" from their eyes. In season and out of season, he kept telling one and all:

"My little ones, all of us are brothers and sisters, all of us are Children of God our common Father in heaven! Love one another." You have heard it said 'Love your friends and hate your enemies'. But I tell you: Love your enemies as well, and do pray for those who persecute you, so that you will become children of your Father in heaven. He makes the sun shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain both to those who do well and to those who do evil. Love others as you love yourselves. Do to others what you would like others do to you. Remove your false glasses and see the good that is in others."

1. Thoughts for reflection

- Christ showed us the way to love and accept one and all without prejudice.
- He taught us that we have a common father in heaven and that all of us - without any distinction - are brothers and sisters.
- He taught us that we have to love each and every one as we love ourselves!
- For Jesus there were no Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, friends or enemies, just men or sinners, grown-ups or children, healthy or sick persons, reputable or disreputable people, saints or prostitutes, males or females. All were equal in his eyes! He loved all, he mixed with all, he talked with all he helped all, he died for all!
- As Disciples of Christ we have to fight and shed prejudices tooth and nail.

2. Pause for Prayer:

For a few minutes pray to Jesus

- For courage to be able to remove your glasses
- For strength to shed your prejudices
- And to be able to live up to His Gospel of love.

3. Gospel Study: Jesus Against Prejudice

Points for Study and Reflection

Go carefully through the N.T. quotes given below and find out how Jesus fought against prejudice both

**In his teaching and also
In his daily practice**

Jesus' Teaching

Mt	5/21-26	Teaching about anger. Respect for people.
Mt	5/38-42	One should never take revenge against anybody. One should return hurt with love.
Mt	25/31-46	Our relationship with God is proved by our relationship with man
Mk	6/31-35	Who is my mother and my brother and my sister? Anyone!
Mk	7/14-23	What makes a person unclean? Everybody's heart is the same.
Mk	9/35-37	Who is the greatest? Anyone who makes himself like a child.
Mk	12/28-34	Which is the greatest commandment? To love God and men.
Lk	6/26-36	Love all, even your enemies!
Lk	6/37-42	Do not judge anyone. Accept all!
Lk	10/25-37	The Good Samaritan. Any man is your neighbor.
Lk	18/9-14	God looks at the heart of men, not at their actions.

Jesus Practice:

He did not make distinctions in the way he dealt with people

Sinners and the just

Jn	8/1-11	Adulterous Woman.
Lk	7/36-50	Sinful woman in the house of Simon.

Tax collectors and Pharisees

Lk	5/27-32	The call of Matthew.
Lk	19/1-10	Jesus goes to Zacchaeus' house.

Samaritans and Jews

Jn	4/1-42	Samaritan Woman.
Lk	17/11-19	Samaritan Leper.

Foreigners and nationals

Lk	7/1-10	Roman Officer.
Mk	7/24-30	Syro-Phoenician Woman.

Women and men

Lk	10/38-42	Martha and Mary.
Lk	7/11-15	Naim's Widow.
Jn	20/11-18	Mary Magdalene.

Children and grown-ups

Mk	10/13-16	"Let little children come to me!"
Mt	18/2-6	Setting a child in their midst.

The poor and the rich

Mt 9/35-38 He has pity for the crowds.
 Lk 7/36-38 Dining at the house of a rich Pharisee.

The uneducated and the educated

Mk 1 / 14-20 Choosing his disciples—fisherfolk.
 Jn 3/1-17 Jesus and Nicodemus.

Conclusions:

From the study of the Gospel Texts we discover that Jesus, in his teaching and in his practice, fought against prejudice in a two prong way:

First prong: By upholding the equality of all human individuals, He eliminated all distinctions between person and person and between groups of persons.

There are no distinctions between

- Jews and Gentiles
- Men and Women
- Rich and Poor
- Respectable and Disreputable
- Practising and Non-practising
- Samaritans and Jews
- Just and Sinners
- Grown-ups and Children
- Sick and Healthy
- Masters and Servants
- Priests and Laity
- Learned and Ignorant
- Conquerors and Conquered
- Nationals and Foreigners
- Slaves and Free men
- Superiors and Inferiors
- Friends and Enemies
- Persecuted and Persecutors

Second prong: By attributing to the human person the highest priority-second only to God, he proclaimed the excellence of the human person above all created things.

The human person holds the first priority above all created things

- Persons above Law
- Mercy above Sacrifice
- Forgiveness above Justice
- Spontaneity above dead ritualism
- Cooperation above Competition
- Service above Authority
- Individuals above Institution
- Love above all other things
- Prayer above prescribed prayers
- Concern above Tradition
- Dedication above Piety-devotion
- Humility above Prestige
- Detachment above riches
- Common good above personal interest
- Conscience above Legalism
- Being above Doing
- Good deeds above belief
- Love above fear
- Sorrows above guilt

4. Write down your Reflections

My Prejudices and how to fight them Like Jesus

1. Which are my obvious prejudices?
2. What effects have they in my behaviour?
3. Which one of them shall I tackle first? Why?
4. What steps shall I take right now? How to proceed? Describe.
5. What difficulties do I foresee? Enumerate.
6. How shall I face them? Explain.

APPENDIX

New Testamtn Texts against prejudice

You can use trhem for a Prayer service or for Liturgy.

Col 3/8-11	There are no more Gentiles and Jews.. Slaves and free men...
Jas 2/1-13	Warning against prejudice.
Jas 2/14-26	Faith in action.
1 Jn 2/7-11	A new commandment.
1 Jn 3/11-18	Love one another