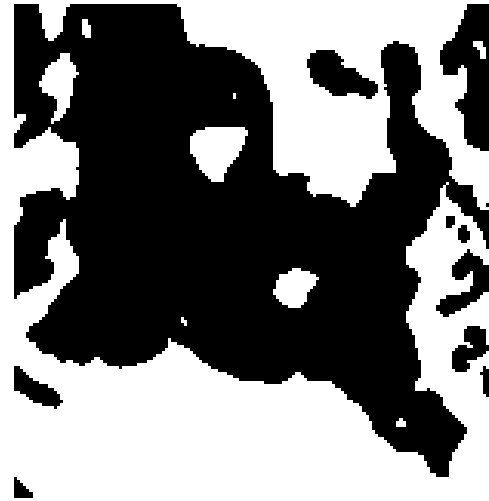


# Portrait of a Radical



A Lenten Series at  
St. Philip's Anglican Church

Wednesdays at 7:30 PM  
February 13 - March 12, 2008

A Lenten Series  
with Christopher Page

St. Philip's Anglican Church  
2928 Eastdowne Road  
Victoria, BC

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[www.stphilips.bc.ca](http://www.stphilips.bc.ca)

# Portrait of a Radical: A LENTEN SERIES

## WEEK I. Sunday, February 10 Matthew 13:53-58

1. Why are the people “astounded” at Jesus?  
What is their problem with Jesus?
2. How would you answer the peoples’ question in 13:54?  
Where do we look for “wisdom”?
3. What was it about these people that seemed to hinder  
God’s work in their midst?
4. What might there be in our personal lives or in our  
community that prevents us from experiencing the  
fresh work of God?

## Wednesday, February 13

### 1. Introduction

Why can we “only take the great truths in little doses”?

What might it mean for us to consider Jesus as “subversive”?

How has Jesus been misunderstood? Why has he been so misunderstood?

2.

How were the mind and teaching of Jesus “utterly revolutionary”?

Why might we today for the first time “be ready to understand how utterly revolutionary the mind of Jesus was”?

## 2. Palestine AD 30

What does “holiness” look like for us?

What “debt codes and purity codes, loyalty tests” do we follow in our culture today and in the church?

What hoops are we attempting to jump through by observing these codes?

What do we hope to accomplish or prove by keeping the dictates of these codes?

How might the religious establishment in Jesus’ day be similar to the religious establishment in our day?

How might we want to respond to this similarity?

## 3. Where did this man get this wisdom?

*(Matthew 3:54)*

What is the significance of the fact that historically we know so little about Jesus?

What was Jesus’ relationship to the mainstream of society?

What might be the implications of this relationship for Christian faith in our day?

3.

## 4. Large crowds followed him

*(Matthew 4:25)*

What is a “true human being”?

Where does our culture look for models of what it might mean to be truly human?

Where might we look for a more adequate vision of “a humanity that is rich and deep and seductive”?

What might it take for us “to drop everything and just cut our ties and go with Jesus”?



**WEEK II      Sunday, February 17**  
**Luke 5:27-32**

1. What was there about Levi that would make it unusual for anyone to want to spend time with him?  
What is Jesus' attitude towards Levi?
2. What is Levi's response to Jesus' invitation?  
What might this indicate about Levi's character?
3. How do the Pharisees and scribes respond to Levi's banquet? What might this indicate about how they view themselves in relation to the others at the banquet? (see especially Jesus' statement in 5:32)
4. How can we communicate to the Levis of our day that there is room for them in our hearts and in our fellowship?

**Wednesday, February 20**

**5. Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?**  
**(Luke 5:30)**

- Why does no one want to attend a party when everyone is there?
- Why does Jesus choose the company of "undesirables"?
- What might it mean for Jesus to have spent so much time just "hanging out"?
- What are the implications for the church of Jesus' example "hanging out"?
- What do the people want when they compare Jesus to John the Baptist?

**6. Woman you have great faith!**

*(John 7:46)*

Why might Jesus' involvement with women have been neglected by those who passed on the traditions about Jesus?

What is the significance of Jesus' involvement with women?

How might "certain social habits Jesus had" be embarrassing to us today?

What is the implication of Jesus appearing after the resurrection first to Mary Magdalene?

**7. No one ever spoke the way this man does**

*(John 7:46)*

What was the authority for Jesus' teaching?

How did Jesus' authority differ from the authority of the other teachers?

What does it mean for us to trust and live out of our own experience?

What might keep us from living out of our own experience?

What do we need to give us "permission to share and to trust and live out of" our own experience?

How can we experience a third degree of knowing God?

**8. I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world**

*(Matthew 13:35)*

Why might Jesus have used metaphors and images in his teaching rather than academic clerical vocabulary?

What might be the implications of Jesus' style of teaching for the way we hear the gospel?

What are the implications of Jesus' "analogy between the goodness of God and the indiscriminate bounty of nature"?

What does it mean to say that "good life is religion"?

What makes it difficult for us to "see the transcendence" in things? What helps us to "see the transcendence" in things?

What helps us see "the goodness of God"?



**WEEK III      Sunday, February 24**  
**Matthew 8:23-27**

1. What is the disciples' condition in this story?  
How does this contrast with Jesus' condition?  
Where is Jesus when his disciples are in a panic?
2. How do Jesus' disciples view their situation?
3. What is Jesus' response to his disciples?
4. What helps us grow in faith when we are feeling overwhelmed by the circumstances of our lives?  
How can we help one another recognize that Jesus is in the boat with us?

**Wednesday, February 27**

**9. Small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it**  
*(Matthew 7:14)*

How have I experienced myself being in "no man's land"?

How does it feel to leave "the world of business as usual, ordinary structures of role, identity, comfort, security, the usual self-image that you dress yourself up with"?

How do we respond when we find ourselves in "liminal space"? How would we like to respond?

8.

What is the implication of the “muddy water” image for how we might be in liminal space?

How do we deal with the “avalanche of distraction and demand and duties” that hinder our ability to “know thyself”?

How do we experience “the revolving hall of mirrors of identity, and role, and persona, and prestige, and possessions”?

Why are “all spiritual disciplines about some form of under stimulation”?

How do we experience the “clamorous ego with its demands”?

What is the impact in our lives of “the fundamental human disability of egoism”? How is this “disability” overcome?

What value might “solitude and the desert” have for us?

What might we learn when we are “eaten by the whale” that we cannot learn in any other way?

What is it that really sustains us?

Do we experience the universe as “safe”? Why or why not?

## 10. Do not be afraid (Luke 1:30)

Why does the instruction “Do not be afraid” need to be repeated so often in the Bible?

What reasons might we have to “doubt the love and care of God and how worthy and deserving we might be of that love and care”? What experiences in our lives reinforce this doubt?

What reassures us that “God’s love and care is very real”?

How do we “make God into what we want God to be”? What enables us to see through the images we have created for God?

Why might it be shocking that “Jesus is not primarily talking about a system of requirements, a behavioural set of patterns that will make God like you”?

How does it affect our understanding of Christianity to say that it is not “a religion of requirements but a religion of relationship”?

What happens in our relationships when we feel the feelings of the other person as if they were our own?

What might it look like for us to “become transformed”?



**WEEK IV****Sunday, March 2****John 2:13-22**

1. What contrasts do you see in this picture of Jesus compared to the pictures in the gospel readings of our two previous Sundays?  
(cf. Luke 5:27-32; Matthew 8:23-27)
2. The area occupied by the merchants and money-changers in this story, was known as “the court of the Gentiles.” It was a large area in which non-Jews could gather and come close to the presence of God confined in the Holy of Holies. In this context, what does Jesus’ action indicate?
3. What event in his life does Jesus point towards in response to the objection against his behaviour in the temple?
4. What impediments might we put in the way of others coming to experience the presence of God? How can we help one another and those outside the church to experience the reality of God’s power as manifest in the resurrection of Jesus?

**Wednesday, March 5**

**11. The time has come. The kingdom of God  
is near** **(Mark 1:15)**

What might it mean for me to “get with this program right now”? How might my life change?

What are the other things I am doing that keep me from getting with Jesus’ program?

What might I need to leave in order to follow Jesus?

Why did Jesus use such harsh language to describe what it might look like to be his followers?

What is God doing “right now” in my life?  
How do I need to cooperate with this?

**12. We have found this man subverting our nation**  
*(Luke 23:2)*  
**He stirs up all the people of Judea with his teaching**  
*(Luke 23:5)*

How might Jesus be dangerous to the “status quo” today?

What would “get Jesus in trouble” today?

Why would the commandment “love one another” “put the scribes and the Pharisees and the elders out of business”?

Why might it be “dangerous talk” to tell people, “go in peace; go on the path you’re on. Your faith has made you whole”? Why might such an instruction be worth the risk?

How is calling God your “father” “implicitly subversive”?

**13. Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!**  
*(Matthew 23:13)*

What furniture might Jesus “violently rearrange” today: in our lives, in the church, in society as a whole?

Why did the Romans execute Jesus? Why might we be tempted to execute Jesus today?



**WEEK V**

**Sunday, March 9**

**Mark 8:27-30**

1. Why might Jesus have asked his disciples the question he puts to them in 8:27?
2. What does the popular answer to this question indicate about the general attitude towards Jesus?
3. What has Peter seen that the others have failed to see? Why might Jesus have wanted to prevent this insight from being made public?
4. How do we and others in the world confront this same question? What might we do that could help others move beyond the popular partial answers to this question that are so common in our day?

**Wednesday, March 12**

**14. He is worthy of death**

*(Matthew 26:66)*

What does it mean for me that Jesus was executed by “the most brutal agonizing form of death in Jesus’ time”?

What are the “collision of opposites” upon which Jesus was killed?

What is the “oppositional energy” in our day that is the place where Jesus hangs?

14. What are the implications of following someone who died “holding together the ultimate opposites that name our soul”?

**15. Three days later he will rise**  
**(Mark 10:34)**

Why are the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus so important for Christian faith?

What is the result of our “incapacity for hope”?

What are the implications for our lives and our theology of saying that God is “always greater than our mind could imagine”?

**16. Who do you say I am?**  
**(Mark 16:15)**

How might it change our view of Christianity to “read Jesus as ‘here’s what it means to be human, instead of ‘here’s the way to get to heaven’”?

How do Jesus’ words serve as a “constant critique of the tradition itself”?

What does it mean for me to “carry the mystery of who I am, to bear the burden of my own reality wherever it leads me never sure that its right”?

What is “faith”? Why is “faith very rare”? (47:40)

**Portrait of a Radical;**  
**Four Seasons DVD presentation**

The number in brackets beside each segment represents the time at which that segment appears on the DVD.

<b>February 13</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
2. (3:13)	Palestine AD 30
3. (6:48)	Where did this man get this wisdom? ( <i>Matthew 3:54</i> )
4. (8:23)	Large crowds followed him ( <i>Matthew 4:25</i> )
5. (10:46)	Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and ‘sinners’? ( <i>Luke 5:30</i> )
<b>February 20</b>	
6. (13:30)	Woman you have great faith! ( <i>John 7:46</i> )
7. (16:43)	No one ever spoke the way this man does ( <i>John 7:46</i> )
8. (19:15)	I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world ( <i>Matthew 13:35</i> )

**16.**

**February 27**

9. (23:25) Small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it (*Matthew 7:14*)
10. (28:31) Do not be afraid (*Luke 1:30*)

**March 5**

11. (31:52) The time has come. The kingdom of God is near (*Mark 1:15*)
12. (34:01) We have found this man subverting our nation (*Luke 23:2*)
- He stirs up all the people of Judea with his teaching (*Luke 23:5*)
13. (36:21) Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! (*Matthew 23:13*)

**March 12**

14. (38:41) He is worthy of death (*Matthew 26:66*)
15. (42:00) Three days later he will rise (*Mark 10:34*)
16. (44:50) Who do you say I am? (*Mark 16:15*)