



If our faith is genuine...

In most church buildings there are artist's depictions of Jesus, and it seems that all believers tend to wonder what Jesus actually looked like and what it must have been like to look into his eyes. Yet, the more common qualities that we think of have to do more with Jesus' character and personality than his physical features.

Dr. Jeff Hensley
Pastor
Kings Mountain Baptist Church

For example, Jesus' qualities of meekness and mildness certainly come to mind, and most of us probably think of Jesus' love of children. I expect the Sunday School or Church School literature of most denominations has pictures of Jesus taking the little children into his lap in a loving fashion. We may also enjoy those pictures that depict Jesus as a carrier of cuddly lambs, or as

the calm and assured shepherd of a flock that is traversing green hills under a blue sky. We likely also imagine him with a smile on his face, or even being handsome (whatever "handsome" is to us).

As recent as April of this year, though, it was reported that in a small Polish town called "Swiebodzin," a group of devoted volunteers and others have been constructing a physical image of Jesus in the form of a 170-foot concrete statue. This statue depicts Jesus with his arms outstretched, and it is even bigger than the famous statue of Christ the Redeemer that is located in Rio de Janeiro.

Father Sylwester Zawadzki, a Roman Catholic priest, is the chief architect of this three million dollar project, and although it is a colossal figure, not everybody thinks this is the best way to present Jesus to the world. Many of the local people in Swiebodzin, in fact, are embarrassed by this statue and several seem to see it as a waste of precious resources. Despite the fact that the Jesus statue is a tourist attraction, one young resident says,

"I think we could spend that money far better" because "we need schools, hospitals and better roads."

All of this makes one wonder just what image of Jesus is most helpful. Is it the depiction of the child-in-the-lap Jesus, the lamb-carrying Jesus, or something more dramatic like the 170-foot tall Jesus? I suspect that each one has its own use and its own value for certain times or situations, and maybe there is a deeper spiritual truth in this reality, for Jesus is more than all of our images or depictions and no one, single painting or statue can fully contain or depict what Jesus means to those of us who name him as our Lord.

This may also be why Jesus chose to continue his work in and through his people - his Church - for the fact is that Jesus is actually in each and every one of his followers. More than anything else, this is the gift that God's people have to give to the world, for if our faith is genuine then Jesus is speaking through our words, touching through our hands, and living through our lives.

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