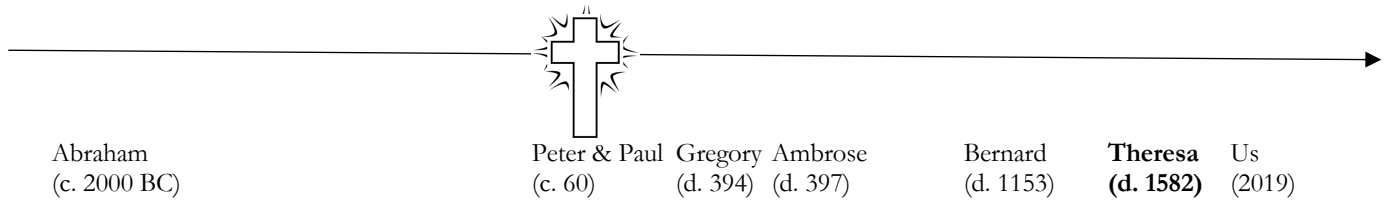


The Shape of Christian Identity
Class 4 Teresa: Intimacy, identifying with Jesus as a friend
Outline

1. Friendship with Jesus
 - A caution.
 - A Scripture: John 15:12-14.
2. A backdrop of her life.
 - The troubles of her times and how the troubles touched her family.
3. Teresa's early life.
 - Precocious at 7, affected by grief, yet “naturally social, lively and vivacious, physically attractive, and had a keen sense of humor.”
4. Becomes a nun and enters 18 years of spiritual dryness.
 - Her life of “spiritual deception” and her life of physical illnesses.
 - The encounter with Christ that changed her life.
 - How her friendship with the world was exposed (see James 4:4).
5. “For the twenty-eight years after her conversion, Teresa was to become a Christian mystic who had vivid, firsthand dramatic ‘favors’ from God: visions, divine ecstasies, levitations, and other supernatural experiences.”
 - Danger from the Spanish Inquisition.
6. Her writings
 - The call to “enter ourselves.”
 - The page of supplemental texts.

Teresa on the timeline:



Teresa on the map:



Questions for discussion:

- 1) What is intriguing for you about the life of Teresa?
- 2) What do you make of the challenge of Teresa: to learn to enter into your inner life? What encourages you? What concerns you?
- 3) How does Teresa help us in our identity in Christ?

Supplemental texts
Things Teresa wrote or said

On the difficulties we face in entering the inner life.

- “It is of great importance, when we begin to practice prayer, not to let ourselves be frightened by our own thoughts.”
- “All the trials we endure cannot be compared to the interior battles.”
- “Prayer and comfortable living are incompatible.”
- “You must not build upon foundations of prayer and contemplation alone, for, unless you strive after the virtues and practice them, you will never grow to be more than dwarves.”

The central importance of prayer.

- “Mental prayer is, as I see it, simply a friendly intercourse and frequent solitary conversation with Him who, as we know, loves us.”
- “Souls without prayer are like people whose bodies or limbs are paralyzed: they possess feet and hands but they cannot control them.”

The many ways Christ speaks.

- “His voice reaches us through words spoken by good people, through listening to spiritual talks, and reading sacred literature. God calls to us in countless little ways all the time. Through illnesses and suffering and through sorrow he calls to us. Through a truth glimpsed fleetingly in a state of prayer he calls to us. No matter how halfhearted such insights may be, God rejoices whenever we learn what he is trying to teach us.”

Showing her sense of humor.

- “God save us from gloomy saints!”
- Life is a “night spent at an uncomfortable inn.”
- (a paraphrase) A woman said God told her thus and such, and as Teresa listened carefully she concluded, “She thinks she is hearing from God; she is only talking to herself.”
- (a paraphrase) Teresa was riding in a carriage on a journey when there was trouble with a wheel – it got stuck in the mud or it broke. And it was pouring rain. As she and her companions began addressing the situation, Teresa heard God say to her, “This is how I treat my friends.” To which Teresa replied, “If this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few.”

Reflecting her own humility.

- “It is presumptuous in me to wish to choose my path, because I cannot tell which path is best for me. I must leave it to the Lord, Who knows me, to lead me by the path which is best for me, so that in all things His will may be done.”

On how valuable our lives are.

- “Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good; Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now.”
- “The very fact that [God’s] Majesty says [that our souls] are made in His image means that we can hardly form any conception of the [soul’s own] great dignity and beauty.”
- “Remember that you have only one soul; that you have only one death to die; that you have only one life, which is short and has to be lived by you alone; and there is only one Glory, which is eternal. If you do this [i.e. remember these things], there will be many things about which you care nothing.”

On her confidence in God.

- “You pay God a compliment by asking great things of Him.”
- “Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone is enough.”
- “May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.”
- She relates an encounter she had with Christ who says to her two words, “Enjoy Me.” “Just these two words He spoke changed my life, ‘Enjoy Me’ What a burden I thought I was to carry, a crucifix! as did He. [My Lord] ... said to me: ‘I know a song, would you like to hear it?’ And laughter came from every brick in the street and from every pore in the sky. After a night of prayer, He changed my life when He sang ‘Enjoy me.’ ”