

What did Jesus want?

In many views, what Jesus wanted was, by teaching and example, to set forth a new, true world view and to urge his hearers to believe and act accordingly. In a word, Jesus wanted people to change their *thinking and doing* so as to bring forth good works.

In my view, however, very much as in Marxsen's, what Jesus probably wanted was something different—namely, that his hearers should exist eschatologically, anticipating God's coming reign already here and now by obediently submitting to God's rule, the gift and demand of which were even now confronting them through him. Again, in a word, Jesus wanted people to change their *being*—or, better, to allow their being to *be changed* by God's gracious acceptance of them through him so as to bring forth good fruit.

Of course, the only evidence for either of these views is secondary, and this means that neither can provide the formal norm for validating the appropriateness of Christian witness and theology. But there is no good theological reason why either of them should be expected to provide this norm anyhow. On the contrary, the formal norm for determining the appropriateness of any witness or theology claiming to be Christian can only be the witness of the apostles, i.e., the original and originating and therefore constitutive Christian witness, according to which the decisive significance of Jesus—and therefore, not what he wanted, but what he *wants!*—is to mediate the gift and demand of God's gracious rule, and therewith the possibility of eschatological existence.

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