

In another church, I started a pastor's book club and one of the books we read was Will Willimon's *Why Jesus?*

The book opened up a new perspective on Jesus for us. We realized that we had "tamed" Jesus, made him nice and safe. And in the process, we made him more like us and less like God. He remains a great teacher and prophet, but he's not as edgy or offensive. Willimon reminds us that Jesus was neither tame nor safe. He is the Son of God and he was not crucified for being too nice.

As we talked about the book and the picture of Jesus there, I was reminded of a story:

A man was going through customs on the way back from Haiti. The person ahead of him had bought lots of costly jewelry but was waved through by the customs officer with a mere glance. The man had only an inexpensive carved head of Jesus. But it was big, about knee-high, so he had wrapped it in several layers of towels in a burlap bag. As the officer dug deeper into the towels, expecting expensive hidden items, suddenly he looked up and asked, "How big is your Jesus, anyway?"

It's hard not to bring Jesus to limit to what our human brains can handle, what our egos want to hear. Jesus is bigger than that; he is bigger and wilder than we want to admit. And that makes us uncomfortable. So we try to bring Jesus down to our size.

God's grace and love as embodied by Jesus are greater than we can ever understand. That's good news! Our Jesus is bigger than we admit or know. The writer of Psalm 103 tried to capture God's greatness: "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:11-12). We cannot tame or limit Jesus and we don't have to be afraid of the greatness of God. Even when Jesus' words step on our toes or point out the log in our eye. His love for us is so great that it overcomes all. As the apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans, Jesus didn't wait for us to get our lives straight. He died for us while we were yet sinners, and that proves God's love toward us.

How big is YOUR Jesus?