

Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, out of wedlock, the child of a young peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty. Then for three brief years he was an itinerant preacher, proclaiming a message and living a life of example. He gathers a little group of friends around him and teaches them this way of life.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held public office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never travelled more than two hundred miles from the place he was born, and was only taken out of his own country to escape infanticide. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him; another betrayed him for money. He was turned over to his enemies. Although recognised as innocent, he went through the mockery of a trial for political expediency. After torture, he was nailed upon a cross between two thieves and scorned. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth – his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity and kindness of a friend.

*These are the facts of his human life. Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the center-piece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.*

*I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched and all the navies that ever were built, and all of the parliaments that ever have sat, and all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life, Jesus of Nazareth.*

James Allen Francis, sermon - 1926