The Teachings of Jesus in Context:

Jesus spent three years travelling around the Holy Land proclaiming the Good News and teaching about The Kingdom of God.
In order to fully understand what the people of the time thought about what he was saying we need to look more closely to what the Jewish people at the time were expecting.

Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God - this was a term that the people of the time would not have been familiar with.

If we think back over the Jewish groups that existed at the time we remember that they were all unhappy with Roman occupation in their land, they all expected God to intervene and return their promised land to them but none of them were expecting somebody like Jesus Christ and his notion of the Kingdom of God.

The Zealots - a Political King who would banish the Romans through force and Violence

The Pharisees  - That by keeping to the strict Jewish laws, God would intervene and rescue them.

The Sadducees - Saw their roles as priests and guards of the temple as being central to God intervening and saving them.

The Essenes - By withdrawing from the world they had hoped God would send a messiah and bring with him a new age.

All of these groups and indeed all Jewish people were expecting a prophet who would come and tell them what God wanted (just as Abraham and Moses had in the past). The prophets preached about repentance and conversion. They called all people to be obedient to God. The people at the time were very concerned with the end of the world and what would happen to them - this concern with the end of the world is called Eschatology.

The people at the time felt that the 'end is nigh' and that people needed to repent their sins immediately and turn to God - this view that the end is coming is called Apocalypticism.

Because the expectation the the world was ending soon there was an call for immediate conversion and repentance. This immediate conversion is called Metanoia. In his preaching Jesus also called for Metanoia.

At this time there was a heightened expectation that God would intervene and save his suffering people from the Romans. They had hoped that the 'Kingdom of God' would herald a new age for the people.

So in light of all of these expectations of God saving his people and the world coming to an end what would the people of the time have thought about Jesus.
Jesus was a Jew himself, born into a politically complex Galilee. He began his teaching at the age of 30 after spending much of his life following the teachings of John the Baptist. Jesus was a prophet who called for people to reexamine their lives and their relationship with God. He wanted to emphasize that everybody could have a special, unique and loving relationship with God. He called on those in power to work for justice and equality. He called for peace, love, justice, equality - a message best summed up in the term ‘Kingdom of God’. In every aspect of his ministry Jesus talked about the Kingdom of God. We will explore this in the

There are 4 Characteristics of the Kingdom of God. They are:

1. A place where peace is the alternative to violence

2. A place where inclusion is the alternative to the emergence of elites

3. A place where the sharing of goods is the alternative to amassing of wealth

4. A place where a God of the powerless is the alternative to a God who sanctions inequalities.

Jesus spoke about these 4 characteristics many times in his teachings but they can be best found in the following places:

1. The Kingdom of God in Parables.
2. The Kingdom of God in the Meals that Jesus shared.
3. The Kingdom of God in the Miracles of Jesus.
4. The Kingdom of God in the prayers of Jesus.

Parables:
A parable is a story told by Jesus that had a hidden message or meaning. The stories were always very simple and were based around themes that his listeners would have been familiar with, e.g. farmers, shepherds, vineyards. Jesus told parables to try and draw the listener in and then try to make them change their ways on thinking about things.

Jesus used parables as a teaching tool and as a way of communicating with people. Those who listened could see themselves in the story. Usually the end of the parable surprised the listener and hopefully made them change their ways.

examples of parables were:
The good Samaritan
The Prodigal Son
The Workers in the Vineyard.

Most of Jesus' parables challenged the listeners and examine the way that they live their lives. In his parables Jesus calls his listeners to **Metanoia**.

In his parables Jesus asked his listeners to choose peace over violence, to include rather than exclude, to share rather than to hoard and to know God as a loving God - All of these are the characteristics of The Kingdom of God. The parables speak of the Kingdom of God as a place where the sick will be healed and the poor will be cared for. A place of justice, compassion and forgiveness.

**Meals:**
In the Gospels there are many accounts of Jesus sharing meals with people - and Jesus usually ate with the outcasts of society - sinners, tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes - when we see who he ate with it gives us a better insight into the man and his teaching.

On several occasions Jesus scandalized the establishment with the people that he shared meals with but on other occasions he chose the setting of a meal to carry out his teaching and reveal his vision for the future (i.e. the last supper).

Christians today the world over remember Jesus through the celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is a sacred meal where we remember Jesus and the words that he spoke on that night. Accounts of the last supper are found in all 4 Gospels.

When we look at some of the meals that Jesus shared it is clear that he was trying to make the Kingdom of God present: He was sharing and being inclusive. He spoke the term ‘Abba’ a term for God that is inclusive and intimate.

As we said, Jesus ate with sinners, tax collectors and outsiders, here he was challenging peoples’ understanding of God - i.e. that he loves everybody.

**Miracles:**

Jesus was an inspired teacher - people were always drawn to him. Wherever he went, Jesus announced the Kingdom of God and did this powerfully through the miracles that he performed.

On many occasions in the Gospel is Jesus recorded as doing many wonderful and amazing things - these we generally refer to as miracles.
At the time of Jesus, Illness was generally seen as a punishment for sinfulness - it was seen as a sign of God’s displeasure with the person or their parents.

But when we see Jesus curing the blind man, the ten lepers, the crippled woman it is showing that God cares for and loves all those who suffer. These miracles reveal The Kingdom of God to be a place where those who suffer will be happy.

By Jesus performing his miracles he showed people that he was allowing God to speak through him to proclaim The Kingdom of God.

**Prayers:**

Jesus being a devout Jew would have meant that he was very familiar with the Torah and all the prayers and teachings that were contained within it. He obeyed all the Jewish customs and laws. Jesus loved God with all his heart, soul and mind, just as the Torah instructed. Jesus, however, used another term for God, Abba, which is best translated as dada or father. This was a term of intimacy and closeness between God and Jesus. Every time Jesus spoke the term it was in effect a prayer and the prayer most associated with Jesus is the one prayer that he taught his followers, The Lord’s prayer (The Our Father)