

jaded faith

SERMON NOTES

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about these notes

Jaded Faith focuses on the young adults within the church who are drifting, wandering, and altogether walking away. Assaulted by a culture that pushes and pulls them in many directions, young adults see the church as superficial and irrelevant to their deepest concerns.

You and your congregation will navigate through the six most common side-trails that distract people from the narrow way: irrelevance, hypocrisy, suffering, evolution, rationalism, and relativism; along with the “secret” seventh reason for leaving the faith: sin. Discover the path for those who still want to believe despite their disillusionment, into a stronger, intellectually honest walk with Christ.

week 1

meltdown

Luke 15:11–32

introduction

This message will cause listeners to interpret a faith crisis as an act of God’s kindness, allowing us to know him more closely afterward.

There is a moment that brings terror to the heart of every parent. If you’ve experienced it, you’ll know exactly what I mean. You’re in a crowd. You have your young child with you. Everyone’s having a great day. You look away for a moment to check your phone or tie your shoe, and when you look back up, your child is gone. You’ve lost your kid. With every passing second, the panic grips you harder and harder.

sermon outline

I. Young Adults Having a Faith Crisis

The younger son left not only his father’s home, but also his father’s way of life. He disrespected his father by taking the inheritance before he died, and spending it on things that disgraced his father’s legacy.

The older son stayed at home working hard for his father, secretly hoping that his efforts would rack up a lot of praise and reward in the end.

Both children were about to see their father in a whole new light.

II. The Actions of the Parent

What kind of father would let his young adult son have tons of cash in order to blow it on wild living? And then, what kind of father would throw such a son a welcome home party?

What kind of father would let his eldest son slave away in his home for years without ever throwing him a party or curbing his hyperactive work ethic?

Parents want to protect and shelter their children from every possible harm. Perhaps God is more willing to let his children wander a while than we humans are. Maybe the hope of God is not that we would stay safe in the status quo, but that in the end we would really see our heavenly father for who he is.

III. What did the two sons learn about their dad in the end?

He is gracious, lavish, and forgiving.

He is patient with both sons in their errors, and teaches them at the most opportune moment.

He trusts them to make their own decisions, even if they are sometimes the wrong ones.

He loves his children and wants them to be with him and to know him.

conclusion

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis of faith, you may be tempted to think that God is acting like an absent father, or even an abusive one. However, when Jesus told the story recorded in Luke 15, he was talking about his own Father, whom he knew better than anyone else. If Jesus said that our heavenly Father is gracious, patient, and forever loving, then he must be. Perhaps our heavenly Father is showing us his kindness by allowing us to walk through a crisis of faith because he is on the other end waiting to celebrate with us in our transformation. Think of a recent crisis you have experienced and reflect on how God transformed you and brought you closer to him during that time.

week 2

narrow path

Matthew 7:13–14

introduction

This message will cause listeners to recognize the consequences to their life paths and choose to walk the path that Jesus invites them on, which leads to life.

In urban areas, there's a phenomena called the "traffic report." Simple concept, valuable application. Someone who can see the big picture tells you which road to take, and which road to avoid. In early 2015 in Michigan, there was a 193 car pileup on interstate 94. People were driving into snowy, blinding conditions, and one after the other crashed. One person died and twenty-two others were injured.

sermon outline

I. Jesus' Traffic Report

In our culture and human history, people blindly stay in the steady flow of traffic, not knowing that it is headed toward destruction.

Jesus knows where all paths lead, and is trying to guide us safely to life.

II. Few People Walk the Narrow Road

At the core, this is a lordship issue. Is Jesus Lord of your life or are you?

On the surface, there are other motivations for joining the crowd on the broad path. Here are some examples:

- We have experienced hurt or disappointment and come to the conclusion that Jesus is not trustworthy.

- We are caught up in the cultural current. We want to be with our friends and do what they do.
- We are trying to cope with hurts in ways that will ultimately bring more pain.

III. Jesus Invites Us to Enter

Jesus was not simply describing the reality, but inviting us to change it.

No matter how deep we are into the pileup, we can always reroute, and God will be quick to receive us with mercy.

conclusion

Your life is leading somewhere. How you respond to the invitation of Jesus will determine your destiny. He is not just the guide, but also the destination. He promises life and he, himself, is the fulfillment of that promise. Have you answered his call on your life?

week 3

dull church

Ephesians 4:12–16; 5:25–33

introduction

This message will cause listeners to increase their love for the church and take a step toward being a blessing rather than just a consumer of religious goods and services.

Many people have personal opinion lists on what is right and wrong about their church. What we need to understand is that churches are a work in progress, not perfected until Jesus comes back to claim his bride.

sermon outline

I. Churches Are Imperfect

Christ is still perfecting the church.

You are imperfect too.

We know this in general but hate it in particular when we are the victims of its imperfection.

II. Churches Are in Progress

God has given leaders to keep building the church.

You are in progress too.

With the birth of new Christians comes maturing. This cycle is part of the spiritual formation of both the young and the old.

III. Churches Are Not a Supermarket

The congregation is the body, not the customer.

The pastors equip the church for the ministry.

You can be part of the solution for making this church what God has called it to be.

conclusion

Instead of keeping track of things that are wrong, make a new list of how God is inviting *you* to be the difference in your local church.

week 4

hypocrites

Matthew 23:3–7, 23–28

introduction

This message will cause listeners to pray for hypocritical Christians.

What makes a person a hypocrite? Who do you think in this room is in the most danger of being a hypocrite? Well, it's probably me, because I am preaching and serving as the spiritual leader. Jesus seemed to be harder on the church leaders and staff than on the prostitutes!

sermon outline

I. Practice What They Preach

This doesn't mean that every preacher has to live a perfect life and fulfill all biblical holiness. But it does mean that they are striving toward it, and helping others toward it, instead of upholding a double standard.

II. Love Praise More Than God

This doesn't mean that human affirmation is bad, but the Pharisees worked for it. They made a show of their spirituality so people would be awed by them.

III. Have Self-Centered Hearts

Their core problem is that they are in it for themselves. They act kindly, but if they are threatened they will not hesitate to "kill and crucify" those who expose their true motives.

conclusion

If you heard this and have come to the conclusion that you are acting hypocritically in your walk with the Lord, today is an opportunity to humble yourself and ask for God's restoring grace. If you have been injured by the hypocrisy of another believer, today is a chance for you to forgive them and pray for their transformation.

week 5

pain and suffering

Job 1–2, 4, 10, 23, 38, 42

introduction

This message will cause listeners to increase their faith during their pain and suffering. (This is a narrative style sermon, focusing on the life of Job. True to the Job story, the preacher does not need to wrap all the loose ends up into simple principles or points to ponder. Some raw and ambiguous space is good. The story, and its conclusion, speak primarily for themselves here.)

Imagine the worst suffering you can come up with. Now double it. Then imagine your pastor knocking at your door right after this tragedy has hit you. The pastor sits on your living room couch and tells you that all this happened because God was punishing you. You'd probably quit going to that church. Then, after the pastor leaves, your spouse sits in the vacant spot on the couch and tells you to not only quit going to that church, but quit church altogether, and for that matter, quit God.

sermon outline

I. Job's Righteous Start

The text goes out of the way to highlight Job's blameless actions and intentions. Job's life was full of blessings.

II. Job's Loss

III. Job's Advisors

IV. Job Hit Rock Bottom

V. Job Met with God

VI. God Spoke to Job

VII. Job Responded to God.

This is the real inner resolution of the story, preceding the outer blessings reestablished.

VIII. Outer Blessings Follow in Abundance

conclusion

Nothing Job's friends said could really work. Finally, when God spoke, Job's heart was changed and his mind was illuminated. In the meantime, Job showed us that it is OK to grieve and to wait in faith. God is not hidden forever. If there is anything you need to grieve over, intentionally take the time to process and cry out to God.

week 6

rationalism

Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 4:8; 2 Timothy 2:2

introduction

This message will cause listeners to love God with their mind more fully.

Jesus was asked which commandment in the law was the greatest. He said to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. But what does it mean to love the Lord your God with all your mind?

sermon outline

I. Love God with Whole Self

II. What Loving God with Our Minds Does Not Mean

Being smarter than other people.

Using your knowledge to advance yourself.

Relying on knowledge without obedience.

The second commandment gives us a vector for the first one. Loving our neighbor means not using our mind to better ourselves at another's expense, but as a tool to help others.

III. What Loving God with Our Minds Does Mean

Having a right view of God and the world.

Meditating on righteous thoughts.

Discerning and preserving the truth of God, his gospel, and the Scriptures, and teaching these to others who will teach.

conclusion

Faith is not in opposition to our minds. These work together like old dance partners who know each other's moves by heart. Having faith does not mean that we dumb down our intellectual capacities. Faith is the foundation on which all our thoughts are constructed and remain strong. So make the most of your God-given intellect and use it as a way to love God and others!

week 7

evolution

Genesis 1:1; 26–28; John 1:1, 4

introduction

This message will cause listeners to hold fast to the core elements of the creation narrative as an anchor amidst a sea of scientific discovery and theories.

Begin by showing a basic timeline for life, according to evolutionary science. Describe how this materialistic meta-narrative shapes the minds and souls of our culture, without ever needing to address God or the Bible. God is moved out of the beginning as Creator, and moved to the middle as a fabrication of human thought for survival purposes.

sermon outline

I. God Created the Universe

II. God Created Humanity in His Image

This role is distinct from the other kinds of creatures, both in relationship with God, and function of governance.

III. Christ Was Present and Participating in Creation

The Word John mentions give us meaning and spiritual orientation far before we had the capacity to make it up on our own.

IV. Jesus Stepped into Creation

Jesus is the light of all people, but the people did not receive the light because they loved darkness.

Some scientific theories are not simply a matter of discovering verifiable data, but a matter of accepting or rejecting the light of Jesus.

The consequences for accepting that he was creator and God incarnate on earth are extremely personal and unsettling.

conclusion

Science can continually help humanity discover more about how God created the world but will never replace faith, which is required to please God and to know him. Such faith leads us not only to discovery, but to truth and life. Take the time to learn new ways to reconcile the relationship between science and faith.

week 8

relativism

John 14:10; 1 John 1:2–3

introduction

This message will cause listeners to view their beliefs as a relational encounter with Jesus and choose to enter into a deeper relationship with him.

Can you remember the first time someone lied to you? You trusted them, you were in the habit of taking their word as fact, and then you discovered later that their words were not matching up with reality. How did you feel?

sermon outline

I. Truth Was Embodied in Christ.

Christian belief is a theoretical doctrine on paper but stems from the person Jesus Christ.

II. Truth Is Also Now Embodied in Us

Christ lives in us and we are his witnesses. The truth of the Bible also resounds throughout history in the mouths of the believers.

III. Truth Requires Relationship

The truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ calls for more than intellectual assent from its hearers. The proclamation of the risen Christ was not simply to believe in something, but resulted in relationship. That you may have fellowship with us, and thus we would all have fellowship with God. Truth is ultimately about relationship.

To not believe in Christianity is not simply to espouse a different worldview, it is to reject a personal invitation into fellowship with the creator, redeemer, and life giver.

conclusion

In one sense, the truth is relative. The truth is Jesus Christ, and he is described as our brother. So he is our relative, our family, and in him we find the convergence of right worldview, right doctrine, right understanding of God, and right relationship. Do you know Jesus as well as you know your own relatives? Make sure you are taking the time to know Jesus as more than a belief or religion.

week 9

the other reason

John 4:13–18

introduction

This message will cause listeners to recognize the Spirit's conviction in their lives and repent of sin that holds them back from living life to the fullest.

From time to time, a patient will go into a doctor's office complaining of a small symptom. During the process of addressing that minor problem, the doctor will discover a far more serious condition that is potentially life threatening. Offer personal examples from your congregation. It was the discomfort of the minor symptom that brought the person to the doctor, only to have the doctor give them lifesaving treatment about a problem they had no idea they had.

sermon outline

I. Jesus Cares about the Things We Care About

He can appreciate the woman's need for water. He himself was asking her for a drink because he was thirsty.

In his conversation with the woman, he did not dismiss the need for physical water. His actions actually validate it.

II. Jesus Cares More about Us than Things

He is not content just to treat the external symptoms. He pointed to a deeper need that the woman has.

He was leading her toward the hope of salvation and abundant life.

III. Jesus Wants to Remove Sin

First, Jesus has to expose the problem. Then he allows us to have choice in confessing it. He will rarely force us toward releasing it, but offers us that option in grace.

It is unclear whether the woman truly received the grace Christ was offering. She seemed to change the subject, and then spread the word in her village about how amazing Jesus was. However, we never fully get a picture of her repenting of her sinful lifestyle or turning to Jesus for healing.

conclusion

Invite any in the congregation who sense that the Spirit is convicting them of something specific in their lives to respond in some tangible way with confession and repentance.

week 10

moving forward with life

John 1:35–42

introduction

This message will cause listeners to let their questions fuel their quest for Jesus.

Riding a tandem bike is more challenging than it looks, especially if you are in the back seat. You are pedaling but often you can't see where you're going, and you have no control over the steering. Your fate is all wrapped up in where the person in front of you decides to go. You are pedaling; they are steering. When we start moving forward with life again after being jaded, following Jesus can feel like being on the back of a tandem bike. We're moving, but we don't know where we're going. It all depends on whether or not we trust the person in front of us.

sermon outline

I. The Disciples Followed Jesus

They started following him because someone they trusted (John the Baptist) recommended him.

II. The Disciples Questioned Jesus

They asked Jesus about where he was staying.

He did not simply give them an answer; he invited them onto a journey.

Oftentimes when we come to Jesus with our doubts or questions, he doesn't answer them outright as we would expect. He invites us to follow him, and the answers will eventually become clear as we get to know him better.

III. The Disciples Trusted Jesus

Jesus rarely, if ever, tells us where he is steering the tandem bike. Even those with great faith get very little information on the long-range plan God has.

This is partly because God wants to build trust in his people.

He loves it when we follow him closely, and know that he will lead us to the best destination.

conclusion

The uncertainty of the future does not have to paralyze you from taking steps into it. The real key is that we are confident in the one whom we follow. Are you following in faith today?