



TIME OF GRACE®

Jesus #nofilter: Why You Need Jesus

Study Notes

Summary

Reading about who Jesus claimed to be and what he said in the Bible can be quite shocking and even offensive. In this first message from the new series about the unfiltered Jesus, Pastor Mike explores two really hard things about Jesus that have not only made people uncomfortable but have also caused some to walk away and the beautiful things that make people give up everything to follow Jesus.

- The _____ Jesus is _____.
- John 6:26-29 — Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs, I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” 28 Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” 29 Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.”
- John 6:35, 38 — Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. ...38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

John 6:41-42 — At this the Jews there began to grumble about him because he said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven.” 42 They said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?”

- The _____ Jesus is offensive.

- John 6:43, 51-53 — “Stop grumbling among yourselves,” Jesus answered. ...51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” 52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53 Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.
- The _____ Jesus is offensive.
- John 6:60, 66 — On hearing it, many of his disciples said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” ...66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.
- “I will give you food that endures to eternal life. God sent me for you. You will never go hungry. You will never be thirsty. I won’t drive you away. I won’t lose you. I will raise you up on the Last Day. You will have eternal life. I will teach you. You will live forever. You will live because of me. I have chosen you.
- The unfiltered Jesus is so _____ but so _____.
- John 6:67-69 — “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”

Points to Ponder

1. Agree/Disagree: As long as we are quoting the Bible, Christian friends should command each other how to live.
2. Read Jesus’ entire sermon in John 6:25-71, noting sections where you see his authority and his exclusive claims.
3. Do you know someone who says they believe in Jesus but doesn’t prioritize him in their lives? Next Sunday’s message will speak personally to them. Invite them to watch Time of Grace with you next week.

Homework for Next Week

Read John 8:12-30

Time of Grace Ministry
Why You Need Jesus
John 6
February 25, 2024

Pastor Mike Novotny

When I was born back in 1980 here in Wisconsin, in the United States of America, out of every ten Americans surveyed, nine of them claimed to be Christian. Now that I'm middle aged, here in my 40's, in 2020's in America, it is no longer. According to research done by the Pew Research Center, nine in ten Americans, and it's not eight in ten Americans, it's not even seven in ten Americans but just six in ten Americans, most of them older, claimed to be Christian. They say if the trends continue and if I live the average life span, it won't be six, it would be five, if not four. In one man's lifetime, America will have gone from a super majority, nine out of ten people identifying as followers of Jesus, to a numerical minority, just four out of ten.

Now, think about that for a second. That wasn't a survey about whether people go to church every Sunday. It wasn't, "Do you make it when the kids don't have stuff on the weekends? Do you show up on Christmas and Easter?" These were just people saying, "I religiously identify as a follower of Jesus, as Christian." And from nine to six perhaps trending all the way down to five or four. As I think about the Bible, maybe the biggest reason why people are not interested in Jesus, or stop following Jesus, or give up on the Christian faith is the unfiltered Jesus.

I'd love for you to write this down. I think the biggest reason why people today, and throughout history have walked away, is because the unfiltered Jesus is offensive. And by that, I mean, if you don't edit Jesus, if you don't pick and choose your favorite parts of Jesus, if you just read who Jesus actually was and what Jesus actually said in the recorded gospels, you cannot avoid the fact that he was scandalously offensive. I think the biggest problem Americans have with Christianity today is not the pastor, even though pastors can be a problem. It's not the priest. It's not the rituals. It's not the rite. I think the biggest offense is Jesus. Here's why I say that.

I stole/borrowed this giant coffee filter that many of you appreciate here at church when I give you coffee for free. Think of what a filter does. A filter, whether we're talking about a coffee filter, or a furnace filter, or a filter for the car you drove here to church, or a filter on your phone, or your favorite pictures. A filter takes what something actually is and turns it into what you want it to be.

And every single day people are tempted to do the same thing with Jesus. Right? I want to take the parts of Jesus that I like, that make me feel good, maybe the parts like, "He's with me. He forgives me. He has time for me. He can rescue me. He can heal this cancer. I want a Jesus who gets me to heaven and watches over me on earth."

But sometimes we are very, very tempted to filter out the parts of Jesus that are not so easy to swallow, and that's why I'm happy that you're here. Starting today and for the next few weeks we are going to meet the unfiltered Jesus. So, if you're ready for that, there's probably no better place to start than the single sermon where Jesus was so offensive that if my math is right, 99.7% of his church left. Can you imagine? If I preach a sermon, and there are hundreds of you here today, and a bunch of you are just popping up and leaving until two of you... What would I have to say to make all the rest of you leave?

Did you know that in the gospel of John that's exactly what happened to Jesus? Here's the story. Jesus is starting to grow in popularity. A few people turn into a few dozen, a few hundred. And one day, thousands of people are there interested in Jesus. The way that he speaks, the miracles that he does. The Bible says that 5,000 men, plus the women, plus the children were all gathered around to hear Jesus, and that is when Jesus decided to pull off his most numerical miracle, what the Bible calls, "The feeding of the 5,000."

Huge crowd is there. No one has anything to eat. So, Jesus takes this kid's lunch box, which had some bread and some fish in it and he says, "You get a fish, and you get a fish, and you get a fish, and here's some bread." And so, he's multiplying this little kid's meal until 5,000 plus people are totally satisfied, they're stuffed, and they pick up the leftovers. And the people realized, "Wait, if Jesus can do that, if Jesus wants to do that, if he has the power to do miracles, and the love to do miracles for us..." It's a unanimous vote and they want Jesus to be their king.

So, they tracked Jesus down. They end up finding him in a nearby synagogue in the ancient city of Capernaum and there as they're gathered ready to put the crown on top of His head, Jesus breaks out in a sermon that makes almost all of them walk out the door. Here's what he said. We're in John 6. "Jesus said to the crowds, 'Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the son of man will give you. For on him God the father has placed his seal of approval.'

Then they asked Jesus, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" And the people are super interested. Now they were busting their backs in Galilean fields to try to feed their families. Now Jesus says he is just going to give them this bread for free. They cry out to him, "Please Jesus, give us the bread you're talking about."

And here's how he responds. He says in John 6, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will, but to do the will of him, of God, who sent me." "You want bread? It's me. Believe in me. God sent me from heaven so your soul would never be thirsty, so your heart would never be hungry. He sent me to fill you up in the most beautiful spiritual way."

That seems maybe at first glance to be a super amazing offer from Jesus, but there was -- there was actually one word in that quote that made everyone cringe. Did you catch it? Heaven. Look at their reaction just a verse later. "At this the Jews there began to grumble about Jesus because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.' They said, 'Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven?'"

"Come on Jesus, I'm from earth. He's from earth. She's from earth and you are from earth. Who do you think -- you think you're some angel that floated down from above? You think you're above us? Better than us?" They grumbled among themselves, "Who does Jesus think he is?" From heaven. It's the first incredibly offensive thing about Jesus that I want you to write down.

The reason that Jesus is so offensive is because Jesus is authoritative. Jesus does not claim to be your equal but to be your superior. He's not just some guy who maybe has a little bit of wisdom to share or things to suggest that you believe. It's not like you and Jesus -- he says, "You are from earth and I'm from heaven. You think according to the wisdom of man, I was sent from God. So, if you think this, and I think this, guess who's wrong and guess who's right? Every time," Jesus says, "I'm right. Every time you disagree with me, you're wrong. Every time you read something I say and you cringe, you don't like it, or you disagree with it, it's not because I have something to learn, it's because you do. You are from earth. I'm from heaven. My job is to speak. Your job is to submit."

And the crowd did not like that. How about you? I'm not sure if it's just me, but my heart has a huge problem with actual authority. I think I like the concept of authority on paper, but in real life, I get really moody about it, like the government, right? I've studied the history of countries that don't have a real government. I would not want to step foot in those places. I would not want to raise my daughters in those places. I love the idea of some structure with power and authority that can give me security and safety. I love that idea until the government says something to me that I don't like, until I don't agree with what the president or the congress mandates. Anyone? Who do you think you are, mandating me? This is the land of the free and the home of..."I'm going to do what I want because I have the right." Right? "I don't care who you are. I don't care how many people voted for you. You either do what I want, or I will -- I will loathe you deep in my heart."

Or think of something as small as sports. On paper I love referees, I really do. I've played soccer games where the ref can't make it and everyone says, "Let's just play without a referee." Always a bad idea. Always a bad idea. Gets so dramatic. So, I love the idea that there's someone there that has authority, a whistle in his mouth, a card in his back pocket that can stop some beefy defender from snapping these skinny legs of your pastor. Alright, I love that. I love it until -- till the whistle is coming in my direction and then no. Then the grumbling Mike, the moody Mike, the, "What are you thinking Mike?" Agrees -- I like authority that agrees with me. I don't like authority that doesn't.

To be a Christian means to call him Lord, King, and God. It means to bend your knee and submit. It means to read the Bible and every time it bothers you to say, "I must be wrong, because he's God. My parents must have taught me wrong because he's God. The way I've been thinking about this, the way nine out of ten of my friends believe about this, we all must be wrong because Jesus is God." He doesn't suggest, he preaches. He has no interest in being your on-call counselor or your occasional life coach. He is either the Lord of all or he isn't Lord at all. Offended? Because he's not done.

Look what happens next in John 6. "'Stop grumbling among yourselves,' Jesus answered. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' Jesus said to them, 'Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'"

Why do people starve or dehydrate? Because their bodies are incapable of producing what they actually need to live. "You need bread," Jesus says, "Or you're dead." And in the same way, here's this unfiltered claim. He says, "Your soul," the spiritual part of you, "Is absolutely incapable of producing what it needs to live with God." And you can think for a long time, you can try your best, you can work hard to be a good person, but what is within you is as capable as living with God as your body is surviving without food.

Jesus says, "Your body needs bread and your soul needs me." And without me, flesh and blood me, living, dying on a cross and rising, you have no life. There's no other way." This is the second offensive thing Jesus said. I'd love for you to write this down. The essential Jesus is offensive. He's saying, "Yep. I don't just come with authority but I'm not optional. If you want to pray and have God listen, I'm essential. If you want to die and not go to hell, I'm essential. If you want God to be for you and not absolutely against you because of your sin, I am essential. You can walk away if you want, but sooner or later, you will die, and your death will be eternal." Jesus said, "Unless you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you have no life." And that's when everyone left.

John is honest about the reaction. He says in chapter 6, "On hearing it," this teaching, "many of his disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?' From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed Jesus." What will you do? This was a hard teaching, was it not? Will you no longer follow him? Is this the last time I will see you in church? Are you reaching for the remote right now at home? You know, why -- if Jesus is going to tell you to change, to repent, that you're wrong - - if he's going to ask you to stand by this book, even if your friends think you're dumb or backwards or something phobic, why would you stick with him? Why wouldn't you join the increasing masses of Americans who say, "No, no, no, no. Maybe that's for grandma, but not for me."

If you had to ask me, "Why not bail on Jesus?" If you have Jesus, you have something in your hands who is so valuable. And what you will get for living for yourself by your rules, your truth, what you will get for a comfortable life of doing whatever you want is so small compared to what Jesus is freely putting into your hands today.

In fact, in the midst of all his offensive things, you might have missed the incredible things that Jesus said. Let me show you this list of promises that I found right here in John 6. Jesus said, "I will give you food that endures to eternal life. God sent me for you. Not other people. Not better people. For you. You will never go hungry. You will never be thirsty. I won't drive you away. I won't lose you. Doesn't matter your background, doesn't matter your baggage." Jesus says, "Come to me. I won't stiff-arm you and say you're not good enough. I will accept the worst sinner in this room, and once I have you, I won't lose you. I won't let death take you from me. I won't let cancer. I won't let job loss or divorce or struggles with anxiety or depression. I won't even let your own sin -- I won't lose you. Instead, I will raise you up on the last day." And he says, "You will -- you will have eternal life. I'll teach you and you will live forever. You will live because of me. I've chosen you." He's saying, "I will take everything that's wrong with you and nail it to the cross. Yes, you will have to give up much to follow me. You will have to take up a cross and deny yourself. You will have to acknowledge me as your ultimate authority, but here is what I'm offering to you, eternity. Forever. You can walk if you want to," Jesus says, "But don't walk away from forever."

Here's how I would describe the real Jesus. It's the last thing I'm asking you to write down today. I think we learn from John 6 that the unfiltered Jesus is so offensive, unbelievably offensive, but he is so worth it. There's a reason why lots of people walk, but there's a compelling reason for you to stay. So, before I say amen and see what you do next, let me say two final things. First, I'd like to speak to those of you who are under 30, and second, I'd like to tell you the story of one of Jesus best friends.

So, hands nice and high, who in the room today is under 30 years old? Yeah, a whole bunch of you, maybe half of you, a third of you. I want to be super, super up front with you that it will probably be harder for you to stick with Jesus than it has been for me. If it's true that when I was born nine out of ten people said, "Jesus is good, and church is good, and the Bible is good." I had a lot of people telling me to stay with Jesus was good. But now as you make friends, as you date people, it is increasingly likely that they will not say that. That they will tell you it's time to close this book and step away from places like this, that we are the problem and not the solution. I need to be honest with you that with your friends and your family, this might be harder than it was for your grandparents or your parents. All of us want to be encouraged and accepted, and there will be much less encouragement and acceptance for your generation. God could change the trends in a second, but if he doesn't, there's going to be fewer and fewer people applauding as you stand beneath the cross of Jesus.

But when that moment comes, there's just one word I hope you can remember in your head, eternal. In the gospel of John this is a word that Jesus repeats, and repeats, and repeats, and repeats. He offends. He offends. He drops bombs. But he always comes

back to this word, eternal. Eternal. Eternal. "Your friends might applaud, but what I'm giving you is eternal. They might give you a job. They might like your post online, but what I'm offering you is life that is eternal."

When you feel the hot sun of people's disapproval, please I'm begging you to remember that no one on this earth can offer you what is eternal, but Jesus can. And if you don't bail on him, if you don't reject or deny him, he will give you life that lasts forever. "Whoever believes in him will have eternal life." You know, some people think when Jesus invited Peter, and James, and John, and the apostles to follow him, they might have just been teenagers. Did you know that? They might have been a bunch of 18-year-olds looking back at Jesus while the grownups walked away.

And that's why Jesus asked them a pretty candid question. John 6 says, "'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked. Simon Peter," always the first guy in the room to talk, "He answered Jesus, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of,'" Can you say it with me? "Eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the holy one of God."

Yeah, Jesus, that was a hard teaching. Where are we going to go? To some Pharisee who makes it easy? He can't offer me eternity. But we have come to believe that you are the holy one of God who makes sinners like us holy enough for God. Friends, Jesus is the bread of life, so offensive and so worth it. Let's pray.

Dear God, I'm thinking of my daughters right now. They are here every Sunday, but a time is coming when they won't be in the back seat as mom and dad drive them to church. There's going to come a time when they're going to have to make their own decision about whether you're worth it, whether you're worthy. And I pray that you would do in their hearts what I can't so that you would give them the kind of faith that can see ahead into their eternal future and believe that heaven is so much better, that Jesus is so much better, that you are always worth it no matter what you cost us.

Our Father, there are people on planet earth right now who are suffering fierce persecution. They're losing their jobs, some of them are losing their heads because they believe that Jesus is worth it. I pray right now that you would give to all of us who are here today and especially to Christians and people here in America, that same conviction, that no matter what it cost us, no matter how hard this gets, whether we're the only one in the room, if you actually gave up your life for us to forgive every sin then you must be worth it.

God, the truth is, it's pretty fun for us to get what we want and it's miserable for our hearts when we don't. And so, we need you to open our eyes to actually believe, at the end of the day, whatever we have to say no to within us when we say, "Yes," to Jesus, it is always the best choice. Give us that kind of faith, God, to see you, to trust you and to sing with all the saints and angels of heaven, "Worthy and holy is the name of Jesus." It's because of him that we pray all these things. And all God's people said, "Amen."