

**Ugly Jesus 1**  
**Ugly for You**  
**7/10/16**

- During our Deacon Meeting two weeks ago, I told the deacons what the upcoming sermon series was going to be. Maybe you noticed the title on your bulletin or you saw the notification on Facebook. For the next several weeks, we are going to be in a sermon series entitled “Ugly Jesus.”
  - o The title of this series may take some people off guard. I was told that maybe I should think of another title because it seems disrespectful. I’ve gotten raised eyebrows. And actually, my response was the same. I got this title and idea from another pastor. At first, I thought, “Hmm...I wonder what this is about.” I was uncomfortable with saying ugly Jesus.
  - o Jesus is my Lord and Savior. He is my life. I respect him and love him with everything in me. To me, Jesus is absolutely beautiful! Calling my Jesus “ugly” can certainly be offensive. I get it.
  
- And, it is offensive maybe to some here because you feel the same about Jesus and because you know Jesus. It might even be offensive to others who aren’t even in the church regularly because we live in a highly religious culture.
  - o In fact, a November 2011 Public Policy poll found that Jesus enjoys a 90% approval rating nation-wide. His approval rating is better than any politician around!
  - o But I wonder if Americans are being honest with themselves.
  
- Because here’s what we are going to look at during this sermon series – Jesus was ugly and he is still ugly. We think of ugly mostly in terms of physical appearance. But, it is much more than that.
  - o Today, we’re going to see how everything about Jesus was ugly to humanity. He was ugly enough that he was murdered. Today, we’re going to look at that ugly murder.
  - o What we’re going to do today with the story of Christ’s ugly murder is something that cannot be done with any other crime or death in the history of the world. We’re going to examine Christ’s death in the writings of a man who died more than 700 years before this particular crime happened.
  - o This story will not only reveal the particulars of Christ’s death, but will also tell the eternal purpose of it.
  
- But, before we begin reading, let me tell you about this writer, Isaiah. See, right up front, although he was writing about the Son of God, he hinted about the ugliness of Jesus – how the Christ would look and act nothing like we expect. What do you think about that? Jesus’s ugly was even prophesied!

- Isaiah would actually tell us that there would be nothing attractive about Christ. Now, let's get out of just thinking in physical terms.
  - The Hebrew word used in Scripture is mar-eh'. This word goes beyond physical appearance. It means that there would be nothing handsome or beautiful in physical appearance or mental appearance. So, then, Jesus would not be appealing to the eye, the ear or the mind.
  - His face wasn't going to attract people, his words weren't going to attract people and his mission wasn't going to attract people.
- Knowing this, we're left with the question: "Why would God send to the world an 'Ugly Jesus'?"
    - So let's break this down. If you're keeping notes and following along on your sermon outlines, this is going to be an enlightening series. If you don't typically, I would encourage you to follow along and begin to take notes. Stay engaged or else you'll forget everything!
    - We're going to learn how and why what probably most of us here see as the beauty of Christ is really ugly to the world.
- So, let's look at some ugly facts. Because the simple fact is that Jesus was and still is ugly to the world.
    - Let's begin to look at a passage from the book of Isaiah. This week, I want to read our passages from the New International Version of the Bible.
    - Isaiah 53:2b-3 NIV says this, *"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."*
- When we read words like this used to describe Jesus, we shudder. We get defensive for Jesus!
    - But, there's the truth, right? Isaiah wrote, *"No beauty...nothing attractive...despised/rejected... familiar with suffering, a man of sorrows, he is like "One men hide their faces from..."*
    - There is it – from his physical appearance to what he taught, people found ugly, enough so that the result was his murder.
    - We want to blame these words on the Romans and Jews who lived in Jesus' time. They didn't see him like we see him. They were horrible people who just wanted power and glory for themselves.
    - We don't like to think that anyone would actually call Jesus ugly today. After all, 90% of all Americans like Jesus!
- But, as I asked before, are we all being honest? Do 90% of Americans really love the real Jesus or just the sanitized version of Him we've recreated in our minds?

- Do we really love the One who said, *“I am the only way, the only truth and the only life...”*? Every other religion is false and every other god is a fake!
  - Have you ever seen this bumper sticker? I’ve seen several around town. This is a good concept. We want to coexist with people in peace and unity. After all, that was a concept of Christ, right? Well, to some extent.
  - Because see, Jesus also boldly proclaimed that he was the only way, not one way, the only way. The only real way to God is the cross, not the ying yang, not the star of David, and certainly not the occultic star in the circle – that is a symbol of satanic worship! He said, darkness and light can’t exist together. And, he is the only light!
  - Here’s another bumper sticker. Prays together well. OK. Again, nice concept, except according to Jesus, if we aren’t praying through him, then we aren’t praying to the same God, the only real God!
- Do we really love the Jesus who announced to the world in John 3:16 that He is the Only Son of the Only God?
- Maybe not as much as you think. Let’s look at an ad that was banned from being aired during the 2012 Superbowl.
  - ***Roll John 3:16 ad from Superbowl 2012***
- Now that seems harmless enough, doesn’t it? Certainly not offensive enough to be banned from TV? It just encourages people to look up John 3:16 and see what it says.
- Yet, this ad was rejected by Fox Sports national and was only run in a few southern markets because they are in the Bible belt. It certainly didn’t run here!
  - Interestingly, it was accidentally run also in Washington, DC. Maybe Jesus is trying to speak to some of those guys down there!
- But amazingly, in the same Superbowl series, the NFL and FOX had no hesitation in airing Madonna’s half-time show in which she claimed to be “channeling” the Egyptian goddess Isis throughout her show. They didn’t have a problem when a British rapper in the show gave the camera the finger.
- While FOX and the NFL were quick to issue apologies, one wonders how they couldn’t have seen this coming, especially in the wake of the “wardrobe malfunctions” of the past.
- If we’re honest with ourselves, even the Christian world we live in still thinks Jesus is too ugly to be heard uncensored. Billy Graham was right when he said, *“Of all the subjects I can speak of, the most controversial of all is the Cross of Jesus Christ.”*
- And when you get down to who He really is, Jesus will always be controversial. The truth that he proclaimed is still too ugly and stringent. Let’s be honest, it would be much easier to simply coexist and to believe that all prayers and all religions are equal. It would be easier because

nothing, then, would be required of us to really share Jesus with anyone!  
We wouldn't have to confront what is false with the truth!

- Do you know how much easier it would be to preach that every religion and belief is of value, just coexist and live in peaceful harmony? We could probably attract far more people into our church if I tickled the ears and preached what was easier for everyone to hear.
  - And, yes, we should live in peace and love others. At the same time, we have to share truth. For in reality, we truly love others if we are sharing the truth, not just what people want to hear.
- While many want to say He was just a good man and a good teacher. While some say he was a tremendous humanitarian and an example for us all. While others try to paint him as a peace-loving pacifist.
- The truth is that he is everything! He is Lord! He is the only way, the only truth and the only life, there is no other way except through him.
  - C.S. Lewis once said, "Jesus Christ was either a liar, a lunatic or Lord!" To a world that might just want to coexist, Jesus is an ugly liar or a crazy man proclaiming he is the only way.
  - But, for those of us who know him as Lord, we know that he is beauty. He is life for us.
- We will have to cling to that life, because if we embrace Jesus, we will embrace the same suffering, sorrow and ugliness that he had to embrace. Because, let me just say this, and we will talk more about this later in this series, if we proclaim Jesus as the only way, we also begin to look ugly to the world. People will find us intolerant, bigoted, simple-minded or indoctrinated.
- The perceived ugliness of Jesus will reflect onto his true followers. Are you ready for that for following him as the only way? Jesus was ready for it for you.
- This brings us to another ugly fact about Jesus: Jesus was ugly for you.
- Let's continue to see what Isaiah prophecies about the coming Messiah in Isaiah 53:4-6, 8b. It says, *"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all... 8b For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken."*
- The image of the crucified Christ must have been a gruesome sight. I think I've asked this question in a past sermon, but how many have seen the 2004 movie

directed by Mel Gibson, “The Passion of Christ?” They tried to stay very true to what happened in order to depict the actual physical horror that Christ endured.

- In fact, they went to different parts of the country and had pastors pre-screen the movie and get input to make sure they were staying as true to Scripture and to what happened as possible.
  - At the time, I was serving as youth pastor at the Avon Community Church of God in Indianapolis. One member of our congregation was a producer of Christian events around the country. He was contacted to help organize a pre-screening with area pastors. So, those of us on staff got to see a pre-screening, not fully edited version of the movie months before the movie hit the theaters.
  - It’s almost torturous to watch it, isn’t it? While we know that it had to have been a horrible death, to actually see it portrayed really puts into your mind images that you never forget.
  - Hollywood rewarded it with an “R” rating just because of the extreme violence. It was, indeed, an “ugly” movie that portrayed the most beautiful event in human history. I can say it is the most beautiful event in human history because it was through the ugly death of Jesus that the price for my sins and your sins was paid.
- Isaiah foretells this ugliness that is going to happen. Let’s look at some of the words Isaiah used.
- Jesus took up our **“Infirmities.”** Infirmities are bodily ailments or diseases. Jesus carried every disease and sickness the world has ever known with Him to the cross. And, “with His stripes you are healed!” Every stripe that was beat upon his back with that whip lead to your healing. It is why we can pray in the name of Jesus for healing from sickness and disease in our life.
- He was pierced for our **“Transgressions.”** A transgression is a sin. It a violation of God’s law
- How many times have we violated God’s plan? How many times have you violated God’s law and plan? Can you even count that high? How guilty or shameful have you felt because of your sinful thoughts or sinful actions?
  - Christ carried those transgressions to the Cross. His body was pierced over and over for our sins.
- He was crushed for our **“Iniquities.”** And iniquity is an injustice. Justice demands that someone pay for every crime, for every violation of the law.
- But you/I cannot pay for our crimes against God and for violating his law. So, Jesus took on that injustice for us. He offered himself as the one to be punished for our sin. There is nothing more unjust that when someone else pays the price for the sin of another.
  - Think of the stories of people, many times people of color, who were finally released from prison after new evidence finally revealed that they didn’t do

the crime, they were just the wrong skin tone in the wrong place at the wrong time. That's injustice!

- Yet, that is what Jesus did for us! The passage we just read said he was crushed for the injustice we did, he was crushed under the weight of the punishment it took to make right the wrong that we did. Can you imagine the weight of all of the injustices and sin for all the world for all time that Jesus bore? No wonder it says that these crushed him.
  - He paid the penalty of our sins and declared us Righteous before God. We didn't deserve it. But, he made it right and paid the price.
- All of this – our iniquities, our transgressions, our injustice – all of this is why He was crucified. All of the ugly shame, hatred, pain...He took for you. The ugliness of the pictures of the cross were for you!
- Every time you see a picture of Jesus on the cross, remember that he was ugly for you!
- The final ugly fact about Jesus is that Jesus was ugly by divine design.
- Let's continue reading in Isaiah 53:7,10,12b *He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ... 10 Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, ... because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*
- Jesus did not die as a **martyr** (someone put to death for his beliefs). Nor did He die as an **example** (someone showing us how to face death positively). He died neither by **accident** nor because **fate** decided it was time for Him to die. Jesus Christ died deliberately, purposefully, and at the hands of God the Father. God Himself determined that His Son would die for the sins of the world. His death was predetermined, planned by God before human history even began. <sup>i</sup>
- The Bible tells us in Revelation 13:8 that Jesus was the *"lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev 13:8). Clearly, this was God's plan from the beginning.
  - That's how 700 years before His death, God spoke to Isaiah and Isaiah wrote what we just read that it was *"God's will to crush Him and cause him to suffer."* That He would be *"like a lamb lead to slaughter...but would not open his mouth."*
  - How gruesome. How unfair. How unlike God!!!
- But when God made you, he decided to make you entirely complete, letting you choose how you live your life. And He knew that we would choose the wrong things. He knew this world would be full of sin, sickness, and pain.

- He knew that those things would separate us from Him. God knew that we would wander far from Him.
  - Why did he make us if he knew that? I guess for the same reason we continue to have children even though there is a possibility that they will choose a different lifestyle or faith system than what we have raised them under. We want to share our love, even though there is a possibility that our children will not share the values we hold dear or even love us in return.
- Yet, like a loving Father, God would stop at nothing to bring us back to Him. Sin has been committed, so a price has to be paid, but I cannot afford the price...
    - But, there is one who can - the sinless Son of God can pay the price. So He sent Jesus to pay the price for us.
    - And the **weight** of our sin, pain, addictions, wrongs, sickness, turmoil...**CRUSHED** Jesus.
- It's a struggle to understand this verse: *"...it was the Father's will to CRUSH Him..."* That doesn't sound loving. That sounds horrible and ugly.
    - Yet, that horrible, ugly thing was done to Jesus because God loved us so much that he decided to lay the sin, sickness, pain, guilt of us all on the back of Jesus. And, Jesus loved us so much that he willingly laid down his beautiful life and took on the ugliness of the world, sin, hell and death.
- And the weight of that is CRUSHING. Some of you know exactly what I'm talking about because it's CRUSHING you today. You're carrying the weight of the world on your shoulders and it's crushing you.
    - Your relationships have been crushed. Your physical body has been crushed. Your self-worth has been crushed. Your outlook on life is crushed. Your family has been crushed. Your hope has been crushed.
    - But, Jesus is saying – you don't have to be crushed! You don't have to take this weight on your own. You could never deal with that kind of crushing weight. Let me take it for you! I have chosen to be crushed for you and have already done it. Now, live free in me and get from under all that is crushing you!
- So, you might have wondered why I'm calling this message "Ugly Jesus." I hope this morning that it makes much more sense. I'm so eternally thankful that Jesus became ugly for me. His ugliness was turned into beauty and I was a recipient of that. Thank you, Jesus!
    - Just look at how the beautiful Jesus takes on the ugliness of the world. The shame of others. The pain we go through. The wrong things that have happened to us. Things that would absolutely CRUSH us under their weight, Jesus took them on himself and carried them to the cross so that we don't have to be weighed down by them anymore.

- He died with the ugly weight of the world on His shoulders, but on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day He rose again!
- This morning, I want you to be honest with yourself – what ugly thing are you carrying today? Are you carrying guilt & shame? Are you carrying pain & sickness? Are you carrying fear & turmoil? Are you carrying rebellion and a sin that has grown into an addiction that you can't seem to get out from under its control.
  - This may be something that you've carried around your whole life. But, it can end TODAY! It can leave today! It has made your life UGLY for the last day!
- Jesus wants to take it from you. He wants to become ugly for you. He wants you to understand that he already paid the ugly price to set you free! If you will let him, today, Jesus will take on your UGLY thing!
  - So, this morning in your bulletin, you should have found just a plain piece of paper. I want you to write down any ugly thing that you are carrying. Any guilt, shame, pain, sickness, fear, crisis, act of rebellion, sin, addiction – whatever it is. Write it down on the piece of paper.
    - Let's take a few minutes to do that.
  - Then, I want you to make that piece of paper as ugly as possible. Wrinkle it up. Twist it up. Tear it up. Whatever you want to do.
    - Go ahead.
    - Now, hold them in your hands as we pray.
- Let's pray.

#### *Altar Call*

- During the altar call this morning, let's get rid of the ugly things we have identified in our lives. Bring that ugly paper with all the ugly things on it and give it to Jesus. Put them here on the altar.
  - Allow him to take them up and be ugly for you. He already paid the price. He is waiting for you to give them up so he can turn your ugly into his beauty.

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<sup>i</sup> Direct quote from *The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible*, Isaiah 2, p. 200