

Ugly Jesus #6
Disappointed in Jesus
Luke 7:17-23
8/21/16

- Today we wrap up our series “Ugly Jesus.” I have really enjoyed this series. Just talking about Jesus has been fun. But, trying to narrow down the powerful stories of the life of Christ has been difficult because there are so many stories.
 - If you have been around, you know that we have been looking at some of the things that Jesus did and some of the things that Jesus said that seemed ugly to the world, but really they were to bring about beauty for us. That beauty is found in salvation, in our relationship with him, in freedom from sin.
 - So, we’ve been looking at ways that Jesus was ugly and controversial.
 - We saw that he keeps bad company – fraudulent tax collectors, prostitutes, criminals, women and the likes.
 - He encouraged worship that was emotional rather than by the law.
 - He forgave people of their sins and cast out demons.
 - He insulted the religious establishment and leadership.
 - Then, there were stories that we didn’t even get to:
 - Things like his infatuation with blood and even references to cannibalism in John 6 which caused a lot of his disciples to leave.
 - He seems highly insensitive as he sleeps through a big storm on the lake as his friends fight for their lives.
 - He told people they would need to leave their family to follow him.
 - Then, you gotta’ love Mark 7 where called his disciples “dull” or stupid, called a woman asking for healing a “dog”, and literally spit in another man’s mouth before praying for his healing. Look it up and read it!

- I would LOVE to tell all of those stories. I believe that I could spend the rest of my life teaching about the life of Jesus and never finish...and that’s just what I intend to do. Even though this series may be over, we will never be done talking about Jesus.
 - And, you know as we look over the ugly or controversial things about Jesus, I can just imagine that there were some people who were disappointed in Jesus at times. They probably looked at some of the things Jesus did or said and thought, “Why would he do that? Why would he say that? That seems harsh. How is that going to help anything? How is that going to save us?”
 - Especially since most people thought the Messiah was going to come and establish a kingdom in Israel to make Israel great and mighty again – the way Jesus came and what Jesus did and the way Jesus died would have been a

huge disappointment. It caused them to question if Jesus was the real deal, if he really was the Messiah.

- You know, every single one of us have been disappointed at some point in life. Can you think of a particularly disappointing event in life? Maybe something that was supposed to happen, didn't, maybe things didn't happen as you planned and dreamed, maybe someone let you down.
 - Maybe we have even looked over our lives at some point and thought, "I haven't really done much with my life. I once had so many dreams and plans and I haven't done much to get those accomplished."
 - Wil and I were talking about our bucket lists over vacation of top places we want to travel to. We had quite the list ranging from Australia to Europe to the Dominican Republic to Israel. I want to do a cruise around the world - like one of those six month ones. I've had that dream for years.
 - I'm not sure that we will have the time or finances to all of things or go all the places we want to go. That will be disappointing. So, I'm hoping in heaven we will be able to travel! 😊

- Disappointment is common for all of us. If you have ever been disappointed in life, you are among good company. I read some interesting information about some leaders who most of us would describe as successful, but how they described their own lives or life situations clearly show disappointment.
 - Hugo Grotius, the father of modern international law, said in the last years of his life, "I have accomplished nothing worthwhile in my life."
 - John Quincy Adams, sixth President of the U.S.--not a Lincoln, perhaps, but a decent leader--wrote in his diary: "My life has been spent in vain and idle aspirations, and in ceaseless rejected prayers that something would be the result of my existence beneficial to my species."
 - Author Robert Louis Stevenson who wrote *Treasure Island* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is the 26th most translated author of all time, yet what did he write for his epitaph? "Here lies one who meant well, who tried a little, and failed much."
 - Cecil Rhodes opened up Africa and established an empire, but what were his dying words? "So little done, so much to do."

- So, disappointment is a given. But the question I have this morning might be one that causes people to wonder why I'm asking it. Here's the question: Have you ever been disappointed with Jesus?
 - Have you ever felt like God didn't come through on His end of the deal? Like he didn't answer your prayer? Like he didn't care about your situation?
 - Have you ever questioned your faith because things didn't work out like you hoped they would?

- If you said “yes” to any of this, then you’ve been disappointed with Jesus. Now, I know those kinds of feelings don’t belong here at church. If you have been in the church for any length of time, you have probably heard somewhere along the line that we are not supposed to question God. We are just supposed to believe by faith.
 - No matter what is going on, we keep it together, we come to church where we get all dressed up, hold our family’s hands, put on that BIG “Gawd bless you” smile. When someone asks us, “How are you?” Our response should be, “Blessed and highly favored and you?”
 - We don’t question here. We don’t grapple with hard questions. Instead, we sing and paste a fake smile and tell our best “God fixed me up” stories. All that disappointment talk is to be done somewhere else. This is a happy place.

- Well, if you have heard some of my sermons, you know I’m not into that. In fact, I believe doing that – being fake to others and to God is exactly why the church is in the mess it is in today! We have to get real. We have to get real with God and with each other.
 - So, I’m blowing the lid off that fairy tale today that you just pray and dig deep in your faith and never question God. The fact is that if you don’t question God and are not honest with God, you will never grow in your faith! Instead, you will have a fake faith.
 - See, God isn’t afraid of your questions or your negative emotions. He wants all of you, not just the happy parts. And, he sure doesn’t want you to fake it.

- Because the deal is that sometimes God doesn’t act like I think He ought to! Sometimes He doesn’t come through for me!
 - In fact, it’s one of the ugly things about Jesus. Sometimes He just doesn’t behave like we think He should! And, we don’t know why when we’re going through it. We might not even know why for the rest of our time here on earth.
 - All of that brings disappointment in Jesus and if we don’t deal with it, that disappointment will eventually lead to disillusionment and then to doubt. When you get to doubt, you are just a short step to turning away from Jesus altogether.
 - So, this morning, we are going to deal with our disappointments so they don’t destroy our relationship with Jesus.

- Let me take you to the story of a great man who was probably just a little disappointed with Jesus. Well, he wasn’t a little disappointed, he was a lot disappointed.
 - His name was John the Baptist. He was the cousin of Jesus. He was the one who it was prophesied would come to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah.

- John is the one who actually baptized Jesus. He was probably the first one to realize that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Messiah.
 - He even encouraged his disciples and followers to follow Jesus instead. John is the one who said, *"I must decrease and He must increase."* So why would he be disappointed with Jesus???
 - Let's read the story in **Matthew 11:2-6**.
- In this short little story, we find Three Reasons to Be Disappointed with Jesus. The first is that Jesus lets things happen that you don't deserve.
 - Look at John, Jesus's own cousin and the one God chose to prepare the way for Jesus's coming. All John did was preach about the coming of Christ. All he was doing was being obedient to God. Jesus, himself, said there was never born a greater preacher.
 - But, where is John? John is in prison just for preaching – for doing the very thing God chose him to do.
 - See, John was just like Jesus, saying controversial things and he said something about the king of the region which ticked the king off and landed John in prison.
 - John knew that Jesus was the SON of GOD. He knew that Jesus was ALL POWERFUL. Surely Jesus could have prevented this. Jesus knew John didn't deserve this kind of punishment and these circumstances. John was just being obedient to God.
 - Yet, Jesus didn't prevent it even though John didn't deserve it.
 - Have you ever looked at your situation and thought the same? Why did God let this happen? I trusted God. I have been obedient to him. Where is he?
 - I sure have! Over the years, I have shared about walking away from the Lord. Disappointment is the very reason I walked away from God. I was disappointed that things were happening to me that I didn't deserve and it led to disillusionment with Jesus and to doubt and eventually to me walking away from Jesus for a time.
 - See, growing up, I was a good Christian kid. As a teen, I was strong in my Christianity. I did all the right things. My parents didn't have to worry about me making bad choices. I stood up for my faith. Everyone knew where I stood. I didn't party or drink or try anything. I didn't have sex. I didn't go to places where I shouldn't go or do things I shouldn't do.
 - I was a good student and did well in school. I was liked by all my teachers and school administration. In fact, I was given privileges that other students didn't have because the staff and faculty all knew I was trustworthy.
 - I loved church and my youth group. I used singing as an opportunity to sing for Jesus. I put Jesus first. I decided to go to a Christian college where I thought it was going to be even better as I would be surrounded by other good Christian kids who loved Jesus.

- But, it didn't turn out that way. I had a good group of friends at first. Then, they decided to get into the party scene and leave me behind. Anderson University is an expensive college and I was struggling financially to put myself through school since my parents could only help so much. I was working hard to keep up my grades and work three part-time jobs.
 - o By my junior & senior years, I was exhausted, had few friends, felt alone and was stressed out! I could not for the life of me understand why God was allowing this to happen! I was a good, loyal friend to others who were not being that toward me. I was faithful to God and he was allowing things to happen that I did not deserve! I did everything that he wanted and he was not rewarding me for my good, Christian behavior.
 - o I thought doing the right thing, being a good Christian, was a guarantee for blessings to come to me. But, it didn't work that way. It doesn't work that way.

- See, you're not alone when you find yourself disappointed in Jesus. You're not the first one to think these things. Whatever might have gone on in your life or is going on right now that you don't deserve and you don't understand it, know that you aren't alone.
 - o John most likely had some of those same feelings in that cold, dark jail cell awaiting his execution – I don't deserve this!
 - o What has happened to you that you didn't deserve? Has it caused you to be disappointed in Jesus?

- You know, when I think about what I didn't deserve, it pales in comparison to what John went through. And, it pales in comparison to what others who have been obedient to Christ have been through and have faced.
 - o And, maybe your disappointment pales in comparison as well. But, it's still real. And, Satan will still use your disappointment in what you don't deserve to bring disillusionment and doubt in your mind about the goodness of God. He will always raise the question, "How can a good God let this happen? If Jesus really loves me how could this happen?"
 - o See, Satan will use even the smallest of disappointments in situations and circumstances and other people – things that happen to you that you didn't deserve to change you obedience to God into disobedience.

- In the story of John, the second reason to be disappointed in Jesus is that Jesus didn't do what you expected.
 - o When Jesus came, most people expected Him to be a conquering warrior. They thought he'd overthrow the Roman Empire by force and liberate Israel. Few, if any, understood that that's not the kind of Kingdom Jesus came to establish.

- Maybe John was expecting the latter. I mean, John was a rough and tumble kind of guy. He lived in the wilderness, killed animals to make his clothes, ate locusts and wild honey.
 - When he shouted out, “Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand” he did it with a passion like he knew he was on the winning side.
 - But then Jesus showed up and showed no power of force.
- Have you ever expected Jesus to do something for you that didn’t happen?
 - You expected Him to take care of a financial need? But, things just got worse.
 - You expected Him to mend a broken relationship? But, the mending didn’t come and the relationship is over.
 - You expected Him to heal a loved one? But, the healing never came.
- For weeks, I asked for prayer for Vincent Jones, the 32 year old man from Ohio who was diagnosed with aggressive leukemia. His wife, Mindy, was a teen in the youth ministry when I was the youth pastor in Ohio.
 - People all over were praying fervently for him. The cancer was treated and was gone. Things were getting better. We were all expecting a full recovery. Then, his health plummeted again. This time, there was no recovering.
 - Vincent died two weeks after the birth of his second child, leaving behind that newborn, a three year old and his young wife. The peace and healing that we had prayed for, for months finally came as Vincent went home to be with the Lord. Now, Vincent is healed and he is no longer suffering because he is in heaven.
 - But, who would have expected it to happen like that? Yes, we were praying for Vincent’s healing and peace, but not like that! That’s not what we were expecting and praying for!
- Here’s the thing - we know that Jesus is powerful and He can do anything. He can heal any illness. He can work through any situation. He can open doors. He can part seas. He can move mountains.
 - Sometimes, just doesn’t do it as we expect. The way he does things, sometimes, doesn’t make any sense to us!
 - If you’ve ever felt like that, you know how John felt.
- The final reason to be disappointed in Jesus is that Jesus hasn’t answered your questions.
 - In our passage, John asked one simple question: “Are you the Messiah?” Why did he ask? He already knew, right? Goodness, he had been preaching it for years. Now, though, his disappointment has come to the point of producing doubt.

- But look at Jesus' reply in verse 4 *"Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the good news is being preached to the poor."*
 - These are words that John would have known well. John preached these very words for years. They were the words of Isaiah 61 – a famous prophetic passage about the Messiah and what he would do.

- But, there were some words that Jesus left out. See Isaiah 61 also prophesies that the Messiah would set prisoners free. Jesus left that out.
 - John was sure to have noticed this omission and would have known that the omission was meant for him.
 - See, Jesus' mission wasn't to release physical prisoners, but those bound spiritually. Still today, Jesus' mission isn't to release us from everything that is negative in our lives. His mission is to release us from spiritual bondage and free us from sin.

- When John asked, *"Are you the messiah?"* he was basically saying, *"If you're really him, set me free."* Do what we have expected you to do. Do what I deserve you to do – set me free! Why aren't you coming to my rescue?
 - John might well have had visions of he and his cousin, Jesus, together taking over Rome and setting up God's Kingdom.
 - But Jesus left him there. And, if we were to read on a couple of chapters, we would read the John is eventually beheaded. Jesus disappointed him and didn't even answer his question with a straight forward answer.

- Probably one of the questions that we ask that rarely gets answered is "Why?" Why did God allow that to happen? What was the purpose? Why?
 - We ask that question when we just can't seem to see any reason whatsoever for why something would happen.
 - I've sat with parents within hours of losing their 16 year old son in a car accident and held the mother in my arms as she asks, "Why? Why did God take my baby?" I've known a father who was teaching his daughter to drive. As they were driving down a country road, the tire road broke and the car went out of control, causing them to crash into a telephone pole on the driver's side, killing the daughter. "Why didn't God take me instead of her?" was the question of the father.
 - Why can't I find someone to marry? I'm a good person. Why can't I get pregnant? I would be a good mom. Why was I abused as a child? I was innocent. Why did my dad leave? Why was I born with a disability? Why won't a good job opportunity open up for me? Why did I get cancer? Why did my mom die when I was so young? Why? Why?

- In those moments, heaven seems so silent. The answers don't come.

- Yet, Jesus did give an answer that we might see as a round-about answer. In verse 6, Jesus told John's followers to tell John, "God blesses those who do not turn away because of me."
 - To John, he was saying, "John, I'm not always going to do what you want. Don't doubt me even when I disappoint you. You have to trust in me when you don't understand."
- In this Jesus round-about answer, we find what we can do when we're disappointed with Jesus. First, is to know that he sees the bigger picture.
 - Jesus full well understood that John was disappointed. He knew that John was struggling with disillusionment and doubt. He knew that John was teetering on the edge. So, he tells John, "I get that what I'm doing seems harsh and you don't understand it, but don't turn away from me. Know that I am doing exactly what needs to be done. You can't see all that needs to be done because you have limited vision and you can't see beyond your prison cell right now, but I can see beyond that and know what needs to be done to save the world."
- During times of disappointment when things are happening that we don't deserve or that we don't expect, Jesus's answer to us is the same as what he was trying to convey to John. He knows best. He sees all and is working all things out for his purpose.
 - God doesn't do all that we expect of him because he can see all that we aren't expecting to come around the corner! He is trying to take us beyond our expectations into his reality.
 - That may disappoint us because we think we know what we need, but we have to believe that God knows the bigger picture and commit to not turn away from him when we become disappointed. We commit that Satan will not convince us that God is not good and instead cling to the truth that God is love and he knows more than we do.
- We can only do that when we trust. We have to trust that beauty will come even through ugly disappointment. We have to trust that Jesus really is the answer in spite of what disappointments come.
 - Yes, life is ugly. Situations and circumstances that we go through and even some people that we encounter are going to be ugly. We live in a fallen, ugly world that is currently ruled by an evil, ugly enemy. Expect that ugly will happen. Disappointment will happen.
 - Yet, through it all, the beauty of Christ is real. The beauty of salvation is real. The beauty of joy unspeakable even when life is ugly is real. The beauty of freedom is real. It might not be our experience here on earth, but it will be our eternal reality in glory!

- Can you imagine the trust that Jesus had to have in the Father's plan as he faced the cruel, excruciating death of the cross? He had to trust that the pain, the disappointment, the feeling of being forsaken – that all of it would lead to the beauty of salvation for all who believe in him.
 - Trusting when you are disappointed and disillusioned and doubting is hard. Trusting when all you see is ugly is hard. Trusting when all you can do is hope for the beauty that is unseen is hard.
 - But, you've got to trust in something. You can either trust in the known ugliness of the world and your own human heart or you can trust in the One who laid down his life for you, even if he doesn't always come through the way you think you deserve him to come through and even if he doesn't always answer your questions. Where are you going to put your trust?
 - I have learned and found it to be fully reliable to put my trust in God and in nothing else.

- And, as you're believing that God knows the bigger picture and as you're focusing on trusting God alone, you can be held. Things get ugly and disappointing. God doesn't promise an easy life for the believer. People say, "I'm just not happy." The Bible never promises happiness, but joy in spite of circumstances. His Word says that the rain falls on the just and the unjust.
 - Yet, there is a promise he has made that you can take to the bank. He promised to never leave or forsake you. You might be going through the dark valley of the shadow of death in the middle of a storm. But you are not alone!
 - God is beside you! His arms are around you! He will not leave you. No matter how angry you get. No matter how upset you are. No matter how many questions you ask. No matter what – he is there with you, holding you in his right hand. Hold on to his promise that will not fail. Be held.

- This morning, maybe you are going through a situation that has left you disappointed with Jesus. Maybe you have already gone through a situation and it has negatively affected your relationship with Jesus. I would dare say that we all have gone through some disappointments with Jesus and will go through some more. Jesus says that we will.
 - Yet, he is calling us to not turn away from him because of those disappointments.
 - Have you fallen away because of your disappointments? If so, know that Jesus is still the Messiah and he is still good. He just has something beyond what you can see. He has answers that you aren't ready for yet. He has expectations that are beyond your expectations.
 - Trust that ugly can turn into beauty. Trust in him as your all in all and be held.