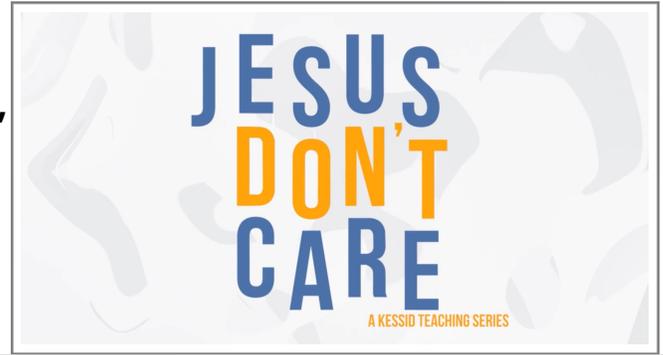


"JESUS DON'T CARE ABOUT NICE"

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Speaker: Danny Clinton



Who do you think of when you think of the word "nice"?

- Gandhi, Mother Theresa... How about Jesus?
- Most artists' renditions portray Jesus as the sweetest, nicest-looking white man, usually accompanied by lambs or children.

The Bible states that "Jesus is the Lamb of God"

- But for many, this has turned into less about the sacrifice He made for us all and more of a personality type.
- When many of us think about Jesus, we think of Him in this "Sheepish," "Lamby" way... Soft and pliable, always acquiescing to the desires of others.
- And so, we say things like, "Jesus is all about Love," and all He wants to do is, "meet people where they were at," so He can, "listen and not judge."
- To an extent, Jesus was all about those things throughout His earthly ministry, but I'd also like to add that for much of the time...

"Jesus Christ was not a nice person."

You may say, "Whoa, whoa Danny! Hold On!"

- What about all that "God is love" stuff? 1 Corinthians 13 describes who God and so who Jesus is!
- You're right... Great argument! Let's read it! (Vs) 1st Cor. 13:4-8a – "...Love never ends."
- **Question:** So... Did anyone see "Nice" on the list?
- **Secular Def:** "Nice: Pleasant; agreeable; satisfactory." Niceness is often more focused on outward consequences and a desire to not ruffle feathers and so minimize conflict.
- Does this sound like Jesus?

Most of us know the story of Jesus and the money changers in the temple...

They were extorting people in the name of God.

- Jesus goes and makes a whip... Makes one!
- Do you know how long it takes to make a whip? Me either... "But more than a minute!" – Jesus had to plan this event!
- It's clear in this passage that in typical prophetic fashion, Jesus was being dramatic.

- He was making a scene! He had had it, and people were going to know it.

But this isn't the passage I want to spend time in today...

- Instead, I want to read to you one of the "Rudest" passages in the Bible.
- In Luke Ch. 11, Jesus pronounces six "woes" on the religious and political leaders of His day...

Def: A "woe" is an exclamation of grief, similar to what is expressed by the word *alas*.

- In pronouncing woes, Jesus was prophesying judgment on the religious elite who were guilty of hypocrisy among other sins. (Vs) Luke 11:37-42 – "While Jesus was speaking..."

The first Woe is the... "Woe of Treasure"

- It's an absurd picture—these socially powerful men gathered around a scale, removing a precise portion of costly garden herbs.
- He points out publicly that those hearts that cared deeply about the weight of mint cared little for God or neighbor.
- JESUS IS ASKING: Where in your life are you weighing the wrong thing?

"Woe of Reputation"

(Vs) Luke 11:43 – "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces."

- As often happens with those in high positions, the Pharisees twisted the honor due to them as leaders into a hunger for praise...
- They were eager for people to flatter them and exalt them in religious and social settings.
- JESUS IS ASKING: Where in your life are you seeking your own praise and adoration?

"Woe of Uncleanness"

- This is the most severe woe to the Pharisees: (Vs) Luke 11:44 – "Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."
- According to Jewish law, anyone who came into contact with a dead body or a grave was unclean... Since Pharisees were devoted to ceremonial cleanness, Jesus's image of them was horrifying!
- JESUS IS ASKING: Where in your life are you refusing His help, and so remaining in your own stained and soiled conditions?

"Woe of Oppression"

(Vs) Luke 11:45-46 – One of the lawyers answered Him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." 46 And He said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers."

- After the first three woes, Jesus focused on the lawyers in the crowd. It's easy to see Jesus on the opposite side of this coin:
- He spoke to it specifically when He said... (Vs) *Matthew 11:28-30* – “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
- JESUS IS ASKING: Whose burden are you making heavier, and whose are you making lighter?

“Woe of Hard Heartedness”

- This fifth woe is the hardest of the six to decipher...

(Vs) Luke 11:47-51 – “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.”

- All the law and prophets pointed to Jesus, and the lawyers, who were supposed to be experts in the Scriptures, ignored these clearly marked signposts...
- Jesus condemns them of purposely missing what it says and so, building upon what their fathers had also done, rejecting the Prophets of God.
- JESUS IS ASKING: Where in your life are you ignoring my teachings and ways?

Lastly, “Woe of Knowledge”

(Vs) Luke 11:52 – “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.”

- The Key of Knowledge is... “Understanding the nature and will of God.”
- What is the goal of Scripture if not to point people to God?
- Jesus called people to follow Him and sought His Father’s presence. He wanted the door to His Father’s house flung open for many.
- Jesus used the key of knowledge to bring people to God, not abuse them.
- JESUS IS ASKING: What have I taught you that you should be teaching others?

So... How’s Jesus’ “niceabilty” score doing?

- The passage ends like this... (Vs) *Luke 11:53-54* – “As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press Him hard and to provoke Him to speak about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for Him, to catch Him in something He might say.”

- Jesus scores a "Let's Murder Him" by the end of this conversation.

He wasn't the kind of Savior they were expecting and wanted...

- And let's just face it! If we aren't careful, we can find ourselves believing in whatever kind of Jesus we want...
 - If we want a violent Jesus who's going to turn up at the End of Days, to lay waste to everyone who isn't on our team, then that's what we're going to see in the Bible. If we want 'Lamby' Jesus who's about nothing but pliability and softness, then we'll probably see that Jesus in the text.
 - If we want a "nice" Jesus who would never offend or do anything disagreeable, we will see mainly that.
- I, for one believe the Bible proclaims a Jesus who was many things... He was part Jewish mystic, part healer, part socio-political agitator, part wisdom teacher, and part movement founder, and this...

"Jesus wasn't nice — He was kind."

- **Def:** "Kindness comes from inside, and expresses itself through a clear love for others and a desire for their well-being."
- And this was distasteful to those who held all the power... This scenario is still a large part of the Christian legacy!
- Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is call out what's not right! Meaning sometimes the most Jesus' thing to do is stand your ground and stand up for the truth, even if it's not going to make you very popular!

Closing Challenge:

- **Think about it...** "How can we claim to love others if we aren't willing to challenge the very situations and systems that oppress those 'others?'"
- If we really want to be like Jesus, we can't settle for "nice."
- We aren't called to just be "nice" to people, but to be kind, by lending a helping hand or sitting in relationship with them even when we disagree.
- We are called to be brave, by standing up for righteousness, and not allowing our desire for approval, or aversion to conflict, keep us from speaking up and doing what needs to be done.

Let us not be nice... Let us be kind... Let us be like Jesus.