



Why Jesus? Part 1

April 7, 2024

“Why Jesus?” - A series about sharing our faith stories about why we follow Jesus and the difference he makes in our lives.

When we go to share our faith, often we often make these three arguments::

1. Just try my church - it's better, I promise
2. Believe what the Bible says because it's the ultimate source of truth
3. Adopt my theology and worldview because it's clearly the best

While usually well-intentioned, these arguments usually fall flat with those who are not already following Jesus. When sharing your faith, do not start with “why church?”, “why the Bible?”, or “why this worldview?”... **start with “Why Jesus”.**

Many people walk away from faith because:

1. Church is boring
2. Christianity seems like an impossible list of requirements
3. Christians often don't act very much like Jesus

Why Jesus?

Jesus wasn't anything like his worst followers today would have us believe. He healed the sick, forgave sins, hung out with sinners, blessed everyone including women and foreigners, called out hypocrisy among the religious, and exposed corruption. And for that, the super uptight, legalistic, judgmental religious folks like the Pharisees ***hated Jesus***.

The Prodigal Son (and older brother)

Luke 15:1-2, 11-32 (NRSV)

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. **2** And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. **13** A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. **14** When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. **16** He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. **17** But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.' **20** So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. **21** Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, **24** for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate."

25 "Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. **27** He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' **28** Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. **29** But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' **31** Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found'".

If God is like Jesus, then that is a god worth following

According to Jesus in this story, God's love was never conditional on being "good enough". If we have seen God because we've seen Jesus (John 14:9), then we know that God:

1. Blesses the people that the rest of us try to avoid
 2. Leads with forgiveness and mercy, not condemnation and judgment
 3. Loves us unconditionally and never needs us to be "good enough"
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REFLECTIONS

1. Have there been times in your life when you set aside your faith and stopped going to church? If so, what were your reasons?
2. Have you ever tried to share your faith with someone else? What went well? What didn't go well?
3. Read Luke 15:1-2, 11-32. Does the meaning of the story change for you when reading the context in verses 1-2 and the conclusion of the story in verses 25-32? Why or why not?
4. In light of this parable, what do you hear about God's character? How do you see people sometimes misrepresent God's character?
5. How might you tell your own story to others and answer the question: "Why Jesus?"