

Bite Me! I Taste Just Like Jesus

Pastor Kellen Eberling

Prep: buy one of every kind of fruit you can get your hands on from Dillon's.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Matthew 5:10-11

Listen, I believe God's Word speaks for itself. However, I think God would like to use me to broaden your perspective of His Word this morning, and to take us all, myself included, to a new level of living God-centered lives. I'm not capable of doing that, though, without God, so let's ask Him to guide us.

Example: One time, I was in my home, and I was really starting to get hungry, and it was a long ways until dinner. So I went to the refrigerator and picked out a nice-looking apple. No bruises, no nicks or scratches, this apple looked like it was fresh off of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

When I bit into it, it was dark dark brown, and there was a suspicious little hole that I decided it would be better not to investigate so I didn't vomit uncontrollably.

Another time i picked a grape out of a bowl on someone's table and almost choked on it because – what do you think – it was a plastic decoration.

Have you ever bitten into a fruit, expecting it to be sweet, and been greeted by exactly the opposite? Do you remember that moment suddenly your mouth is completely full of rotting fruit, and you have to decide whether to swallow or spit it out? Or better yet, have you ever picked up a piece of fruit from someone's table and realized it was made of plastic? Do you remember that moment of disappointment and the anger and frustration of feeling betrayed by a piece of fruit?

Well, let me just say, that explains EXACTLY why America responds to the Christian church with a sour look on their face.

The time that we're supposed to look the most like Jesus is when we're persecuted for doing right.

"His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."

Acts 5:40-42

3 Steps To Right Responses in Persecution

1. **Don't try to look like a fruit that you're not. (misc. notes – time you went to eat your cream of wheat and accidentally used salt instead of sugar)**

Now, you need to know that this is something that I've done horrible with. God really convicted me of this as I was preparing this message. You all need to know that when this church hired me, it hired a highly imperfect youth pastor.

2. **Train yourself for success**

I think we'd all be a lot happier if we realize that fruit is meant to be enjoyed by being eaten. If fruit sits, it goes bad. We have to realize people are going to bite us whether we like it or not.

Malori Aslan Smith

- Mark came and led students in worship in hotel room.
- The way that you respond to the sin of others will dictate the way that they will respond to your sin.
- Funny, when we're driving, we always expect better treatment than we give.

3. **Become someone who loves other people**

Something Pastor Tony told me one time really helped me to love others more... "Don't ever be shocked when sinners sin."

Listen, the best chance people will ever get to see Christ in you is when they just took a bite out of you.

One time I met someone, and as we began to talk I asked what he believed about God, and he said he was a Satanist.

Can you see Jesus responding to people that way? Who did he spend time with? The swindlers. The perverts. The prostitutes. Can you see Him saying "hey, what do you do for a living?" 'Oh, I'm a prostitute.' and Him running for the door?

Do you remember what Stephen said when soldiers were beginning to stone him? "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" It was almost the exact same words that Jesus Himself spoke as the Roman soldiers began to crucify Him... "FORGIVE THEM, GOD, BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING!"

Pastor Neil shared something last week that I want to share again, because it illustrates the words of Christ far too well, and I'm not sure everyone here knew about the story to begin with. So here's the full story:

Amish people

This may sound horrible, but I thank God that this happened to people who loved Jesus Christ.

So let's be honest today: how are we doing with this?