

Jesus 2020

The logo for 'Jesus 2020' is composed of several elements. The word 'Jesus' is written in a large, white, rounded font with a thick blue outline. To the right of 'Jesus' is a blue square containing a white cross. To the right of the cross are three horizontal red stripes. To the right of the stripes is the year '2020', written in a white, rounded font with a thick red outline.

Christ Church Fall 2020 Sermon Series Study Guide

Welcome to Jesus 2020!

When I have shared that we will be doing a message series and small group material based on faith and politics, I usually get one of two responses. The first is “oh no”. These people hold tightly to the axiom that there are two things you never talk about with people close to you: faith and politics, and I will do both in one series. The other response is “this should be fun”. And I am not sure if these people are really interested in faith and politics or they can’t wait to see me sink like the Titanic.

Faith and politics bring up many thoughts, ideas and emotions. These topics are often very personal and can lead to very passionate expressions of belief. In our current culture this will lead to arguments, hurt feelings and division. This, of course, is not my goal.

My goal is to offer us an opportunity to learn and grow as people of faith who are involved in politics.

I will start by confessing the connection between faith and politics is a newer one for me. For many years I stayed away from politics because I was “a man of faith”. Jesus is my king; I don’t care who lives in that white house. I felt like politics took my attention away from living my faith. I have since begun to realize that political actions deeply affect people. I want those effects to be positive and life-giving because of my faith. So it is better to pay attention to how these two interact than trying to pretend they do not affect each other. So let’s talk about it.

As an opportunity to learn and grow, the focus of this series is not to change anyone’s mind or political stance. I will not be telling you who to vote for. My hope is that we will learn to ask good questions, seek God’s answers, and be willing to have conversations that do not belittle or demean each other in the process. I have learned that good Christians can disagree, and we can show each other grace.

We will attempt to see how faith and politics can work together and how we, as followers of Jesus, can grow in living our faith even in a political season. So prepare yourself to be challenged, to hear different perspectives and, through it all, to be loved because we serve the God of love and grace and not a human being in a political party.

May God grant us grace as we wrestle with tough situations, always looking for his kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Pastor James

Administrative Details:

- If you need a study guide, you can find the study online by clicking on the Jesus 2020 page at christchurchdavenport.org
- If you miss a message you can head on over to our YouTube page (subscribe and you'll get alerted when new messages are posted) or visit christchurchdavenport.org/media
- Review or establish your group's rules/guidelines

Study Format:

Each week, is broken into three segments:

- Experience God's Love
 - This segment always asks what from the previous Sunday's message stood out to you. It's a good idea to fill it out when you're listening to the message.
 - For Weeks 2-6, there's a second question under this category that will ask you how the previous week's Revive the World project went.
- Develop Relationships
 - This segment focuses on reading scripture and giving you the opportunity to answer questions that are designed to help you understand different perspectives of the scripture.
 - Discuss these questions in your group.
 - There are four days of scripture readings and questions for each week.
 - Questions vary in type, depth, and challenge. It's okay not to have all the answers.
 - Each day ends with a Prayer Exercise. Prayer Exercises are a way to apply what you learned that day into prayer. Group leaders will guide you through at least one Prayer Exercise each time you meet.
- Revive the World
 - This segment focuses on taking the main point from the week and applying it into action in some format.
 - In weeks 2-6, you'll be asked about your experience applying the Revive the World activity from the previous week.
 - Some activities will be individual, others will be for pairs or your whole small group.

Week 1

 Open in Prayer

Experience God's Love:

- A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

Develop Relationships:

Day 1:

Read: Romans 13:1-8

- A. What do you feel is the purpose of the government?

B. What does this passage tell you about those in authority?

C. What are the two reasons for submitting to the government listed in verse 5? Which one do you think you are most closely aligned to?

D. We are to owe nothing to anyone, except this (see Mark 12:29-31)? What is it? How do you fulfill the law?

Prayer Exercise: Prayerfully contemplate today's passage and the connection between submitting to our government and fulfilling the law through love. Write down what comes to you during your prayer time.

Day 3:

Read: Titus 3:1-2

- A. What commands are in these two short verses?
- B. Given our volatile political climate, which of these commands listed do you find the most difficult to follow?
- C. In what ways can you exercise your “be peaceful and considerate” muscle when you encounter those who are on the opposite side of the political spectrum from you? How can you still be peaceful and considerate when the person you’re encountering isn’t exhibiting those traits?

Prayer Exercise: Refer back to question B. What command did you find the most difficult to follow. Find a scripture to help support you as you work towards growing in that area.

Prayer Exercise: Pray each line of the Lord's Prayer with our nation in mind or write your own prayer for our nation using the Lord's Prayer as a model.

--OR--

Ultimately, this prayer, the Lord's Prayer, asks for God's kingdom to come to be on this earth. We know that our world is imperfect and no human being will ever be able to build a kingdom that could compare to God's. We are designed to long for a perfect government, and we are each trying to create it when we vote, when we express our political views and when we look to elected leaders to lead us. We cannot create that perfect government, only God can. Today thank God that we get to be a part of His perfect kingdom. Pray for patience with our peers and elected leaders.

Revive the World:

This week, commit to finding out more about each candidate's views on the topics you feel are important to God, so you can be actively involved in bringing about God's kingdom here on earth.

 Group Prayer Requests:

Week 2

 Open in Prayer

Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Describe what it was like to research different candidates' platforms.

Day 3:

Read: 2 Timothy 2:22-26

- A. In today's political climate, is it easy or hard to follow the instructions in this passage? Why or why not? In what ways can you practice following these instructions?
- B. What guidance is given here for working with people that we oppose/disagree with?
Leader Note: this doesn't mean that everyone you disagree with is "working for the devil". Sometimes good Christians disagree.
- C. How open are you to the idea that you might be the one who needs to repent? How difficult is it for you to say "I might be wrong"?
- D. What is the desired outcome of Paul's instructions here?

Prayer Exercise: In Matthew 7, we learn that it is important to examine ourselves before policing other people. Consider where you need to be patient and open to learning, repenting, and moving in a new direction.

Day 4:

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

- A. Based on this passage, what do you think was going on in the Philippian church? What kind of conflict do you think they were having?

- B. What does Paul say would make his joy complete?

- C. How can you look towards your own interests and simultaneously the interests of others? How does balancing your interests and the interests of others shape your voting decisions?

Prayer Exercise: As Christians, we are to have the same humble mind-set as Jesus to be an encouragement and comforter. Prayerfully consider ways you can follow Jesus' example in comforting and encouraging those around you. If you haven't accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, what is holding you back? If you're ready to make that commitment, spend time in prayer offering your life to Jesus and asking him to come into your heart. Your small group leader or Pastor James can help you with any questions you may have.

Revive the World:

Make an effort this week to be unified with your small group. Find an activity to serve together that brings the love of Christ to our community. Use the attached list to serve alongside each other.

 Group Prayer Requests:

Week 3

 Open in Prayer

Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Share how you saw God working as you served alongside your group members.

Develop Relationships:

Day 1:

Read: Micah 6:6-8, Matthew 25:31-46

- A. What three things does the Lord require of his people (Micah 6:8)? Explain them in your own words.

- B. How do you see justice, mercy, and faith in your political candidates? (Example: One may look at the death penalty as a way to see a candidate's views on justice.)

- C. Describe the difference between the people labeled as "sheep" and "goats".

- D. What does verse 40 mean to you?

- E. How can you apply these verses to your involvement in the community? And, our church's involvement in our community?

Prayer Exercise: Pray God would show you where your actions towards others might be lacking mercy, justice, or humility and ask Him to change your heart.

Day 2:

Read: Zechariah 7:9-10, Luke 11:42

A. Read Zechariah 7:9-10. What groups of people does God seem especially concerned about in these verses? Who would these people be today?

B. What group do you feel passionate about serving?

C. Read Luke 11:42. What are the Pharisees being chastised for here?

D. How does the church focus on trivial things, neglecting the important issues? Our government?

Prayer Exercise: Ask God to fill your heart with a desire for justice, mercy and compassion for all people (including those squirrely politicians you may disagree with). Ask God to open your eyes, ears, heart, and mind to better help the widow, the fatherless, the foreigners, the poor, and the people you would include today.

Day 3:

Read: Philippians 2:12-18

- A. What do you think Paul means when he says “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”? Leader Note: This is not salvation by works, but the continual process of sanctification to become like Jesus. “Fear and trembling”: The proper sense of awe and responsibility; humility and dependence (Phillips Translation)
- B. While you work, what are you to refrain from doing (see v. 14)? Why?
- C. How does this passage shape the way you respond to people who disagree with you or want to solve a problem differently than you?

Prayer Exercise: Think of people who have shown you how to disagree gracefully. How, then, can you grow to do everything without arguing and grumbling? Ask God to help you learn, grow, and become more like Him and shine like stars.

Day 4:

Read: Deuteronomy 15:7-11

- A. What is God's instruction on treating the poor?

- B. How do you treat those less fortunate than you?

- C. When have you been on the receiving end of help? What was the person's attitude that helped you? How did it make you feel?

Prayer Exercise: Think about people who have helped you meet physical or financial needs and/or people you have been able to help. Thank God for his provision and ask him to show you how you can bless someone this week.

Revive the World:

Look at the Day 4 prayer exercise. Take action on blessing someone this week and be prepared to share with your group how it went.

 Group Prayer Requests:

Week 4

 Open in Prayer

Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Share with your group what it was like to bless someone this week.

Develop Relationships:

Day 1:

Read: Luke 10:25-37

- A. What excuses do you think the Priest and Levite might have made not to help the man?
When are you tempted to behave like the Priest and the Levite?

- B. What do you think Jesus was teaching by telling a story about a Samaritan helping a Jewish man?

- C. How have you helped a 'neighbor' through a health crisis or how has someone helped you?

Prayer Exercise: Examine your heart. Do you respond more like the Priest and Levite or are you a Good Samaritan. Today ask God to help shape your responses to those in need to be more Christ-like in nature.

Day 2:

Read: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- A. How does knowing your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit inspire you to make changes that will make your temple/home healthier?

- B. What goals might we set to make improvements to our temple: Physically? Mentally? Spiritually?

- C. What do you think honoring God with your body looks like?

Prayer Exercise: Pick a goal from Question B to work on this week. Ask a friend to pray for you and hold you accountable.

Revive the World:

Ask God to give you the opportunity to be a good neighbor this week and take action. Be prepared to share with your small group how it went.

 Group Prayer Requests:

Week 5

 Open in Prayer

Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Share with your small group what it was like to be a good neighbor this week.

Day 3:

Read: Matthew 20:1-16

A. How would you have felt about your wage...?

a. ...Being one of the first workers hired?

b. ...Being one of the last workers hired?

B. Do you feel like the owner was wrong in how he paid the workers? Why or why not?

C. What do you see as issues today regarding pay inequality?

D. What does verse 16 mean to you?

Prayer Exercise: Think about a time when someone showed you unexpected generosity and thank God for that person--and let that person know again how meaningful that was to you. Pray about how God wants you to show generosity.

Day 4:

Read: James 2:14-24

A. What are these verses telling us about faith?

B. How have you seen faith expressed in the deeds of others recently?
How do you see faith expressed in the action/programs of Christ Church? Where do you feel we could do more?

C. How have you seen your faith grow as you put it into action?

Prayer Exercise: Spend time in conversation and prayer with God. Examine your balance between faith and action. Ask God to help your faith bubble into action that brings Him glory.

Revive the World:

This week, we looked at stories of money, entitlement, wages, and the balance between faith and action. Where might you make a difference? Take an active role in engaging in ministry to the impoverished this week.

 Group Prayer Requests:

Week 6

 Open in Prayer

Brief Review of last week's lesson:

Experience God's Love:

A. What spoke to you in the sermon?

B. Where did you find a place to serve the impoverished last week?

Develop:

Day 1:

Read: Luke 4:16-32

- A. What five purposes for Jesus (and subsequently his church) are listed in the passage? How does Jesus fulfill these?

- B. How do these purposes sound like campaign promises? What promises do candidates make today? How are many of these fulfilled?

- C. What did Jesus say after he read from the scroll? How did Jesus fulfill these prophecies?

Prayer Exercise: Consider the five purposes listed in the passage. How do those purposes move and stir your heart? Pray daily this week for God's wisdom and discernment in selecting candidates that connect with these purposes in our upcoming election.

Day 2:

Read: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

- A. For who does Paul call the church to pray? Who would these people be in our country?

- B. What reasons did Paul give for praying for those in authority?

- C. What does it look like to pray for a leader you agree with? What about the one you disagree with? What things are similar or dissimilar?

- D. What does a mediator do? How is Christ the believer's mediator? How can we as Christians be mediators in these unsettled times?

Prayer Exercise: Today, spend time in prayer for the leadership of our city, county, state, and country. Pray for God's will to be done through them.

Revive the World:

1 Timothy 2:8 says “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.” Share our prayer folder with friends and neighbors and ask them to join in you praying for our nation, individually and corporately.

💬 Discuss what you group will do/study next.

 Group Prayer Requests: