

Choosing Our Masks

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[0 : 0 0] Well, this is the third Sunday in our Coming Back to Jesus series, and it's a special Sunday because Cadren Payton is going to deliver most of the message this Sunday. I'm just going to come up! and kind of close this at the end. But Cadren's been working on this sermon for months. He started coming to our church a few years ago, and he was the first person that I led to Christ here at this church. He came down front. Just, I had only been here a couple months, maybe, and he raised his hand at the end of the sermon. By the way, that's why I always ask that question at the end of the sermon. How many of you would like to give your life to Jesus today? Cadren raised his hand, came down front. We talked down front. He was ready. He'd been coming and listening, and he was ready to put his faith in Christ. And so he did that that day, baptized him not long after that, and he has been growing. Man, it was last year, I believe. Wasn't it last year when you came down and said you felt like God was maybe calling you? Yeah. Last year, he came down front and said it felt like God was maybe leading him to go into ministry himself. So that was a really, really cool thing. I wanted to give him an opportunity on this youth-led Sunday to break him in a little bit. Y'all be nice to him, okay? It's his first time preaching in front of a church like this, but he's been studying this for months. He sent me this kind of framework of a sermon quite some time ago. We've been going back and forth on it. We met last week and went over it, and I'm excited. This is going to be great. And it fit right into what we've been talking about with coming back to Jesus. So, Kadron, it's all yours, man.

So, how many of y'all find yourself acting differently around different groups of people? Maybe they have different expectations, different personalities, different jokes, different just pretty much everything. So, we often put on masks as we change ourselves to fit different groups.

that have all those different things. Even though we change, someone never changes, and that's Jesus. So, the question we have to answer as Christians is, who is Jesus?

Jesus. The text for this sermon is Matthew 16, 13 through 16. When Jesus came to the region of, I don't know how to say that.

Cesar of Philippi, he asked his disciples, who do you people say the son of man is? They replied, some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

[2 : 3 9] But who, but what about you? He asked, who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, you are the Messiah, the son of the living God. So, who is Jesus? He is God himself. In John 10 through 30, he says, I and Father, oh, yeah, forget about that. God himself. He says, I and Father are one. A lot of people like to say that Jesus never went, oh, I'm God.

That's clearly, he clearly said it. So, another thing that he is, he is the word of God. In John 1, 1, it says, in the beginning was the word, and the word was God, and the word was with God, and the word was God.

Keep messing up. See, he's not this word, but he's the word. He's perfect.

In Deuteronomy 32, 4, it says, he is the rock. His works are perfect, and all, in all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. It's also all loving, which is, sometimes it's hard to see that.

[4 : 0 2] And John 4, 8, whoever does not love, does not know God because God is love. So, that's pretty self-explanatory.

He's all kind. Pretty sure we used this not too long ago. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest in your souls.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. So, basically what he's saying is, if you choose him, it's not going to be easy through life.

But after life, you will go somewhere much better than we could even fathom. So, he's also slow to anger and quick to love.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He's our source of hope. In Romans, this is one of my favorite books, personally.

[5 : 12] It says, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. He's understanding and just.

In Psalm, see, Psalm is the only book that you can just say 147, because there's only one book that has 147. Great is our Lord and mighty in power.

His understanding has no limit. The Lord sustains the humble, but casts the wicked to the ground.

And last but not least, definitely not least, all powerful.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord. The Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. What that basically means is that Alpha was the first letter in, I think, the Greek alphabet.

And then the last one is Omega. So, he's basically restating the first and the last. So, how do you treat Jesus in your life? Maybe you treat him like a genie.

[6 : 21] Maybe you go, okay, so I'll give up this thing if you gave me this thing in return. Maybe I'll give up my love for money if you'll give me more of it.

Maybe he's an ATM of forgiveness. You run around, you go sin, and you're like, okay, Jesus, forgiveness card. Thank you, I'm going to go sin again. Which is not anything like him.

He's much more than either of those. How you should treat Jesus is your heavenly counselor. You can say anything to him. And unlike other people, he won't judge.

And you can also treat him as a faithful friend. Because throughout all the letdowns that you're going to go through in life, Jesus will never let you down.

Maybe your spouse lets you down, says something rude or unkind, and you just can't deal with that. Jesus is the only person who would never do that.

[7 : 34] Ever. Ever. So, are you choosing your masks, or are you choosing Jesus? Listen, we heard a lot of scripture today.

And I think if you are going to make a mistake, it's using too much scripture. Because you're never going to go wrong going back to the scripture that much. So, I'm glad that Cajoran led us on a journey through the scriptures of who is Jesus.

He said he was God himself. He said he was the word of God. He said he's perfect. He's all loving. He's all kind. He's slow to anger. Quick to love. Our source of hope. Understanding and just.

And he's all powerful. Isn't it great that we serve a God who is all of those things? And we could have added a hundred more. We didn't want to keep you here that long. Cajoran, you did a great job, man.

Thank you for sharing what the Lord put on your heart. I love how he ended it. And we, look, it took me a long time to get used to using this thing.

[8 : 47] So, he skipped over that first slide. But we've got it right up here at the end. And it's the masks that we put on, right? You never have to put on a mask with Jesus. He never puts on a mask with us.

He's always the same. He's all those things. He's always faithful, always kind, always powerful, always God with every one of us. So, we might change who we are around others.

And people might say, well, who's Cajoran? Well, it depends on who you ask. Who's Sam? Well, it depends on who you ask. Who are any of you? Well, it depends on who you ask. Sometimes we'll act differently around different people, right?

Jesus always treats us the same. He always shows the same amount of grace, the same amount of love, the same amount of forgiveness toward every single one of us.

I think the point that the Lord, the Holy Spirit made through Cajoran today was coming back to Jesus. Who are you going to choose?

[9 : 54] Are you going to look at him? Cajoran, I'm going to go back a couple slides here, man. I'm going to turn this thing back on. How do we treat Jesus?

He said, do we treat him like a genie? I thought that was so good. An ATM of forgiveness. Oh, need my forgiveness card. Forgetting the price that that forgiveness cost on the cross of Calvary.

And then how should we treat Jesus? And we remember that he is our wonderful counselor. He's our faithful friend. He's the one who always is there, always listens.

But how often do we ignore that? So I think the challenge from and the application from the sermon today is, what are you doing with Jesus?

Yes, he is all these things. He's all loving. He's all faithful. And we would all say, yep, I believe he's all that. But how often do we then turn to him and say, God, be my counselor.

[10:57] Be my friend today. We'll turn to all kinds of other sources, won't we? We'll turn to every other source that cannot be all those things that we know God is.

So instead, I pray that God and the reminders from the scriptures today, where God claims to be all those things that Cadran told us he was, that that reminds us exactly who the mighty God is that we serve.

And that he did humble himself. And he did become flesh. And he did come down. And as we learned last Sunday, he wants to meet you in the morning. He wants to have breakfast with you. He wants to meet you in the evening. He wants to meet you at prayer. He wants to meet you in the church. He wants to meet you at your work. He wants to meet you wherever you are.

Will you choose Jesus? You don't have to put on a mask with him. Would you bow your heads in prayer? I have loved seeing these young people up here serving God actively on this youth-led Sunday.

[12:04] Sunday. It's a bit of an unusual Sunday for us. And we're probably going to get out earlier than we should. Maybe y'all want to have youth-led Sunday every day, depending on what time we get out. But listen, in the last couple minutes we have remaining before we dismiss, I want to ask you, is God by his spirit calling you to a decision?

Maybe it was something from the sermon. Maybe it was something from one of the songs. The young people presented those songs beautifully. Berklee did such a wonderful job on that. I was singing along with Cam while he was playing the piano. Beautiful song, Oceans, singing about the ocean of God's love.

Maybe the Holy Spirit cut through the noise, the distractions in your heart and your mind, and he is prompting you to make some kind of decision before you walk out today.

Maybe somebody came in here thinking, man, these young people can't teach me anything. And then the Holy Spirit said, I'm going to use these young people to reveal something to your heart by my spirit.

[13:23] Whatever it is, would you be open to the Lord, remembering who exactly he is, what a wonderful God he is? I'm going to give you a chance to respond to that.

If there's somebody here today who says, I need to meet Jesus for the first time, just like Cadron did three years ago, say, I need to place my faith in Jesus once and for all.

I need to commit to be a follower of Christ. Today is going to be the day. Would you slip your hand up and I'd love to pray with you, talk with you. Thank you. Let me ask this question.

Is there something else that God is working on your heart about? And you just want to be open to him right now. And you say, I could use some prayer. I'll pray for you. We don't have to get into the specifics unless you'd like to come down and share something with me privately.

We can do that. But how many of you would say, I just need some prayer right now. Would you pray for me? Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Case I missed a hand, God sees every one of them.

[14:23] We're going to have a moment of quiet prayer. You can remain in your seat. Jared's playing on the piano. If you'd like to come down and kneel at the altar down front, have a quiet time alone with God, you can do that.

If you'd like somebody to pray with you, I'd be happy to do that. We can grab somebody else if you'd like. But for the next couple of minutes, let's let God do business with our hearts. Let's let God do that.

Let God do that. Let God do that. Amen. Amen.

God, we walk in here with masks sometimes. Pretend to be one thing. We know the truth about ourselves, but even when we lie to ourselves, you know the truth about us and you love us still.

You love us more than we can understand. I pray that whoever's hurting today, whoever's confused, whoever's fearful, whoever's prideful, whoever's about to make a wrong decision, whoever's struggling, that they would run to Jesus.

[16:02] They would fly to Jesus and say, Jesus, you are the answer. Lead me back to your arms. Lead me back to your word. Lead me back to the scriptures. Lead me back to the things you taught

us.

Lead me back to prayer. Lead me back to faithfulness. Lead me back to the church, the body of Christ. Lead me back to the way of Jesus. I pray that you would intervene in miraculous ways. That by your power, you would make yourself known to every heart that is hurting, every heart that needs you right now. We'll give you all the glory for it. It's in Jesus' name we pray.
Amen. Amen.