

Apathy

Prayer

Praise God!

This morning I want to discuss Apathy...

Does anybody really care what I talk about this morning? Does it matter what we discuss as long as we put in our time and do our duty and go through another sermon?

How about that person next to you... When you said hello, how are you? This morning, did you actually care how they were?

Now the good news is that many of us actually really do care and that is so great! I am thankful for every person here today. Any I am delighted when we reflect the love of Christ!

The world has a negative impression of the Christian church and part of the reason for that is Apathy. Instead of our just being offended, I believe we need to take a look at some of the arguments that we hear and weigh them out. One such argument is that the Church is an inward focused social club that doesn't really care anyway. In short, we as the Christian church are accused of being apathetic.

To be fair, when I consider the arguments, I don't think it is just the church that has a problem with apathy but rather that our culture has become apathetic.

This is a hard topic but today, I will be discussing the spirit of apathy and its impacts.

The Problem

A huge problem in our society today is apathy. It occurs when we really don't care one way or the other.

Let's start with a working definition of what apathy actually is:

Apathy is a lack of feeling, emotion, interest, or concern. It is a state of indifference, or the suppression of emotions such as concern, excitement, motivation, and/or passion.

In the Christian church we need to shake off the apathy of the world and embrace a higher standard. We cannot allow ourselves to become like the church in Laodicea.

Rev 3:15 NIV says:

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth."

Let us take up the banner of Love, represent our God well and care for those around us. It is not enough to just do a good deed. God looks at the intentions we have in our hearts. In short, Jesus expects us to care.

You see we face a very real adversary who utilizes many different weapons to try to bring down the church. One very useful weapon in his arsenal is the spirit of Apathy.

Have you noticed that some people just aren't as engaged in things as they used to be? Politics is a huge one... many people don't even vote because they feel it won't make any difference. You will often hear things like: "Nothing Changes anyway, so why bother?" Many times horrible things are done and no one cares until it affects them personally.

Take for instance the issues right now with ISIS. Children are being killed and their heads are being put on pikes. Women are raped and their husbands forced to watch. Right now real people are dying, yet we have been conditioned and desensitized to all the pain.

Now don't get me wrong many of us here care a great deal.

Now ask yourself this question... If it was my wife or my child or my husband would I feel the same way?

We become apathetic because we feel there is nothing we can do about a situation or we feel that nothing we do will make any difference. Apathy is insidious and destructive. It causes depression, it sucks the energy out of you; It destroys enthusiasm.

The simple fact is that Apathy can grab ahold of areas of our lives and before we even realize it, apathy will keep us from doing anything or feeling anything.

I wracked my brain to come up with something good to say about Apathy?

Here is the only thing I came up with... Apathy is great because you don't have to exert yourself to show you are sincere about it

Examples:

Niagara

A gentleman relates how, in his boyhood days, he walked nearly seven hundred miles to see Niagara Falls. When he was about seven miles from the spot he thought he had heard what might be the thunder of the great cataract, and inquired of a man who was working on the roof if it were so. The man replied that it might be, but he could not say since he had never been there. (Al Bryant)

Apathy will cause us to miss amazing opportunities that may be right in front of us...

Tae Kwon Do

When I was a martial arts instructor. I wanted to make my classes available to everyone around me. I wanted to simply help people. I rented a room from the chamber of Commerce and for \$10 a month you could take Tae Kwon Do classes...

People showed up on an inconsistent basis. They did not have their uniforms or if they did they were not laundered. People came late to class. When given homework techniques to practice, it was seldom done. In short, it cost them little and they valued it little. People became apathetic to the class.

I went to the bank, got a facility and put in new equipment. I ordered a supply of uniforms and instituted a policy that they must be worn and clean. I charged \$80-\$100 per month. My schools grew to over 300 students in 3 years.

Why because it started to cost them something personally and so they valued the classes. The material had not changed. The lessons had not changed. The instructor had not changed.

Apathy will cost us more than we can imagine and cause us to miss out on blessings...

Music

There was a famous classical violinist who was performing at Carnegie hall. Tickets were over \$200 each to hear this master musician perform. During the day the violinist went down to the subway and set up his violin case and played the exact same concert that he would play again that evening. He made a few dollars but most people simply walked on by without a second thought. At the concert he told his audience what he had done and that perhaps some of those who walked by were in attendance tonight. His point to the audience was to not be apathetic to those who are around you. You missed out on the concert in the subway because it didn't cost you anything. There are many great musicians and talents in this world that nobody even notices, because we simply don't care to open our eyes.

Apathy will cause us to only value that which costs us personally...

Wright Brothers' Hometown

Orville and Wilbur Wright had tried repeatedly to fly a heavier-than-air craft. Finally one December day, off the sand dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, they did what man had never done before. They actually flew! Elated, they wired their sister Katherine, “We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas.”

Hastily she ran down the street, shoved the telegram—the news scoop of the century—at the city editor of the local paper. He read it carefully and smiled, “Well, well! How nice the boys will be home for Christmas!” (Maxwell Droke)

Apathy will cause us to get our eyes on the wrong things...

Pelican Feast

There was once a flock of pelicans that happily fished off the coast of California. One day, a fishing company began cleaning their catch at a nearby dock, where it was convenient for them to cast the discarded fish scraps into the water. The pelicans, drawn to the daily ritual, soon gave up fishing for themselves and settled into a more domesticated existence. Life was pretty good for these pelicans, at least until the fishermen discovered that there was a market for fish scraps. Abruptly, the free meals ceased.

Despite this regrettable change of fortune, the pelicans continued to show up every day at meal-time, only to go away with empty stomachs. It wasn't long before the lack of sustenance began to take its toll. The unsightly appearance of the emaciated birds eventually drew the public's attention, and experts were called in to investigate the cause of their plight. For some unknown reason, the pelicans no longer seemed able to access the abundance of food that teemed just below them in the sea. After a thorough investigation, it was concluded that the pelicans were starving to death because they'd forgotten how to fish!

Have you ever heard of anything so absurd? Pelicans were made to fish. But they had forgotten who they were and what they were made to do. (Michael Dillon)

Apathy will cause us to loose focus and forget what we are here to do...

You see apathy is dangerous...

When a child of God doesn't remember who they are and why they are here, they suffer. When apathy robs us to the point where we suffer from this spiritual amnesia then doubt and fear can take hold of our lives. It will rob us, of the Joy and fullness of life in Christ Jesus. You have been given a purpose to fulfill and apathy will cause you to waste away.

Apathy can destroy marriages...

If your marriage becomes boring or routine, the marriage will lose its joy. At this point the marriage becomes lukewarm... not hot or cold...

See the parallel here with the bride of Christ:
Revelations 3:15,16

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of My mouth

At this point the Husband becomes totally indifferent to the needs and desires of his wife and she responds the same way. Next communication starts to break down and pretty soon. They are living in the same house but apathy has taken root. Housework, mundane activities are the order of the day. There is no celebration of each other. A spirit of indifference takes hold, selfishness takes root and pretty soon people begin to think... "I just don't love you anymore." With nothing being done, there is a danger of divorce.

Apathy is destructive to purpose...

As human beings God created us to care! Read Genesis we were destined to be his caretakers of this world. If we allow apathy to take hold then our lives lose their meaning. Our purpose is destroyed.

Many of our churches today have allowed apathy to turn them into inward focused fruitless social clubs.

Here is a statistic that will scare you... Did you know that if 10% of the Christians in North America were to contribute 10% of their income into feeding the hungry that almost 100% of the worlds hunger problems would be solved? So If 100% gave 1% there would be no more world hunger. Chew on that one for a while...

You know in psychology there is a term called Narcotizing Dysfunction. The concept was original asserted by the sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld. Narcotizing Dysfunction is the idea that; as we as a society and as individuals become exposed to more and more information, we subconsciously confuse knowing about a problem for doing something about it. We become concerned and informed but we don't do anything about it.

As a church when you hear a sermon or message, you are educated and informed. Is the modern church suffering from Narcotizing Dysfunction? Do we live in a state of perpetual concern about issues without ever actually doing anything about them? Do we have the faith in place without the works? Has the Christian church grown apathetic?

- I don't want to live a live of mundane existence.
- I don't want to live a life that is all talk and no action
- I don't want to miss the amazing opportunities that God has in store for me
- I don't want to only care about myself, I have a bigger heart than that
- I don't want to get my eyes on the wrong goals and objectives
- I don't want to forget why I am here

Eph. 5:14

For anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

Isa. 60:1

Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

Let us be ever vigilant against this insidious spirit that would seek to rob and destroy us...

I pray today that the Holy Spirit comes and breaks the spirit of Apathy that has taken up residence in our churches and in us. I pray that he brings back the motivation and the life we truly need.

Warning Signs of Apathy

- Your regular interests and hobbies don't feel interesting or fun anymore;
- You feel very unmotivated at work and your work performance starts to slip;
- Every time you think of acting on a goal or possible interest, you quickly lose steam;
- You allow yourself to spend a lot of time in front of the TV, surfing the net, shopping, or playing video games;
- You feel frustrated or embarrassed being around friends who have something interesting going on in their lives or you avoid them altogether;
- You fill your life with mindless tasks and busy work to keep from having to figure out what you really want in life;
- You're hearing comments from family and friends trying to "help you" get motivated;
- You are reading lots of self-help books without applying any of the help;
- You're eating too much and exercising too little.

We need to fight this thing...

So what do we do to prevent Apathy and how do we fix it if it is already with us?

We allow it to take root when we are:

- Self-Centered
- Worldly-minded
- Unthankful

Since it takes root when we are Self-Centered we need to focus on others not ourselves. Since it happens when we think in a worldly fashion, we need to study and understand what God thinks about things so we can approach them with a heavenly perspective and most of all, since it takes root when we are unthankful and ungrateful, we need to appreciate what we have and what God has done for us.

Here are ten steps that will help

- Get Perspective
 - Don't label yourself as Lazy, unmotivated, or anything that allows apathy to accept this state.
- Identify the Cause
 - Is this spiritual or natural?
 - Was there a specific event or hurt that is causing the apathetic feelings?
 - If you don't know pray
- Change what you can
 - If you could identify a hurt or event, don't bury it. Deal with it. Call on God. Call the Pastor. Call a friend.
 - If you can make it right do so.
- Avoid ritual
 - Shake up your schedule
 - Add new things into your life
 - Do things a different way
- Recharge
 - Plug into church events
 - Plug into your community
 - Plug into your friends
 - Find circumstances that energize and excite you and participate
 - Play worship music and soak
- Fight Un-thankfulness

- Make a list of what you are thankful for
- Think about what has been exciting and has brought you joy in the past
- Try to identify what it was that made you feel great and plug into it.
- Look at today
 - What little things can you do today that might reignite engagement and motivation
- The big picture
 - While the big picture can be daunting, don't let the enormity of what God is doing in the church stop you from doing something small. All the ants in an ant hill carry small leaves but they have a harvest at the end to sustain them.
 - Don't try to do it all just find what makes you happy and what God has for you and plug in
- Stop worrying
 - Worry can cause burnout faster than anything else. You need to learn to do what you can and give the rest to God. This is not to be confused with not caring... Care and have faith.

Small biblical lesson to wind up

1 Samuel 3:1-3 YLT (Context)

And the youth Samuel is serving Jehovah before Eli, and the word of Jehovah hath been precious in those days-- there is no vision broken forth. And it cometh to pass, at that time, that Eli is lying down in his place, and his eyes have begun to be dim-- he is not able to see. And the lamp of God is not yet extinguished, and Samuel is lying down in the temple of Jehovah, where the ark of God [is]

1 Samuel 3:1-10 CEV

Samuel served the LORD by helping Eli the priest, who was by that time almost blind. In those days, the LORD hardly ever spoke directly to people, and he did not appear to them in dreams very often. But

one night, Eli was asleep in his room, and Samuel was sleeping on a mat near the sacred chest in the LORD's house. They had not been asleep very long when the LORD called out Samuel's name. "Here I am!" Samuel answered. Then he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am. What do you want?" "I didn't call you," Eli answered. "Go back to bed." Samuel went back. Again the LORD called out Samuel's name. Samuel got up and went to Eli. "Here I am," he said. "What do you want?" Eli told him, "Son, I didn't call you. Go back to sleep." The LORD had not spoken to Samuel before, and Samuel did not recognize the voice. When the LORD called out his name for the third time, Samuel went to Eli again and said, "Here I am. What do you want?" Eli finally realized that it was the LORD who was speaking to Samuel. So he said, "Go back and lie down! If someone speaks to you again, answer, "I'm listening, LORD. What do you want me to do? "Once again Samuel went back and lay down. The LORD then stood beside Samuel and called out as he had done before," Samuel! Samuel! "" I'm listening, "Samuel answered." What do you want me to do

God's people were in a state of Apathy including Eli the priest. They started to look with a worldly point of view. They saw what was right in their own eyes instead from Gods viewpoint.

1 Samuel 2:29-30 CEV

Out of all the tribes of Israel, I chose your family to be my priests. I wanted them to offer sacrifices and burn incense to me and to find out from me what I want my people to do. I commanded everyone to bring their sacrifices here where I live, and I allowed you and your family to keep those that were not offered to me on the altar. But you honor your sons instead of me! You don't respect the sacrifices and offerings that are brought to me, and you've all gotten fat from eating the best parts. I am the LORD, the God of Israel. I promised to always let your family serve me as priests, but now I tell you that I cannot do this any longer! I honor anyone who honors me, but I put a curse on anyone who hates me.

The results of the Apathy in this instance are:

- Dim spiritual vision
- Lack of a word from God
- Enemy robs them of anointing and presence of God (Ark taken by Philistines)
- Leadership replaced

What can we learn from this story and its surrounding events about Eli and Samuel?

Eli – The priesthood was passed down to him and he was only in service because of his family. He was serving God because of duty alone. He did not have a clear vision of his role, nor did he understand the purpose for it.

Turn with me to Acts 3:24-25 NKJV

Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘ And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ’

Samuel – Samuel was dedicated to the Lord’s service by his mother and this young man had a clear vision and an understanding of God’s Purposes. As a prophet, he shook off apathy and diligently sought the voice of God. As a result he ushered in a new era in Israel’s history. He saw the establishment of kings; which prophetically points towards King Jesus. As you can see from the scripture here his life was aligned to the seed of Abraham and all the blessings of that line.

The lesson is that despite role, position or anything else, we need to set aside our perspective and adopt God’s. We cannot have a grateful heart and be apathetic at the same time. We need to hear the voice of God and respond.

Rev 3:15 NIV says:

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth."

If you have lost your zeal, your passion for Jesus – GET IT BACK!
Apathy leads to destruction. Thankfulness leads to life.

This Thanksgiving Day let us determine together to shake of the captive bonds of apathy. Let us re-awaken the desire within us for the good things of God. Let us not rely on mere tradition as we see in the instance of Eli. After all he knew the right things to say... But let us be teachable and grab ahold of what God has for us today, right here and right now!

You see Samuel was teachable and zealous for God and because of it God used him to usher in a king for his people. He was found faithful and so God used him to reach his generation.

You, today! Have a destiny in Christ and in that destiny is no room for Apathy. The world doesn't need apathy it needs change and apathy prevents that.

If we are committed to:

- Worship your God
- Love all the people you see
- Embrace your community

We need to care... Apathy doesn't cut it.

Prayer