

I want to show you a video from You Tube as part of the sermon today. And as it's coming up I want to give some words of introduction. The video is called, "Why I Hate Religion but Love Jesus." It's had over 20 million views by now, and whenever any religious video gets that many hits I think it demands notice.

The video builds upon an idea of shared before in sermons but I think I need to repeat. If you follow strict definitions of words, Christianity is not a religion. Let me say that again. By strict definition, Christianity is not a religion. It is a gospel.

You may remember me preaching before that a religion is what you do to please the gods. Let's use the ancient Greek religions as an example. The Greeks believed that the world was ruled by the gods and the gods, for the most part, didn't really like people. They put up with people because they could use people to do their dirty work for them. In other words, the gods were lazy. People, for their part, were always trying to please the gods so the gods would give them protection. If you

wanted a favor from one of the gods you might make a sacrifice - a burnt offering - or donate money to the god's temple so the god likes you. If you did get the favor of the god then the god would watch out for you and give you some divine protection.

This idea of religion carries across all religions - people do things to please the gods. That is why, technically speaking, Christianity is not a religion and Christians are not religious people.

I know that offends many people, especially middle aged and older people, but understanding that is important to understanding the mindset of many younger adults.

Christianity is not a religion. It is a gospel. That means that God loves you. Simple. Period. You can do nothing to earn God's favor. Your life is a response to God's love. And that is very different than working to please God.

One final piece before we watch it. There is a political statement that might offend you. The narrator says, "What if I told you voting Republican was not his mission. What if I told you Republican doesn't automatically mean Christian."

I don't think he intends to offend anyone. But I think it is a fair statement about the reality of our current political climate. Often so-called conservative Christian churches equate Christianity with Republicanism. They don't critically look at the situation. As for me, you know my political views. I dislike the Republican Party just as much as I dislike the Democratic Party. I believe politics is dirty business. Dirty but necessary, and I'm glad that many of our elected leaders are skillful and who can do it well.

Let's look at the video. (Show video)

In our gospel reading Jesus meets the disciples after the resurrection. They are huddled together, not what Jesus told them to do. What were Jesus' first words to them? Were they words of religion or words of gospel? The first thing out of his mouth was, "Peace to you."

We use words like that so often that we forget their meaning. They mean that even after these guys have failed completely God's first words to them are of peace. God and people are at peace. There is no enmity, there is no strife. There is no struggle and there is no war. The relationship is restored.

Jesus could have started off by saying, "What are you doing here?" He could have upbraided them. They certainly deserved it. He could have started off with a theological treatise they were to understand. But he didn't. He started with peace.

God is at peace with you. Live it.