

***Welcome to Our World:
A Day in the Life of Teenagers Today***

**A Sermon for Children and Youth Sunday
Offered by Members of J-Crew (Senior High Youth Group)
in cooperation with
Jeffrey W. Gibelius, Pastor
Second Presbyterian Church,
Carlisle, Pennsylvania**

January 23, 2011

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care, then do me a favor: Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

Philippians 2:1, 3-5, From The Message (a paraphrase of the Bible)

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.... I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.... I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.'

John 17:1-3, 9-11, 14-18

Today's sermon is an experiment. It began with a few adults wondering what it's like to be a teen today; so we invited the youth to tell us. *Be careful what you ask for...* In some ways their stories echoed the same kinds of issues we all faced years ago: teen pregnancy, drinking, cliques, pressure from parents, and so on. The big difference is how these problems seem more widespread today and much more out in the open.

Rather than have me try to describe to you what they said, they came up with the idea of showing you what it's like to be a teen by acting out a day in their life, complete with a trip to youth group in the evening. They wrote the entire skit that forms the heart of the sermon. We don't usually deal with these issues so frankly in worship.

Perhaps that's more of an indictment of us adults than it is of the teens who worked so hard to put the skit together. Pretending that life isn't sometimes completely unfair, complex, and even cruel doesn't help. If we want our young people to have faith that can carry them through the death of parents, the divorces of parents, and the accidental death of peers – and the kids in our own church community have all experienced these things in one form or another in the past year – we need to be honest about the serious challenges young people face today.

Emily: This is a dramatization. The situations are those that we experience through sight and sound all the time in school, at the mall, and in social media (that's Facebook, e-mail and texting). Some of what you'll hear is unsettling. We don't really like hearing or seeing these things either, but we do. Our goal is to let you know how life is for us and to show you how church is a safe place for us to express ourselves and feel unconditional love and acceptance. The characters are fictional.

Emily: Welcome to the Life of a Second Pres. Teen. This morning you'll get to experience some of "our world" and see how our Second Family makes a difference" One catch, we're gonna do this our way.....

Emily: For those of you who don't know, we love to text. So what is texting? It's typing a message into your phone instead of talking. You can send and receive messages to several people at a time. Because you can't see our phones, we'll say what we are texting...just for you.

There are some “abbreviation” and” terms” in the bulletin that we teens use. This will help you understand some of our texts.

Scene 1: Mistrust, Fighting, and Inappropriate Touch

Miranda: Hey girl, what’s up?

Leia: I just finished soccer practice and I’m on my way home. I have tons of homework!!!!!!!!!! Oh wait, Rachel just text me

Rachel: My life is over!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Leia: Why?

Rachel: Well, I like Brad, Emma found out and told him after I told her not to!!!!!!!!!! I can not trust her at all!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Leia: I warned you about her. She is gossiping about everyone all the time!!

Miranda: So, what’s up with Rachel?

Leia: Another betrayal! She trusts Emma and Emma keeps hurting her. I don’t know how to get through to her.

Miranda: I didn’t even get to tell you what happened to me today.

Leia: OMG, what’s up?

Miranda: I was like walking to Bio, minding my own business and this huge fight broke out in the hall. They pushed and I got hit and got a bloody nose. Girl you should’ve heard the language coming out of their mouths!!!

Leia: OMG, what did you do?

Miranda: Duh, I went to the nurse and got an ice pack.

Leia: Yo, what happened with the fight?

Miranda: IDK. They probably both get OSS. Why can’t the school do something about the language and fighting? It makes me really uncomfortable.

Leia: I know and the making out!!!! You should have seen Jacob and Lizzie making out in the hall the other day.

Miranda: Gross, I'm surprised they weren't.

Leia: Oh yea, some other kids were like – “get a room”.

Rachel: Hey, where are you? What am I supposed to do?

Leia: Sorry, Miranda and I were talking about a fight at school.

Rachel: Oh yea, I heard about that. Guess who from?!?!?! And you know what else she told me?

Leia: IDK

Rachel: That the fight was over drugs.

Leia: OMG girl, more drugs. I am so sick of hearing about drugs!

Emily: Misha texts Miranda

Scene 2: Drugs

Misha: Did you hear about Cole overdosing?

Miranda: Wait? When?

Misha: Last night, I think he's in a coma?

Miranda: What did he take?

Misha: I think he did meth or something.

Miranda: Like seriously?

Misha: It's been getting easier and a lot cheaper.

Miranda: Hey, how do you know that stuff? Are you into that?

Misha: No way!!! Are you nuts? I saw it on Facebook. Not that people haven't tried to get me to do it.

Miranda: Nu-uh.

Misha: Seriously, I have some friends who have done it and have asked me if I want to.

Miranda: Are you for real?

Misha: I said no, but my friend tried it. Now I don't know if I want to hang out with him.

Emily: Rachel is having a melt down because she trusted Emma AGAIN. She texts Nikk.....

Scene 3: Mistrust, Parental Pressure, Teen Pregnancy, and Drinking

Rachel: Where are you? I need help. Remember Emma, the "BIG Mouth"

Nikk: K, my advice is to stop telling her stuff.

Rachel: But she is always asking; and I forget and tell her stuff anyway

Nikk: And she uses it against you!

Rachel: I know, I know...

Nikk: Really, I have to get my homework done or my Mom is gonna "kill me".

Rachel: Ya, the parents really go overboard on the "do well cause you want to get into a good college" lectures.

Nikk: Yo, I know right?

Rachel: Sometimes I feel like bombing it to make them mad...

Nikk: Don't do that, you'll just hurt yourself.

Rachel: Yea, but I get sick of the pressure

Nikk: Hey, did you hear Lizzie's pregnant?

Rachel: Get out! No wonder, the way they act in school. No tellin' what they do outside of school. What is she going to do?

Nikk: IDK, just found out.

Rachel: I could only imagine what my parents would do.....

Nikk: Woahhhhhh... don't even go there. Ya know that makes 3 girls in my grade who are pregnant. What's up with that?

Rachel: I don't know, it gets on my nerves

Nikk: Yea. So, what are you doing this weekend?

Rachel: I don't know.

Nikk: Do you want to go to a party?

Rachel: Not if there's booze and stuff.

Nikk: IDK, but it's all the "cool" kids.

Rachel: I don't care. I'm not goin there.

Nikk: Whatever.

Emily: Nikk texts Miranda.

Scene 4: Underage Drinking

Nikk: Hey, do you want to go to a party this weekend?

Miranda: Where?

Nikk: Over at Chandler's.

Miranda: Doesn't he drink?

Nikk: Yes, but that doesn't mean we have to.

Miranda: Yeah right! Like that's gonna work.

Nikk: But I want to hang with my friends!

Miranda: Not if it means drinking.

Nikk: I told you, we don't have to drink.

Miranda: Sorry girl, I'm out.

Emily: Misha decides to see what Hannah is up to.

Scene 5: Bullying and Self-harm

Misha: Hey, what's going on?

Hannah: You're not gonna believe this! I can't tell you who, but I was just texting one of my friends who is cutting!

Misha: What?! No way!!!!

Hannah: Yes, it's this guy and people keep calling him gay and he said he can't take it anymore.

Misha: Did he talk to someone about it?

Hannah: No, he's afraid it'll just get worse.

Misha: So what'd you tell him?

Hannah: I don't know, just to hang in there.

Misha: Who's messin with him?

Hannah: Ya know, Chandler and them.

Misha: No Way!

Hannah: And Chandler is supposed to be "cool!"

Not quite the same world that you and I grew up in, is it? And yet, is it really *that* different? The terms have changed, but teens have not. Teens are still at the age where they are experiencing so much, and questioning everything:

What does it mean to be "cool"?

What does it mean to be "good"?

What's the purpose of my life?

They want to know how to relate to friends who aren't Christian or who have no faith at all. They want to know how they can grow closer to God. They want to know how to what sex and faith have to do with each other. They want to know how we can be sure the Bible is true. They want to know how they can help their friends who are struggling with drinking, or drugs, or their identity. They want to know how a good God could let Tucson happen or allow four bright young football players to die in a senseless car accident.

They are asking tough questions, the kinds of questions that you and I might not have asked until we were a little older. We need to give them good answers *now*, while they're still listening. Otherwise, how are they going to make it? We can't give them a faith filled with easy answers. That kind of faith won't hold up. Life is too raw and real for that. We owe them more.

When our kids are small, we pray "God, keep them safe." And that's a great prayer for all of God's children at any age. We want to protect kids from the underside of life. But before the point comes when we can no longer do that, we need to equip them to face those challenges with faith, love, and strength.

We need to add one more request to our prayers for our young people, “Make them brave.” We need to say, “Equip them, Lord, with the courage and wisdom to not simply get through the day, but to redeem the time. Lord, make them – as St. Paul said – to shine like stars in the midst of a dark generation.”

The incarnation – Christmas – is all about God coming in human form, not to judge the world – as dark as it is -- but to save it. Jesus was the most courageous person who ever lived. He knew exactly what was going to happen to him, but he knew he had a calling and that that calling was more important even than himself. He was sent on a rescue mission.

You and I have been sent, too.

Toward the end of his life, in one of his prayers, Jesus said to his Heavenly Father: [Soon]

I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world... I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them... As you have sent me into the world, so I am sending them...

Teens need protection, sanctuaries like this one where they can hear that God has a plan for their lives, that there is hope. But they need more than protection, because God has sent them – and us – into a world desperate for that same hope and healing. They need equipping, too.

God believes that they are up to the task—otherwise he wouldn’t send them. We need to believe in them too, and equip them for their calling. We need to show them how *our* faith story relates to their *life* story – even the most troubling aspects of it; and help them to make that faith story their own. If *we* don’t give them direction, someone else will, and those directions may well lead to a dead end.

Here’s what we can do.

1. Listen to young people. Ask them to tell you what daily life is really like for them.
2. Pray for our teens and their schools.

3. Talk to them about how your faith has helped you to deal with challenges.
4. Support our ministries for them—they really do make a difference.

Our teens want to make a difference in the world. They want to live out their God given callings. They want to “shine like stars” for God. The good news is that they are already doing that, whether it’s through helping at Project Share, or building houses on a mission trip, or inviting kids to youth group – it’s already happening. That’s something to celebrate and a great thing to see.

Emily: And the drama continues.....

Scene 6: Church

Patrick: Hey, are you going to youth group tomorrow?

Leia: Yeah and you

Patrick: I’m thinking about asking Hannah to come to youth group. What do you think?

Leia: I don’t think Hannah will want to. She’s not religious at all. She never goes to church.

Patrick: So, why can’t I ask? Do you think its “uncool” to go to church?

Leia: Kinda

Patrick: I don’t care. Youth group helps me and I think it will help Hannah. You know someone is trying to get her to do drugs? I think she’s a little depressed too.

Leia: Seriously??

Patrick: Yeah. Maybe she needs to be around people who care who she is, not what she does.

Emily: So Patrick texts Hannah...

Scene 7: The Invitation

Patrick: Hey, how are you?

Hannah: Umm...not so well. I'm so confused about stuff. My friend's cutting and I'm always sad and I don't know what to do anymore.

Patrick: Honestly I don't know what to tell you but I think that coming to youth group at my church will help you.

Hannah: I don't know...I've haven't been in a church for so long. idk if I'll fit in.

Patrick: Why don't you bring your sister, Laura, so that you'll feel more comfortable?

Hannah: I guess, let me ask her.

Emily: Hannah texts her sister, Laura, from across the room...

Hannah: Hey Laura. Patrick just invited me to come to his youth group...will you go with me?

Laura: Church?!? We haven't been there since we were like really little.

Hannah: I know, but let's just go and see how it is.

Laura: Alright. When is it?

Hannah: Tomorrow night.

Laura: Okay. Do you mind if I ask Sam to come?

Hannah: Oh yea, sure, invite Sam.

Emily: Laura starts texting Sam...

Scene 8: Youth Group

Laura: Hey girl. You want to come to youth group with me tomorrow night?

Sam: What church?

Laura: Second Pres.

Sam: OMG!! Guess what?? I go there!!

Laura: No way!!

Sam: Yeah. You guys will LOVE it. It's so much fun and there are really nice people there. There's also a ton of room to hang out...there's couches and fuse ball, and we always have food!

Laura: Food?! I'm in.

Sam: Ha-ha okay. My parents will pick you all up at 5:15.

Laura: K.

Emily: Ok, now you get a break from the world of texting! We're going to do a little simulation of one of your youth group meetings for you.....

Scene 9: At Youth Group

(Cut to stage where youth are in bean bags talking)

Patrick: Hey guys. I forgot to tell you that some new friends are coming to night. Everybody, this is Hannah and Laura. They are sisters.

Leia: Hey Sam, how are you doing?

Sam: Good, since I'm here. It has been such a stressful day!!!

Hannah: So what's going on?

Sam: I don't know— I'm just sick and tired of all of the stuff that goes on at school. You try to be nice to people and they stab you in the back. I can really relax here and talk about my frustrations.

Laura: Can't you talk to your friends.

Sam: That's the point. I have true friends at church; friends that will be there with me through anything and everything.

Micki: Hey, Que Pasa? I'm showing off my Spanish.

Sam: Oh please Micki, give us a break!

Micki: Hey, how are you and who are you?

Laura: I'm Laura and this is my sister Hannah.

Micki: Great to meet you!!! We're so glad you came to join us today. Do you know someone in youth group?

Laura: Yea, Patrick invited us and Sam gave us a ride.

Micki: Very cool! Did you get to meet everyone?

Laura and Hannah: Yea.

Narrator: Now Patrick had given Micki the "heads up" about some of what Hannah has been going through.

Micki: So, I thought today we would talk about stress at school

Narrator: Hannah is thinking "What the heck? Can she read my mind????? Well, no matter what, I'm not talking!"

Misha: Yesterday, a kid that used to go to my school committed suicide. He and his friend made this pact that if one shot himself the other would. Now, I'm like freaked out about what Justin will do!!!

Miranda: My friend starting doing all this stuff like drinking and smoking pot and I don't know what to do. It really hurts and I want to help her, but I don't know how!!!

Nikk: Recently a lot of cheerleaders went to this party where there was drinking. One cheerleader got really drunk and got pregnant!

Micki: How's school going for you Hannah and Laura?

Sam: Come on Hannah; tell everyone what's going on

Hannah: What, I'm good.

Sam: No you're not. It's ok though, we all talk about our problems.

Hannah: Really

Sam: Yea,

Hannah: I don't even know where to begin.....

Sam: it's ok.....

Hannah: Well, one of my friends started drinking and he thinks it ok AND he wants me to drink. Then, this guy I know overdosed on Meth or something. Then, I have a friend who is cutting because people keep calling him gay. Everything is like coming down hard right now.

Misha: I know what you mean; we all have stuff that stresses us out all the time.

Sam: That's one of the reasons we come to youth group. We can get it all out.

Hannah: You know, I feel better already, just talking about all this stuff!

Misha: Hey, do you want to sit with Sam and me at lunch tomorrow?

Sam: Yea, please?

Hannah: Yea, sure

Micki: It's important for you to know that God loves you NO MATTER WHAT!! It says so in the Bible. God understands your challenges and is always there for you. You can talk to God whenever you want and ask Him for help and strength. The Bible also says that with Him you can do anything. We will be here for you too. Thanks so much for coming Hannah and Laura and we sure hope you'll come back. Who wants to close us with prayer?

Sam: I will. Dear Lord, we thank you for bringing Hannah and Laura to youth group tonight. We thank you for our friendships and time together. We thank you that we have a place to find friendship and comfort. Please show your love to Hannah and Laura and let them feel your presence with them. And please help all of us to make wise decisions through these difficult years. And the people of God said.....

Everyone: AMEN

Emily: So you may not think the same way we think. You may not like what we like. You hopefully do not see and hear the things we see and hear every day. We hope now you know what our youth group and our Second Family mean to us. Thank you for listening and thank you for loving us!

Dear Friend,

I hope you have been blessed by this message. You can request a free audio-tape or CD recording of this sermon by contacting the church office. We also have a complete sermon archive (including audio-files and PDFs) on-line at www.GrowWithSecond.org/sermons

Second Presbyterian Church is a thriving congregation celebrating over 175 years of service to God and God's people. It would be our joy to help you grow in faith, hope, and love. Please consider being our guest for Sunday worship at 8 or 10:30am. Children's Church and infant and toddler care are always provided.

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