

LIVING A LIFE OF JOY PT.3: Restoring the Wonder!

Scripture used: Matthew 1:3,5-6,16 (NIV)

OVERVIEW

Big Idea: You can live a life of joy—if you live in awareness of God’s grace!

In this week’s third message in our series, Living a life of Joy, we are focusing on God’s grace reflected in our lives. Christmas is the time of the year when Americans really focus on joy and happiness in some form or another. As we live our lives and make our choices, we build our own histories and stories.

Some say that “Bad Choices Make Good Stories”. We see included in Matthew’s genealogy (Matthew 1: 3-16) of Jesus’ birth a variety of stories associated with real people making key choices in their own lives and how those choices were lived out. Matthew’s inclusions of 5 women, a Moabite, several Canaanites (who would be routinely excluded from the sanctuary of Temple worship) are each a part of Jesus’ background. They were real people, real lives, who made choices and lived lives filled with God’s grace. Makes you thankful for your own life’s stories, doesn’t it? We can all choose to be a part of Jesus’ family. You, too, are living a life filled with God’s grace just like people mentioned in Jesus’ genealogy. The awesome joy of Christ comes from knowing that, regardless of what good or bad choices we make, when we choose to follow Christ, we are recipients of His grace!

KEY POINTS

1) Joy is a byproduct of:

- a. **Seeing the wonder of God.** Jesus coming to a broken world as the one to save people from their sins is simply an amazing story. Matthew’s genealogy points to the fact that Jesus is real and part of a real history and not a fairy tale or fable. Each person in Jesus’ genealogy encountered God’s grace “showing up” in a real person’s life in amazing ways. Often we don’t recognize God’s hand at work until we can look back at history. That is when we see *Joyfully*.
- b. **Hearing the good news from God.** We have to hear the good news before we can believe it. Some stories are too extreme to believe at face value. We need to be willing to listen, examine the story for truthfulness, and then choose to believe. Just like those people who learned their layaway bills had been paid in full and they could pick up their presents, we, too, have to hear, test and then believe. That is when we hear *Joyfully*.
- c. **Experiencing the grace of God.** Having our bill “paid in full by someone else” when we didn’t deserve that kind of treatment is a reflection of God’s grace at action in our lives. It is not what we do but what God has done. That action is from God which we, in no way, can earn. That is when we live *Joyfully*.

2) Hear and believe the Good News:

- a. ***I am saved by God’s grace and grace alone.*** None of us can make God love us anymore than He already does nor can we save ourselves using our own efforts, choices, and abilities.
- b. ***I am delivered from the “Tyranny of the Ought”*** We are delivered from the guilt of not doing more, not trying harder, not succeeding like others around us. By God’s grace we are exactly where we should be at this season of our lives.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - When have you put aside God’s calling for something you were told you ought to do?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - There are facts about our own lives which we would like to tone down or omit from public view. That desire contrasts with the facts and stories associated with the names brought out in Matthew’s background and genealogy of Jesus. How is grace upon grace reflected in your own life’s stories similar to the grace revealed in the honest stories of Jesus’ ancestors?
- 3) **DO** - The “Tyranny of the Ought” can quickly rob of us of joy and make us feel less than adequate and deserving of God’s love and approval. How can living a life filled with GRACE consciousness help us work through that tyranny?. Please list 3-5 grace filled blessings you noticed this holiday week and share your observations with your group and how you were personally delivered from tyranny!