

When We Forget Grace

Joy Over One, Pt. 6

Luke 4:16-30

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I. INTRODUCTION

a. This is our last message in our sermon series “Joy Over One.”

- i. The Bible says there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance.
- ii. And this whole sermon series has been designed to challenge and encourage all of us to go all in when it comes to God’s call on our life to be making new disciples of Jesus Christ.

b. And we started this series by doing a Heart Assessment.

- i. Asking the question if we really believe that there is abundant joy in going all in when it comes to sharing the gospel with the lost.

c. And in Week 2, we looked at Psalm 96 and we saw that there is joy in going all in.

- i. And sometimes we need to posture ourselves to receive that joy by being obedient to sharing Christ with others.
 - Which is why we challenged everyone to pick one person in their life, who lives locally, and does not know Jesus Christ and commit to them.
 1. Commit to pray, to invite them to church, and to share the gospel with them.



d. In Week 3

- i. Nick taught us from Philippians 2 about how taking on an attitude of a servant puts us in a natural position to share Christ with others.

e. In Week 4

- i. We talked about what's at stake for everyone we know who does not know Christ.

f. Then last week

- i. We talked about doing whatever it takes to get that message to the people we committed to.

g. So, this morning, as we conclude this series, I want to talk about one more obstacle...one more reason why we may not be motivated to go all in and pursue other people with the gospel.

- i. And this is something that commonly happens to those who have been Christians for a long time.
 - Here it is...it's when we no longer view God's blessing on our life as a gift of grace and we begin to view it as a right or entitlement.
 - It happens very subtly and you'd be surprised how easily this happens.
- ii. So, I want to unpack this and talk about the implications on the church and our own lives when this happens.
 - To do that, I want to show you how this happened to the people of Israel during the days of Jesus in Luke 4.



II. LUKE 4:16-30

a. But before we read from Luke 4 together, I want to give us a little bit of Old Testament history to serve as some context so you can understand what is happening here in Luke 4.

i. In the Old Testament, God reveals Himself first and primarily to the Nation of Israel. He chose to bless this nation and make Himself known through this nation.

- Why? Why did God choose the nation of Israel to be the people that he would first reveal himself to?
- Did they earn it? Did they do something to compel God to speak to them first? Were they entitled to it?

ii. Well, the answer is of course not because when God decided to bless the nation of Israel, the nation of Israel didn't exist!

- We first read about this in Genesis 12 when God speaks to this guy named Abram. Abram or "Abraham" was from a place called Ur and there was no such thing as Israel or the Jewish people at this time.
- Look at what God says to this random guy Abram in Genesis 12:1-3...

1. ***"Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless***



you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

- So, we learn here that God has decided to choose this guy Abram.
 1. Why? We don't know. God can choose who he wants.
- And God says he is going to make a great nation out of his offspring.
 1. That will become the nation of Israel and we read of the emergence of this nation through the rest of the Torah...the first five books of the Bible.
- And God says he is going to bless this nation. He's going to reveal himself to this nation. He is going to give his law and his Word through this nation.
- But for what purpose?
 1. Well Genesis 12:2 makes it clear that the reason God is blessing Abram and the Nation of Israel, the reason that he is going to make them great, is *so that* they will be a blessing to others.
 2. Genesis 12:3 makes it clear that the blessing given to Israel is a gift from God that will turn into a blessing for all the families of the earth (nations, tribes, tongues).
- Israel has no right to God's blessing. They are not entitled to it.
 1. It was a gift of grace that God gave to them for the expressed purpose that they would take that blessing and bless the nations by proclaiming who God is.



- iii. We could spend hours working through all of the Old Testament texts that expound upon this truth that God has blessed Israel so that they would bless others.
- That God's vertical blessing upon Israel was for the purpose of Israel horizontally blessing the nations.
- iv. **But let me give you one more - Read Psalm 67.**
- It's the same pattern. God will bless us SO THAT we will bless the nations.
 - God's desire was not to just bless one nation but to bless all people.
- v. **And so, the nation of Israel was not entitled to God's blessing.**
- It was a gift from God. It was God's grace.
 1. We know this because there were many times that Israel rejected God. They said: "we don't want to proclaim you to the nations, we want to be like the other nations without you!"
 - And even though Israel often times betrayed God and rejected his blessing, God still pursued them...because this was not a right...this was grace...it was a gift.
 1. When Israel was in captivity, God would rescue them.
 2. When Israel forgot His Word, he sent prophets to preach His Word.
 3. When Israel was poor and in need, God would provide for them.
 4. He lavished his blessing on Israel by His grace as a gift and God's plan has always been that through God's gracious blessing on Israel, all of the earth would be blessed.



- There is a multiplying pattern to God's blessing.
 1. God blesses *so that* those who are blessed may bless others.
 2. There is no hoarding blessing to yourself in the Kingdom of God.
- vi. **So, with this context from the Old Testament, I want to fast forward to the time of Jesus.**
 - During this time, Judaism is a more established religion and God's people would gather in the Synagogues where the Scriptures would be read aloud and they would celebrate the fact that God had given Israel His blessing.
 1. And in Luke 4, we read an account of Jesus in the synagogue in his hometown in Nazareth.
 2. And I want us to see how Jesus exposes how God's people forgot the reason why God put his blessing upon them.
 3. They forgot that God's blessing was a gift to be shared not a right to hoard.

b. Read Luke 4:16-22.

- i. **So, here, Jesus reads from Isaiah 61.**
 - As a part of God's blessing upon Israel, God promised them that he would send a Messiah – one who would become their true King and establish the Kingdom of God in earth.
 1. One who would rescue them from the evil of this world and establish an eternal Kingdom where there would be no more death or sorrow.
 2. And Isaiah 61 is one of those texts promising God's people that the Messiah would one day come!



- Well, so fast forward to this day where Jesus is in the synagogue in Nazareth, you have to understand that this was a very precious promise to the people of Israel because they were occupied by the Roman Empire!
 1. They were under the rule of Caesar!
 2. And so the idea of God sending them a Messiah who would liberate them from Roman Rule and establish an everlasting Kingdom was something they longed for.
 3. They were God's chosen and blessed people and they waited and waited for God to send them their Messiah who would rescue them.
- ii. **And so Jesus reads Isaiah 61 and then tells everyone that He is the fulfillment of that passage.**
 - He tells everyone that he is the Messiah.
 - And everyone is mesmerized at Jesus because He spoke with such authority and they heard the rumors about Jesus...that he was traveling around the area and healing people of their diseases and performing all of these miracles.
 1. And so, they are wondering if this is true.
 2. Could it be that this carpenter who grew up down the street, Joseph's son...is really the Messiah?
- iii. **Then Jesus says something to everyone in the synagogue that pokes them in such a way that it reveals that they have forgotten why God chose to bless them in the first place.**



c. **Read Luke 4:23-30**

- i. What in the world happened that caused this crowd at the Synagogue to go from being mesmerized by Jesus to wanting to murder Jesus?
 - Jesus obviously poked a sensitive spot when it comes to their faith and their history that their reaction was to put Jesus to death.
 - So, what's going on here?
 1. Let me explain to you what Jesus said and how it pushed these people's buttons as Jesus intended.

ii. **Read Luke 4:23.**

- So, Jesus knows what these people are thinking. Here it is...
 1. They're still not quite sure if Jesus is really the Messiah or not.
 2. But what they do know is that Jesus was in one of the neighboring towns, Capernaum, and he performed all kinds of miracles and healings over there.
 3. And these people are thinking: Jesus, you're from Nazareth. Heal yourself...or...heal your own people!
 4. What you were doing in Capernaum, you should have been and you should start doing that here in Nazareth where you're from!
- So, Jesus calls them out for having hearts that were immediately wrought with jealousy and selfishness when Jesus announces the Kingdom!
 1. If Jesus is really the Messiah, then we should be the ones who benefit the most!



- So, Jesus has already revealed their selfishness and sense of entitlement but he is now going to go for the jugular.
- iii. **Read Luke 4:24-28.**
- See, it was now Jesus' turn to give his Old Testament History lesson.
 1. And what Jesus did was he reminded everyone in the Synagogue that there had been times in Israel's history where God chose not to bless anyone in the Nation of Israel and instead chose to bless gentiles!
 2. That salvation was never an exclusive right to Israel but is a gift from God to whom he pleases.
 3. In fact, Jesus point here is that His mission, the mission of the Messiah, is to accomplish redemption and salvation not just for the Jews but also for the nations.
 4. Because God's Kingdom will include all nations, tribes, and tongues.
 - And this poked a nationalistic, ethnic pride in these people where they viewed themselves as the Nation of Israel.
 1. The ones who are the rightful recipients of the blessing of God.
 2. Better than the other nations.
 - And this guy who is now saying he is the Messiah certainly cannot be, because the true Messiah would come to prop up Israel, to make Israel great, to conquer the other nations so that Israel could enjoy the blessing of God without enemies.
- iv. **They forgot...**
- They forgot about God's grace and they took pride in themselves.



- They forgot the very reason why God blessed them in the first place.
- They forgot that God’s blessing upon them was a gift to be shared with the nations and not a right to be kept for themselves
- They forgot that God has always announced from the beginning that His Kingdom will be comprised of all nations.

III. APPLICATION

a. Entitlement is devastating to your joy.

i. We see this in Luke 4.

- The Messiah, the Son of God, the one who was really bringing the Kingdom of God that the Jews had been longing for was standing in their midst.
 1. And entitlement caused them to miss it.

ii. See, when we claim a right to something or we feel entitled to receive something...

- We are naturally fighting for ourselves, defending ourselves, seeking to receive what is rightfully ours.
 1. And there are times in life where we need to do that.
 2. But the fundamental attitude of claiming rights and entitlements is “me first.”
- And whenever we have a “me first” attitude, two things will happen.
 1. We’ll never have enough. We will always feel entitled to more.
 2. It breaks relationships.



iii. Over the last couple of weeks, my wife and I took care of a little 4 year old girl as foster parents.

- This meant that we have 2 four-year-olds and a 3 year-old in the house.
 1. All of whom had “me first” attitudes.
- And although it seemed that they wanted to play with each other...because they were all so concerned about getting their way, playing with the toys they wanted to play with, and not letting others get in their way...it just created all this conflict!
 1. One minute, they’re all laughing and having fun. The next minute WW3 breaks out.
 2. One minute everyone is peaceful. That is until one person picks up a toy and when someone is the first to pick up the toy, the entitlement in the others just rages because they must have the toy and that person is NOT ALLOWED to enjoy that toy....that’s mine!
- And as parents, you observe all the conflict and you do your best to teach them that it is way less stressful and whole lot more fun to share, to let others go first, to not just be about yourself.
 1. But the “me first” attitude never allows you to be satisfied and it always puts you in conflict with others.
 2. And it’s not just preschoolers that struggle with it.



iv. See, in Luke 4, the people in the Synagogue felt as if they were entitled to the blessing of God.

- So, when they read Isaiah 61 in the Scriptures...and they read about how God would send a Messiah who would...
 1. preach good news to the poor...
 2. release to the captives...
 3. recover sight to the blind...
 4. set free the oppressed...
- They read themselves into that Scripture.
 1. They were the poor. They were the blind. They were the oppressed. They were the captives.
 2. They needed more blessing from God!
- But Jesus seems to indicate that the gentiles Zarephath and Naaman were examples of people who were poor, blind, and captive who needed salvation from God...not Israel.
 1. See, spiritually speaking Israel wasn't poor, they were rich!
 2. Israel wasn't blind, the Word of God was given to them.
 3. They weren't captive or oppressed, but God Himself had been their defender, made a covenant with them, brought them to the promised land and promised a future Messiah.
 4. Of course Isaiah 61 is good news to Israel but it was not good news to just Israel!
 5. The nations around them were blind to the truth, held captive in their sins, oppressed by evil.
 6. They were in desperate need to receive the gift of God's blessing just like Israel did.



- But Israel’s entitlement, their “me first” attitude, caused them only to think of themselves.
 - In fact, just the idea of including other people was a threat to what they felt entitled to.
- v. When you see your faith as a right, an entitlement you will see yourself as the poor one who needs more from God, the oppressed one who needs a break through, the captive one who needs God to intervene and blessing others won’t even enter your mind.
- Others are only competition to what you feel like you need.
- vi. But when you see your faith as grace, as a unmerited gift from God, blessing you did not deserve, you will see yourself as the rich one, the rescued one, the one who can see clearly.
- You’re not the poor one who needs more, you’re the rich one who has the abundance to bless others.
- vii. Israel was rich in vertical blessing from God but stingy in horizontally blessing others because they were entitled.
- To the point of rejecting the very Messiah they were waiting for.
- b. Grace Hill, let’s press in on this.**
- i. In the eleven years that I have served in pastoral ministry, I can tell you that the number one threat to your joy in Christ is forgetting the fact that God has graciously blessed you in every single way **SO THAT** you can go bless others.



- If you're struggling in your faith, feel like you are distant from God, don't really experience joy in your faith, if you are having a hard time with this challenge to commit to sharing the gospel with one person...this might be the reason.
 - We want more from God and so we don't even think about how God might use us to bless others.
- ii. **I see more people become stagnant in their faith because they feel they are entitled to more from God and therefore they put off reaching out to others.**
- They need more knowledge...
 1. they need more confirmation from God
 2. they need better community
 3. they need better life circumstances
 4. they need a certain kind of church experience
 5. they need a certain kind of worship music
 6. they need to get their quiet time on track
 7. they need to be better at prayer
 8. they need to improve their marriage
 9. they need to get ahold of parenting
 10. they need to walk more closely with God
 11. they need a sign from God
 12. whatever it is...
 - It's this subtle "me first" attitude that keeps our focus on ourselves, on the strength of our faith, it demands more from God, it's threatened by others because they may get in the way and it justifies never doing anything to reach anyone else.
 1. It's pious unfaithfulness.



2. and it's completely opposite to the kind of Kingdom that Jesus announced in that synagogue.
3. Because God doesn't bless us for our own joy.
4. God blesses us so that others may have joy.

iii. Jesus says in Mark 9:35

- *"If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all."*
- What this means, is if you want to truly grow in your faith, if you want to truly have a more intimate relationship with God, if you want to truly experience more joy in Christ, then focus the practice of your faith primarily on serving others and spreading the good news of Christ and put yourself last.
 1. Repeat that.

iv. If you are a follower of Jesus, Paul says this about you in Ephesians 1:3

- *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."*
 1. You have been given EVERY blessing.
 2. You are forgiven of your sins.
 3. You are righteous in God's sight
 4. You have a place prepared for you in god's Kingdom for eternity
 5. You have been adopted in God's family
 6. You are a part of the body of Christ
 7. You have been given the Holy Spirit.
 8. And a million other things...
 9. You are rich! Your eyes have been opened. You've been set free from sin!



- And God has graciously given you this priceless, unmerited gift... SO THAT you will bless others.
- v. **And here is the secret of God's Kingdom...**
 - It's when we put ourselves last (preferences, politics, comfort, grievances, needs)...it's when we focus the practice of our faith in taking the vertical blessing we have received from God and spreading that horizontally, it's when we are more concerned about others than ourselves...that's really when we begin to taste true joy, that's when we begin to experience an emotional closeness to Christ, that's when His Word begins to come alive.
 - Why? Because we are most like Christ when we forget about ourselves in order to love others.
 1. This is what Christ did for us.
 2. He came to serve us and not be served.
 3. He came to give himself up for us.
 - Jesus came and he opened the Kingdom of God to all people, Jew and Gentile, by sacrificing Himself on the cross to cover our sins.
 1. All one must do to have this blessing is place their faith in Christ. It is open to all people.
 2. And all who have this blessing have become rich and therefore have been commissioned to take this message to the nations.
 3. To live a life of serving, not being served.
 4. To give ourselves for others.



IV. CONCLUSION

- a. And so as we conclude this sermon series all about pursuing those who do not know Christ...**
- i. Let me ask all of us...do we believe that God has saved us *so that* we will bless others.
 - Do we believe that God allowed us to gain knowledge of the gospel *so that* others may have knowledge of the gospel?
 - Do we understand that you cannot separate the blessing that God has given us with the mission that God has given us?
 - ii. Because if taking the gospel message to those who do not know Christ has been a back-burner, optional, probably non-existent part of your faith...
 - That might be a sign that you have forgotten that God's grace is an unmerited gift and not a right or entitlement.
 - And you're probably wondering why you don't experience more joy in your faith.
 - iii. And the good news is God is gracious and patient and leads us towards the way he wants us to go.
- b. What does it look like for you to focus the practice of your faith primarily on serving others and spreading the good news of Christ and put yourself last?**

V. PRAY

