Series: Do You See What I See?

December 10, 2017

**I See Freedom!**

Matthew 1:21

**Intro:** We started this series last week - the title of the series comes from a Christmas Song titled, “Do You Hear What I Hear?” But the second line of the song says, “Do You See What I See?”

That’s the line that got stuck in my head as I was thinking about our Christmas series this year.

As we go through this Christmas season - we come to the end of another year and prepare for a year to come - we want to see what God wants us to see -

* For our lives
* For our families
* For our ministries
* For our church

I believe the Christmas story will help us see what God wants us to see.

Last week -

**God came to be with us because He wants us to know Him!**

From Isaiah’s prophecies about Jesus being born to a virgin, and the various names & titles Jesus would be given we see that -

* Jesus came to be with us
* He is a Wonderful Counselor
* He is the Mighty God
* He is the Everlasting Father
* He is the Prince of Peace

Isn’t it awesome that God wants to know us personally and He sent Jesus so that could happen?

Matthew 1:18-21 - This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, to whom she was engaged, was a righteous man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

 As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

**Big Idea: Jesus came to give us freedom!**

**> He came to set us free from sin.**

The name Jesus means “one who saves” - OT: Joshua - Heb: Yeshua

* This involves forgiveness.

If we are going to be forgiven of sin, we first have to confess (agree) that we are tainted by sin.

Romans 3:22-25 - We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood…

Here’s how it started -

Romans 5:12 - When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

How did he sin? He disobeyed God. He did what God told him not to do!

Why did God tell him not to do it? Because it would be bad for him!

“You can live forever - or you can die. Here’s how you can live forever - don’t eat from this tree. If you eat from this tree, you will die.”

Sin is sin not because God is trying to keep things from us. Sin is sin because God is a good, good Father who knows what is good for us and sin is sin because it hurts and destroys us.

Something happened then in that man that was passed down to all of us.

All of us receive the same punishment for our sin -

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

There’s that word “free” again! Freedom is available! Do you see what I see? Jesus came to bring us freedom!

Freedom from sin and it’s consequences - pain in this life - and mainly eternal death!

How do we get this freedom?

The punishment is death - how do we get out of it?

Romans 5:6 - When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners.

Jesus came … to die for us! To die in our place! To take our punishment!

This is awesome! If you’ve never heard this before - this is the greatest thing you’ve ever heard!

If you have heard this before - you should be rejoicing again at what Good News this is!

This is the choice - are we going to die for our sins? Or, are we going to let Jesus’ death be the punishment for our sins?

How do we claim this prize of freedom from sin and ultimate death?

Romans 10:9-11 - If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.”

Romans 10:13 - For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

* This comes by grace alone - there is nothing we can do to deserve this -

Not church attendance - not church work days - not teaching classes - attending classes - not knocking on doors - learning all the right things and doing them - and learning all the wrong things and stop doing them -

None of us could ever learn it all and keep it all! That way is hopeless!

That’s really what that tree was all about - the Tree of the KNOWLEDGE of Good and Evil - Think about it -

From that time on men have been trying to be right with God based on their knowledge of good and evil …. This is good, I will do it and be right with God - this is not good - this is evil - I will not do that and be right with God!

Doesn’t work! We can’t learn it all! Even if we could, we wouldn’t be good at doing it all!

I’m not saying don’t be good - I’m not saying try not to be bad. I’m just saying that alone won’t get you freedom - it’s actually another kind of bondage.

His name is Jesus because He will SAVE His people from their sins!

Who are “His people”?

John 1:12 - But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

Let’s get back to how we receive this -

Confess Jesus is Lord - believe God raised Him from the dead …

Ephesians 2:8,9 - God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Jesus life is a gift to us! His coming is THE Christmas gift - the greatest gift of all.

Glen Campbell song … The Greatest Gift of All …

*…the greatest gift of all*

*From heaven up above*

*Is the love that He gives to all*

*Doesn't matter where you've been*

*He forgives the greatest sin*

*With His love that He gives to all.*

Jesus volunteered to come.

The plan was in place before the foundation of the world -

1st Peter 1:18-20 - For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom long before the world began, but now in these last days he has been revealed for your sake.

Revelation 13:8 - …the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made.

Explain …

* This freedom from sin means we are no longer bound to keep sinning!

This is great because sin has consequences …

Both in this life and in the next …

Isn’t it great that we are not only forgiven, but we are set free!

Mary Magdalene … when those demons are gone - they are gone!

And she lived her life of thankfulness by following Jesus …

**> This freedom is secured in healthy relationships.**

Matthew 1:22-23 - All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means ‘God is with us.’”

He came in a relationship - a son - that’s a relationship! His name Immanuel means, “God with us!” He wants to be with us - He wants us to be together.

Second purpose of our church … Find Freedom … we do this in Small Groups …

We can be forgiven of sin and still messed up! We can be forgiven of sin, right with God, on our way to heaven, but still be carrying around scars and hurts, and be struggling through life because there is still a lot of junk from our past hanging on to us.

We need one another! We need to love one another - encourage one another - pray for one another - bring joy to one another - give life to one another -

We do this in relationships - we weren’t meant to be alone. It is not good that man should be alone.

Hebrews 10:24 - Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

James 5:16 - Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed…

Explain …

All of us have things that we need to be healed from - for all of us, something hurts - something is messed up - we all have issues -

How are we going to deal with our issues? The Bible doesn’t tell us that happens with God alone- it happens when I have a person who prays with me and walks me through it - we all need this.

Church services alone are not going to change your life. Relationships will. Real life change happens when we sit in circles, not just rows.

If I asked you to name the last five messages I preached, you couldn’t do it! Sometimes you can’t remember by 3 o’clock in the afternoon! (And I’m great!)

But - you can tell me 5 people who have impacted your life for good or bad - because your life has been impacted by relationships - not merely information.

If you are going to really find freedom, you need the dynamic of small groups.

This is the Biblical model -

The earliest followers of Christ met both in large public gatherings and in small groups in their homes.

**Small Groups provide three things -**

**1. A place to connect with others.**

You need a place to connect - Sometimes people say the church is too big - the fact is - every church is too big if you’re not connected! Some people go to small churches and don’t meet anyone - and then they go to a big church and develop great relationships - it depends on being in a place where relationships are valued. Everyone need a place to connect.

Everyone needs place where “everyone knows their name.”

We need to get bigger and smaller at the same time! - Bigger because so many more people need to know Jesus - they matter -

Smaller - in more and more small groups - because you matter.

**2. A place to protect each other.**

You need a place where people know you’re struggling. You need accountability partners. “I’ve messed this up so many time - would you help me - Calle me? Hold me accountable? Pray with me?”

Quit pretending you’ve got it all together! Be honest! This is how we grow! This is the plan!

**3. A place to grow together.**

The Bible calls this discipleship. Real discipleship happens in a life-giving relationship with other people. You will grow personally and spiritually a lot faster in relationships with other believers walking the same path with the same goals.

If you’re not in a small group - you’re next step is to get in a small group -

If you’ve been in a small group for a while - you’re next step might be to lead a small group.

Leaders grow like crazy! They have to!

Matthew 1:23 - “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”

Jesus came to have a relationship with us - He lives in us -

Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them.

When we gather together in relationships, He is with us, we strengthen one another, we hold each other accountable, we find freedom - we stay free!

He is with us and He is in us so when we are together there is a great sense of His presence!

One of the greatest aspects of Christmas is the get-togethers - we get together with friends and family members that we don’t often see … don’t always have time for in the busyness of life …

The relationships that we forge in the family of God through our groups that meet on a regular basis - this is one of the greatest highlights of the Christian life!

Don’t take these relationships for granted! These relationships are a gift from God to us!

God wants you to live in freedom!

Hillsong: Grace to Grace - Chris Davenport & Joel Houston

*If love endured that ancient cross*

*How precious is my Saviour’s blood*

*The beauty of heaven wrapped in my shame*

*The image of love upon death’s frame*

*If having my heart was worth the pain*

*What joy could You see beyond the grave*

*If love found my soul worth dying for*

*How wonderful*

*How glorious*

*My Saviour’s scars*

*Victorious*

*My chains are gone*

*My debt is paid*

*From death to life*

*And grace to grace*

*If heaven now owns that vacant tomb*

*How great is the hope that lives inYou*

*The passion that tore*

*Through hell like a rose*

*The promise that rolled back*

*Death and its stone*

*If freedom is worth the life You raised*

*Oh where is my sin where is my shame*

*If love paid it all to have my heart*

*When I see that cross I see freedom*

*When I see that grave I’ll see Jesus*

*And from death to life*

*I will sing Your praise*

*In the wonder of Your grace*

*How my soul will sing Your praise*

*In the wonder of Your grace*

*How my soul will sing Your praise*