

NOW: Part 1- Looking Back

1 John 3:19-23

I. ME

- A. Welcome/Online/So What About
- B. **Safe Spaces-** B/c God is for you and your neighbors.
- C. **NOW- God is for your happiness**
 - 1. Arguments**
 - a. Not what I was taught
 - b. He wants me to be holy now and then when I die I'll be happy in heaven.
- D. Maybe why you gave up on church.
 - 1. "If there is a God he's not interested in my happiness and often puts roadblocks and rules in the way of my happiness now."
 - 2. In fact some of the people who described themselves as being "HOLY" were not very happy people at all.
 - 3. So you felt you needed to make a choice between God and happiness.
- E. Nothing could be further from the truth.
 - 1. Yes, God wants you to be holy, but happiness and holiness go hand in hand... you just have to understand what Holy really means... get to that in a bit.
- F. God wants us to be happy NOW
 - 1. He actually wants you to enjoy life now, be fulfilled now, to be who we were made to be NOW

- 2. Think about it... happiness can only be experienced NOW
 - a. You can remember good times but the memories bring happy feelings now.
 - b. You can even sacrifice a bit for a future happiness... but that hope brings you happiness now too doesn't it?
 - c. **Happiness is experienced now.**
- 3. But so often we can't enjoy NOW.
- 4. We are actually robbed of our now and our happiness.
- 5. Guilt/worry/distractions
- 6. That's what we are going to talk about for 3 weeks.

II. WE

- A. One of the biggest thieves of our current happiness is our past.
 - 1. Choices we made in the past that haunt us... that produce guilt/shame...
 - 2. Maybe even something that happened to you that wasn't even your choice/fault... but still clings to you.
- B. **Guilt from your past is poison to your happiness now.**
 - 1. It ruins relationships
 - a. It isolates you
 - b. Causes you to hide your true self from others...
 - c. What if they find out? No one will understand.
 - 2. Causes anxiety and depression- constantly beating yourself up over things you can't change
 - 3. Can be exhausting- a nagging, unrelenting feeling like your soul is being waterboarded.
 - 4. Makes it nearly impossible to enjoy the beautiful moments you find yourself in.
 - 5. "If there is a God, he definitely wouldn't like me... and definitely wouldn't love me if he knew what I did. Who I've been."

6. So we run... we hide... we deny... we ask endless questions
 7. And maybe this guilt isn't even about something specific...
 8. It's a vague, indefinite but persistent guilty feeling that you can't shake or put your finger on
- C. If you're a Jesus Follower there's more to it too...
1. If I really were a sinner I wouldn't have done _____.
 2. God is mad at me that's why he's making me feel guilty
 3. I'm not worthy to be close to God... stop praying/ reading Bible
 4. God won't bless me now. There's no way He could after what I've done.
- D. It leaves you feeling like you have to do something to make up for the past... have to do something to ease your guilt...
1. How many religious rituals were started...
 2. Why those "holy" people are trying to follow all the rules but are completely miserable.
 3. "I hope I've done enough good to make him happy... I guess I'll find out someday."
 4. Deep down you know it's impossible to take away your past... so you are left feeling hopeless.

E. **Guilt is a thief of the life Jesus promised - John 10:10**

- F. I have some wonderful news for you today: you **can** have peace with your past.
1. You can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God loves you and is for you.
 2. You can enjoy happiness NOW.
- G. Jesus' best friend, John, tells us how...
1. Teenager when he was w/ Jesus
 2. In AD 85 Old man writing to Jesus-Followers
 3. Telling them who Jesus really was and what the whole point really was.
 4. Talking to Jesus-Followers... those who trust that Jesus' death and resurrection makes them right with God.
 5. What we'll see is...
 6. **Truth conquers guilt.**

III. **GOD (1 John 3:19-23)**

- A. **V. 19** - Know that we belong to the truth.
1. KNOW that you belong to God?
 2. IF you died today? "I hope so." Don't all of us want better than that? Is that even possible?
 3. John says you can KNOW... NOW
 4. And that knowing we belong to God will set our hearts at rest... peace/no constant guilt/shame/anxiety.
 5. Guilt makes us question whether we are loved by God at all.
 6. Confuses us. Makes us fear God... makes us feel like he's against us.

7. But when we **know** we belong to him we can have peace.

8. **Knowing whose we are gives us peace with who we are.**

B. V. 20

1. When you feel that condemning guilty weight you can know it doesn't mean God has rejected you.
2. Guilty feelings are not proof that God is mad at you.
3. They aren't true.
4. **If you are a Jesus-Follower**, you have confessed and accepted his forgiveness... then God does not condemn you.
 - a. God Convicts.
 - b. Not condemns... "You're so evil. You're just a sinner."
5. So if you are feeling that tormenting guilt... it's not God punishing you.
6. Look at it... Who is doing the condemning?
7. Our heart. Our feelings.
 - a. Sometimes we have an overactive conscience.
 - b. Sometimes we feel the accusations of the one whom John calls the Accuser.
 - 1) "You're evil. God couldn't love someone like you. Who do you think you are? You're just an imposter."
8. Whatever it is... John says God is greater than our hearts.
9. Even if we FEEL guilty... if you are a child of God... God knows the truth.
10. He is greater than your feelings.
11. Feelings or our perception of things are not always reality.
12. What God says is reality.

13. Guilty feelings are not truth. They are feelings.

14. If you have trusted Jesus you are not guilty.

15. God knows that you are his and nothing can change that.

C. V. 21-22a (...ask,)

1. If we can accept the reality that we are free... we can enjoy confidence and peace with God.
2. If we accept reality that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God... there is never any reason to hide from him, avoid him, feel inadequate with him.
3. We can be comfortable with him. And ourselves and our past, too.
4. We can have confidence that we belong to God.
5. We can be at peace with him no matter what our hearts tell us... and at peace with our past, too.
6. We can enjoy a perfect relationship with Him NOW.
7. And enjoy and appreciate the good gifts he loves to give to his children.
8. But how do we KNOW that we are his? How do we KNOW we are at peace with him?

D. V. 22b

1. In other words... holiness.

2. The path to a guilt free and happy life is holiness.

3. I thought you said it wasn't about rules?
4. We have to follow his commands to have this peace, to be happy?
5. We have to be those holy people?

6. I thought it wasn't about holiness?
7. Holiness is not what you probably think it is...

E. V. 23

1. Holiness is not what you might think it is. It's not following rules, not doing rituals,
2. **Holiness is faith expressing itself through love.**
3. Faith- Trusting that Jesus is the way to peace with God
 - a. **Gospel.**
 - b. Your guilt is washed away.
 - c. Guilt never has to have a hold on you again... b/c it's already been taken care of.
 - d. Bill is paid.
4. And when you have accepted this relationship you begin to be transformed... and you start loving others in ways you never did before.
5. You express your faith by loving others.
6. **Love is proof that you belong to God.**
7. Love does not make God like us more, love does not earn his favor. It's not the cause, but the effect.
8. Love is the product/result of our belonging to him and therefore we can look at it as proof that we are his.
9. Has there been a transformation in how you see and treat others? Are you looking more and more like you Father?
10. **Example-** Me looking like my dad
11. No matter what your heart tells you... this love is proof you can look back on and see that you belong to him.

IV. YOU

- A. Maybe you've never allowed Jesus to pay your bill.
 1. You've been trying to pay it yourself.
 2. Hoping good outweighs bad. Or that God doesn't exist or He won't notice what you've done or care.
 3. Trying to do your own version of holiness.
 4. Ignoring the guilt, shoving it down.
 5. It's time to make peace with your past.
 6. Accept that you can't change it and you can't make up for it.
 7. God wants to give you a new life, make you who you were always meant to be.
 8. Free you from that guilt and shame and make you his forever.
- B. Maybe you have done that but you still just feel guilty.
 1. Your feelings aren't reality.
 2. You have been forgiven.
 3. Jesus has the scars to prove it... there is nothing he forgot to die for.
 4. There is nothing you can do that will surprise him... nothing so bad that is stronger than his death.
 5. You are forgiven of EVERYTHING, you are his... relax and enjoy him.
 6. And now prove it by loving others.

7. And it might be time to identify with him by being **baptized.**

C. Prayer.

V. WE

- A. Jesus came to give true life and life to the full.
 - 1. Does that mean it will always be easy? No.
 - 2. But it does mean you can be happy even when things are hard.
 - 3. It means you can be happy NOW and be fulfilled NOW.
 - 4. Not chained to a past that constantly saps your joy.
- B. You can be free and you can be happy NOW.
- C. We weren't made for guilt. We were made for love.
- D. **The past is over. Accept, enjoy, and share God's love NOW.**