



THE GOOD NEWS IN OUR GENERATION

One evening, after a beautiful Bible study (at least I thought it was) on God's purpose for creating man (where we learned that man was created for God's pleasure), a woman made a comment that I couldn't shake for a long time. She said, "I'm not sure I like what I learned tonight. It's hard for me to believe that God created us so He would have creatures to worship and serve Him. It seems that everything that God does is for Himself. I don't like this God." This woman and I came from a religion that believed in the necessity for Christ's true believers to demonstrate "sinlessness" in the final "time of trouble" (right before the Second Coming) in order to vindicate God's law and character. So, I understood her misunderstanding. In our old religious paradigm, God appeared to be "needy" of human devotion, adoration and sacrificial performance. We had better come through for Him or else. Even then, I had a nagging suspicion that the God our old church knew and tried to worship and obey was a distorted and warped imitation of the real God.

Through the years, I have come to know the God of the Bible. Two of His divine attributes have helped me change my view of God: His grace and His sovereignty. A gracious God would not be self-centered like sinful human beings. In fact, He would be other-centered. Because He is love, He could not be otherwise. A gracious God would only derive personal pleasure from the success and happiness of His creatures. A sovereign God would not be dependent on the response and performance of His creatures. He would have a perfect plan and will for His creation that would succeed, no matter what, regardless of His creatures' response or performance.

In our new Basic 10 course, I want to be certain that we paint a clearer portrait of the God of the Bible. While we worship and serve the same God that our parents tried to please and obey in their generation, we should have a better picture of God than they had. If our parents were sincere in their journey to God, they would want and expect their children and grandchildren to be closer to Him than they ever were. They would hope that our generation would be more intimate with God and, thus, would obtain a clearer view of Him.

Jesus said that the Gospel is forever like new wine and it will continue to require new wineskins. Every generation must deal with the continuing need for a new container of the Gospel. Old wineskins will burst if they are not replaced or renewed. God's story remains unchanged, but the way we tell it and the way we hear it will have a new slant or vantage point. Like a precious jewel, new facets of God's story are discovered as they radiate the light in different lines.

The Gospel as presented in "Kingdom" paradigm is not new. Jesus referred to His main work as the preaching of the "Gospel of the Kingdom." He taught His disciples to pray for God's kingdom to come and for His will to "be done on earth as it is in heaven."

When Jesus began His ministry, He declared, "The Kingdom of heaven is here." When He taught the people, He presented the Gospel in the wineskins of allegories, saying in the beginning of every parable, "The kingdom of heaven is like . . ."

The stories of our Lord did not portray God as a self-centered celestial despot. In fact, His best story (**Luke 15:11-32**) depicts a father who desperately loves his prodigal son. The father's unconditional love overcame his son's rejection of his family and the squandering of his inheritance. In the end, the profligate son came home to his father's acceptance and his destiny as heir.

The story of God begins with His creation of humankind with a special purpose in mind. He said to them (**Gen. 1:27-28**), "*Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over (other creatures).*" Humanity was given dominion over earth that was to be exercised in connection with God's intimate relationship with man. When David understood this, he exclaimed (**Psalms 8:3-8**), "*What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands.*"

God did not make human beings because He needed more creatures to worship and serve Him. He had a glorious purpose for humanity. We were created for intimacy with God and to be His ambassador-regents on earth. When we understand His royal destiny for humankind, when we experience the depths of His unfailing love, we will worship and adore Him. God is not self-centered. He is love and He is worthy of worship.

This week, we are taking care of our grandson, Judah Caleb, who is twelve months old. Jon-J and Marcia are in Hawaii to attend their friend's wedding. My wife convinced me that we can still do this. But it turned out to be not a picnic at all. Judah has a cold and has a difficult time breathing at night. I told Jec that we should demand a refund from Judah's parents. They left us a sick baby to take care of.

For the past five nights Jec and I have taken turns in getting up and rocking Judah back to sleep every time he would wake up and start crying. It's 4:30 A.M. and I hear Judah whimpering and moaning. Jec taps me and tells me to pick him up. I had just done that about half-an-hour ago. But I force myself to get up, regretting the day we brought Jon-J into this world. As I pick up Judah, he hugs me and says, "Mama." Clearly a case of mistaken identity. But still, I'm so thrilled! My grandson has returned my love for him.

The God of the Bible says to you, "*Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for a child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you. See, I have written your name on my hand.*" (**Isa. 49:15-16 NLT**)

I'm hoping and praying that someday that woman would join one of our small groups and study our new Basic 10 and discover and come to know the true God who loved her and planned a royal destiny for her.