

Lessons from the Jordan River: Living to Please God

Mark 1:9-15

Illustration - I read a spring issue of Time Magazine that described how new cell phone applications are available that can tell you about people that you might encounter in public places. One app tells you if someone nearby who has their cell phone on them is on your Facebook friends list. Another app can tell you if someone approaching you shares your common interest. It is amazing the ability we have to please our selves with technology.

What about pleasing God? Can you describe concretely what you do to please him? This morning we continue in our sermon series looking at life lessons from the Jordan River. Today were about to read the first place in scripture where Jesus takes action and God acknowledges how pleased he was with Jesus.

Reading of scripture: Mark 1:9-15

Jesus modeled the desire to please God: vs.9-11

Mark's gospel tells us that after Jesus came up out of the water God was pleased. The word pleased has many meanings. The story of the baptism of Jesus can also be found in the third chapter of Matthew's gospel. One thing Matthew tells us is why Jesus offered himself to be baptized. Because remember, John the Baptist was baptizing people as a response to their awareness they needed to repent of their sin. Jesus had no sin. Matthew's account of this event includes the words of Jesus which explained he came to be baptized **"to fulfill all righteousness.."** (Matthew 3:15) Jesus came to fulfill John's prophecy that God was on the move and soon sending a messiah. So even though Jesus was without sin, he was baptized to say he was a part and the fulfillment as God

was moving in that special time. In Matthew's version of this story when God says he was well pleased the word pleased means **“the willingness and freedom of intention or resolve regarding what is good.”** (Vines Bible Dictionary, p.189)

- God was pleased because Jesus freely and willingly was decisive and took action.
- Jesus pleased God by being in sync with God's timing - how about you?
- Jesus pleased God by being with the people he was suppose to be - are you?
- Jesus pleased God by being where he was suppose to be - are you
- His pleasing God demonstrated honoring God with actions; not just words.

Illustration: Spiritual Assessment

In March many took part in filling out a spiritual assessment questionnaire. Have you done anything to utilize those assessments? The Charting the Course Team met the other night and to be honest we had not done much with them either. It was necessary with preparation for Easter to give a little space in work with those assessments and then come back and look at the charts everyone anonymously turned in where you assessed yourselves. The team under your new pastor, Pastor Lea's leadership will be doing more follow through, but let me just ask this, did you finish the rest of the assessment? Did you ask somebody to fill out the feedback sheet? Did you fill out the spiritual growth action plan? If you didn't, you're not alone because not everyone on the team including me has finished our assessment. But here is what important, that assessment following lunch and time together wasn't just for you; it was so we could please God. It was so we could imitate Jesus and take a decisive step that freely and willingly wanted to help us be part of what God is seeking to do in our lives.

The baptism of Jesus is a great story that ought help us focus on what really pleases God. Because often, we think we cannot please God because of what we don't have. Especially has a church we can think we don't have much to offer God because of a lack of financial resources, people gifted in music or knowledge of the Bible, or the limited building space. But I don't know anywhere in the scripture where God or Jesus is displeased over those types of issues.

God gets upset over things such as;

- When we seek to compromise his values in order to please people; rather than please him - **Galatians 1:10**
- He is not happy when our motivation toward him is lukewarm. - **Revelation 3:15-16**
- He is not pleased when his people stall and delay at the purposes of his will - **Ephesians 5:15.**

We say God has provided so much and yet there is that uncomfortable truth of why we don't go to the lengths to please God, like we do ourselves and others and why is that?

Illustration

Sometimes we treat God like a man who called up his dentist at the last minute and wanted to know if he could come late for appointment. The dentist said sure you can be late, and I'll still see you but I won't be able to give you anesthesia for your procedure. The man arrived 15 minutes early for his appointment.

Honestly we sometimes please God because were really looking to please ourselves.

So a lesson from the Jordan River is your life pleases God when we willingly and freely give ourselves totally to his will.

Letter about nursery coverage

This is why this past week I mailed out a letter to those who

provide nursery care on Wednesday evenings. We thanked them for their service but also shared some expectations that are needed in order to make sure care is provided for toddlers so their parents or grandparents parents can be freed to attend groups. It's about making sure we live like Jesus, we willing give of ourselves to please him.

**Difficult days may follow us even when we have pleased God:
vs.12-13**

Funny thing happens in this story. Right after Jesus was baptized and God tells him he is pleased, God led Jesus into the wilderness. In the wilderness the devil tempted Jesus. The wilderness is where there was risk of being attacked by bandits and wild animals. In the wilderness things weren't always worked out in a fair way. The wilderness is life.

This part of the story might cause us to ask why please God if he is going to lead you into the wilderness? Is it worth the struggle, headaches and hassles?

I'll offer part of an answer to those types of question now. **The Bible is teaching us that just because your life might please God that doesn't mean you won't experience the unfair and discouragement.** It doesn't mean you won't be tempted and tested. As a matter of fact if God is going to use you or this church he has lead you into the wilderness of people's lives who are lost confused, mean, and unfair. He is not always going to lead you to be with people that will treat you fair that are already Christian that seem to have very few hang-ups.

But remember the Bible states that the angels were with Jesus in the wilderness. **Which would you rather have, a life without problems and never need to discover and experiences the presence of God, or life in the wilderness and experience God's power?** I heard that an elderly black woman once told to her discouraged son, **"If the mountain was smooth you couldn't**

climb it.”

So another lesson from the Jordan is even though God may be pleased with how your striving to live for him, life will have it's share of times that feel like the wilderness. God is no more displeased with you anymore than he was with Jesus.

Pleasing God leads to sharing God: vs. 14-15

The Bible tells us that after Jesus was baptized and after his time in the wilderness ended, Jesus began his ministry of preaching the good news. Look what it says, “after John was arrested..” Jesus started his ministry after John who baptized him was arrested. Jesus doesn't let anything deter him from living for God and sharing God. He doesn't say, “wow I better lay low they arrested John, I might be next.” He stepped us to share. Pleasing God leads to sharing God with others.

Conclusion: Pleasing God will lead to true joy and fulfillment. Jesus once told a parable about those who lived a life that was pleasing to God. When they stood before God they heard the words, “Well done good and faithful servant, come into the joy of Heaven.” Maybe one way we know we please God is by asking who words of approval do we long to hear the most; our own someone else, or the God's? Living a life that seeks to please God will not disappoint.

Illustration

Time Magazine ran an article this spring that said 4 out of 5 veterans that were surveyed said life for them is full even though they had lost an arm or a leg serving in in Iraq or Afghanistan. If they can say that in all they have been through, how much more should we be assured God will not disappoint us.

Illustration: I read this week about a man who had been ill for

quite some time and was nearing the end of his life. His daughter called her pastor and asked if he might come over and talk with her father. The pastor agreed and when he entered the bedroom of the man there was an empty chair at the head of the bed. The pastor thought the chair was for him until the man who was ill began to talk about prayer. He told the pastor he never understood how to pray. He said once his church had a preacher come to their church and talk about prayer but everything he said went over his head. But then he talked with a friend about prayer and this friend said just get you an empty chair and place it in front of you and imagine Jesus sitting there. Imagine you can tell Jesus anything you want and you can ask him anything you need to discuss. So while I have been sick I have had to move the chair closer to my bed so I can pray.

The visit continued on for a bit and then the minister left. The next day he received a call from the dying man's daughter. She called to say that earlier in the day, she had stepped out briefly to go to the grocery. When she returned home, she found that her father unexpectedly died. She said but what is odd is that his head was resting in the empty chair next to his bed. The minister said he was too choked up to explain it to the daughter, but since he knew the reason behind the empty chair, he also knew the man had passed on comforted by the presence of the Lord. Seeking to please God will not disappoint.

- What are you going to do about the aspect of your life that you know is displeasing to God?
- Maybe you need to look at some discouragement and quit interpreting that as God's punishment, but you're just experiencing life?
- Maybe its time to be like Jesus, decisive about an opportunity that helps share God?

- But I hope the one simple lesson from the Jordan River is live in such a way your hear God say “well done.”