

CLOSING THE GAP #3
ABUNDANT LIVING
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- CTG When we're talking about closing the gap we are talking about gap between the reality of the life we now live... and the life promised in scripture.
- (Hook) A couple years ago we went to Disneyland and it was to be Colie's first trip to Disney. When we told her about it she wasn't all that impressed w/ the idea... To her the long drive over to California didn't seem to be worth whatever payoff was coming with this Disneyland. I would say, this is where Mickey Mouse lives... Big woop! Couldn't we go to someone's house that lives closer.
- Q: Guess when her opinion changed? Yea, about 5 seconds after we entered the park. It created in her a deep longing to be at Disney, to eat, drink and live in Disney land... to never leave the home of Mickey.
 So on the morning of our departure we load up in the Cherokee... and she puts two and two together and realizes we're not getting in the car to go back to Disney... we are going back to Arizona.
 "I don't want to leave California Adventure, then she started think of excuses to stay. Go back, I need water, I need crackers, we drive by this trashcan on the side of the road... I need trashcan... (Now she knew what Disneyland was all about, and she couldn't get enough of it.)
 ~ **For Colie there is a gap between the life she has and life at Disneyland...**
- John 7:37* "...anyone who is thirst come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them."
 ↳ What does that mean? What is this like?
- Q: What can I expect on this side of heaven?
- (Story) Talking w/ a guy who was... well I know I need to get into church but... I mean I'm still young and I really want live a little before I have start being a church person.
 Wo... I think you've got the wrong picture of being a Christ follower... Being a Christ follower is an improvement on what you've got.
 I'm telling you this guy looked at me like I was telling him to try some lima bean casarole.
 ↳ You could sum up his feeling about the Christian life in three words:
 Scarcity, Stagnation, and Misery
- There's not enough, and what there is, is boring, or worse depressing.
- The spiritual life wrongly understood is deflating and de-motivating... it robs us of joy and life... BUT the spiritual life rightly understood is energizing and refreshing... It captivates your soul.

- Gal 5:1* “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”
- Eph 2:4-5a* “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.”
- 2 Thess 2:16-17 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who **loved us** and by his **grace** gave us **eternal encouragement** and **good hope**, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”
- This is a life where God is your encourager... Life may be filled w/ difficult moments... but God is there to provide eternal encouragement...
- Q: *Will God encourage you for a little while and then abandon you...? NO...*
- Q: Are you facing some task that's difficult? Is there a conversation that you need to have, but it's filled with stress and anxiety?
What would it be like to just have God constantly there... encouraging you... supporting you... providing inner strength... for the difficult moments of life?
- Peter Inexpressible joy
- T>> ** Some churches teach that passages like this are only an ideal to help point us in the right direction... but it's not something you really experience.
** Some churches look at passages like this and they say... yep... someday when we die... when you die... and go to heaven you'll experience that life.
- Casas* ~ But what you have to know... At Casas we believe that when Paul or Peter, or Christ taught about this life... they really believed that we could experience this life... that new levels of joy, love, and hope would be experienced... That we could walk life and experience God as our encourager. That God joy could be our joy..
- T>> Jesus understood many saw life as filled w/ scarcity, stagnation, and misery.
↳ But Jesus taught that life w/ him was the opposite. It was...
- Repeatable: Say it with me... abundance, transformation, joy
- John 2:1-9a The wine is gone... the party is about to die... things are about to take a turn for the worst. This would be a major failure for the Bride and groom.
Jesus didn't have to perform a miracle here... there were other ways of solving this problem.

(ILL) You have a big mother's day lunch... let's say today... you run out of bean dip and lime coke... and your mom loves bean dip and lime Coke... Then out of the corner of your eye you see your mom singing

"You put the lime in the coke... you nut..." What do you do??? It's your mom's favorite...

Q: What do you do... you know... **if you love your mom?** You hop in the car and book it down to Walgreens...

~ Probably... the intent of Mary was that Jesus would find some wine from a local land owner... They didn't have a Walgreens on every corner... so it would take some work to find someone to supply it.

Why a Miracle?

T>>

But for some reason Jesus decides not to solve this problem through the normal course of events... He decides this is the opportunity to perform his first miracle.

Q:

What was his reason for performing a miracle here? What's he up too?

- ✓ Was he **tired**... "I just don't feel like running around the country side looking for wine."
- ✓ Was he trying to **impress** some of his friends at the party? This will be cool?
- ✓ Was it some kind of double dog **dare**? "Come on Jesus you've been talken big lately, "I'm on a mission from God stuff" prove it!"
- ✓ Was it a kind of **warm up for bigger miracles** like calming storms and raising the dead. ("What if one his first try it just turns into fruit punch... then I'll know I've got a few rough edges to smooth over.")

John 2:1

On the **3rd day** a wedding took place..." This is a clue, third day is always symbolic in scripture of God's redemptive work foreshadowing the death of Jesus and his resurrection on the 3rd day.

- **It always comes as an invitation into a new life of faith with God.**

Repeatable

He offers a life of... Abundance, Transformation, and Joy

Abundance

John 10:10

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

John 2:6

6 thirty gallon jars... "fill them"

(ILL)

Q: do you know how much that is...? 180 gal, yea but do you know how much that is...? Let me show you. Three 55 gallon drums + Three 5 gal buckets

↳ Jesus could have pulled a vase off the table tossed the flowers...

Q: What is the point of what Jesus is saying?
 ~ My kingdom is one of Abundance... Abundant in grace, love, and patience...
 Jesus is living in a religious world of relational scarcity...
 The notion... God only had enough grace & love for the “GOOD PEOPLE”

(ILL) I hear people say... “Oh Glenn you don’t understand... God couldn’t forgive me... You don’t know what I’ve done... the roof of your church will fall in...
 - “If the roof isn’t come’n down when I walk in... your OK!”

1 John 3:1 “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”

Repeatable He offers a life of... Abundance, Transformation, and Joy

Transformation

John 2:7-9a Somewhere between the servants pouring the water into the jars and it being drawn out again... he transforms the water into wine.
 ↳ Jesus does more than just turn water into wine... He transforms the entire Wedding Celebration... Because now they have the good stuff.

(TV) Extreme Makeover Home Addition – they rebuild the home... but...
 They’re really transforming whole families...
 Little boy w/ rare disease that makes his bones like glass... they break... he was only 6 or 7 and walk around on his knees... the sister was arrested for child abuse, because he kept breaking bones And you cry...

Repeatable He offers a life of abundance, Transformation, and Joy

Vision The Call of Casas is to lead people to experience the life Jesus talked about.

- ✓ What would it be like if scared and untrusting people actually put their faith in Jesus.
- ✓ If exhausted, confused culture chasing souls... begin rearranging, and reorganizing their lives around the truth and wisdom of the Bible.
- ✓ What if Stingy mean people... became loving givers... who just delighted in giving to those in need.
- ✓ What if... Hopeless, distraught quitters overwhelmed by life... slowly started becoming excited and optimistic
- ✓ What if... Judgmental, religious workaholics – with their scorecards & good works... became dispensers of grace

- ✓ What if people caught in materialism always looking for the next toy to make them happy actually found something new... a joyful heart
- ✓ What if the hurting and those struggling w/ additions and past hurts... found healing in a community of love and acceptance?

Repeatable He offers a life of... Abundance, Transform, and Joy

Joy

Too often in our world we form an **emotional picture** of God as being very serious... maybe even a little cranky in the morning. We don't picture God as one who laughs at a good joke.

John 2:1-2 "they were invited..."

(Quote)

James Boice

"Jesus was always welcome among those who were having a good time. Have you ever thought how wonderful it is that Jesus was at home in such company? Some Christians go around with grim looks and long faces. If they ever find themselves in the company of someone else who is having a good time, they immediately suspect that the cause of the fun is either illegal, immoral, or fattening."

(ILL)

I've had the opportunity to visit many of our **Bible Fellowships**... and one of the great re-occurring themes in each of these Bible Fellowships is joy. They are laughing and smiling as if they actually like each other...?

- Jesus wanted people to know that joy is at the core of God's Character.

I want you to think for a moment about the kind of joy Jesus experience... because it...

- ✓ Wasn't pain free, or trouble free.
- ✓ It didn't mean people wouldn't be mad or angry w/ him.
- ✓ It didn't mean he would be loaded with riches or have the latest technology. Jesus didn't have an iPod mini, Camera phone, PSP , or On Star on his donkey.

John 15:11

What was Jesus talking about when he said: "So that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete."

- Jesus always found God's joy in the moment... He treated every moment like it was a gift from God...
 - He was simply never hurried...
 - He didn't carry bitterness over past hurts.
 - He didn't get weighted down by fears or anxiety about his future.

~ If you're carrying around a ton of past wounds... it's going to be hard to have joy.

~ If you're stressed out about tomorrow... filled w/ fear about your future... it's going to be hard to have joy.

Application:

1. Make sure you're in a community where you can mourn your hurts and wounds from the past.
 - a. Bible Fellowship... small groups... support groups
2. Trust God with your future...
 - a. Believe that he has the abundance to provide everything you need for life.
3. Live in the present... You have this one moment, and you'll never have it again.

(ILL)

One of the things I learned from Colette... is to just live in a moment... she is so good at this.

At night I put her down and she plays this funny game where she asks for a drink of water or to pray with her, a stuffed animal... but it's all an opportunity to hide under her covers, or bed... this is not new, I've figured this out.

And when I walk in I hear her giggling... and she's learned to live in that one moment... The joy of the moment is not lost.

(Quote)

GK Chesterton. Orthodoxy

“Because children have abounding vitality because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged, they always say “do it again” and the grown up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown up people are not strong enough to exalt in monotony, but perhaps God is strong enough to exalt in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning “Do it again to the sun.” And every evening do it again to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike. It may be God makes every daisy separately but has never gotten tired of making them, it may be that he has the eternal appetite of infancy.

For we have sinned and grown old and our Father is younger than we.

- a. Enjoy your mom's today... just delight in them.
- b. If you see the mountains just know that God put those there for you... for you to see and enjoy.
- c. When you worship... loose yourself in the moment... you'll never get that moment back again.
- d. In your Bible Fellowship... just bask in the joy of all those relationships... they don't have to be perfect... but they are a gift.

