

Introduction

Did you know that before God laid the earth's foundations, he had you in mind, and he settled on you as the focus of his love, to make you whole and holy?

260 02 HH – Holy and Whole

Is it not remarkable – the depths to which deception penetrates our world, our families, our lives. We think that doing things our way instead of God's way brings success. We think that God wants us to be eternally bored. We think the exciting, glittering things of the world bring happiness when the opposite is true.

We discovered in our previous broadcast that happiness and holiness belong in the same sentence. This is not an oxymoron. They are not mutually exclusive terms. They belong together like a husband and wife, like the earth and the moon, like the Father and the Son.

We discovered that our problem is that we have a faulty view of God and a faulty view of what brings joy. God tells us to be holy because he is holy. Sometimes we think that means that we must measure up in our behavior and not break any rules because that would make him angry. We view God as a severe, stern headmaster of an uppity private school who walks up and down the rows of students with a ruler ready to slap our hands if we do not measure up. How exciting is that? Not very. If that is your view of a holy God, no wonder you are having trouble with holiness! No wonder the enticements of the world seem so attractive. No wonder we so easily fall into sinful behavior.

You see, you and I were made for joy. We were made for goodness. We were made for happiness. And our hearts long for these things. This is the reason the entertainment industry is so profitable. It has tapped into the basic drive of all people. People are constantly looking for entertainment, for distraction, for joy, for happiness, for relief from the drudgery of life. But they are looking in the wrong places. While some things in this world are good and pleasant and are gifts from God for it says in 1 Timothy 6:17 that he has given us all things richly to enjoy, we must realize that ***things*** cannot satisfy the ache and the longing in our hearts and only God himself can fill that void.

We must ask God for new eyes to see clearly. We must ask God for a new mind to think clearly. We must ask God to help us see that holiness brings happiness.

I mentioned to you that this series of messages was inspired by a book I read by John Eldredge, *The Utter Relief of Holiness*. I shared how that title caught my attention because we don't think of holiness as relief and joy. I bought the book and benefited greatly. Here's a thought-provoking question the author asked, "What is our faith supposed to do to a person? What effect is it supposed to have upon us?" Now, we know of course that the greatest effect is eternal life through Jesus Christ. But what is that eternal life like? Is it an eternal life of drudgery or joy? We know the right answer to that question – joy, of course. But if we are to live eternally in joy, why is the joy not experienced on earth? Shouldn't we be increasingly experience what we will one day fully experience forever?

Yes, of course, a relationship with God is to be far more than a ticket into his kingdom, it is to be a new life now. Here is how Eldredge answered the question. Here is how Paul answered the question for he let the words of Paul in Ephesians 1 answer this great question. Here is what it says in the Message paraphrase:

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.

What was the goal? God's goal, before time began was to make us whole and holy. Translations often render this blameless and holy. But the idea of blamelessness is that our lives have been put back together so that we are beyond reproach, we are without blame, our character is as spotless as the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are holy. We are whole again.

This is what the Gospel is supposed to do to a person. The Gospel is supposed to bring wholeness to our fractured image. You and I were made in the image of God. We were created to reflect his holiness and therefore his joy and to live in bliss in the world. Sin broke us apart. This is what is missing from the understanding of so many people. Most of us realize that sin has legally separated us from God. Sin has made us guilty before God. A payment was needed to take away the guilt and condemnation.

But we forget that sin did something else; sin penetrated our system and began to fracture us from the inside out. I'm sure many of you are familiar with bugs or viruses that enter our computers, fracture files, and cause the system to operate slowly or not to operate at all. Right now, governments of the world are engaging in cyber-warfare, trying to infiltrate government systems, steal information, and shut down computer programs that keep the power structure running. This is the way sin is – sin is like an invading virus that has permeated our human nature to the depths.

Let me explain how – God made us to experience emotion. Emotions are a good thing. God has emotions. God feels things deeply. God feels love. God experiences joy. You and I are to experience these things, but the sin bug has infiltrated our emotional system so that it doesn't work properly. Sometimes we rejoice in the wrong things. Sometimes we are cold toward the joys of God. Sometimes we just don't feel like loving others. And, on top of that, we can feel shame, loneliness, heartache, sorrow, fear, anxiety. Our emotions are fragmented.

God made us with an intellect. He gave us the ability to reason, to learn, to converse, to think, and to express innovative ideas as we figure things out. This is an amazing gift. But the sin bug, the sin virus has infiltrated our intellectual system so that we no longer think correctly. We think wrong thoughts about God. We think wrong thoughts about others. We think wrong thoughts about important topics such as this one we are exploring – the happiness of holiness. We think those words don't go together. Our universities are now graduating students with degrees in nonsense

because they have forsaken the biblical worldview and embraced the worldview of humanism – making man the center. Our intellect is fragmented.

God made us with a will. He gave us the ability to make choices in life. But the sin bug, the sin virus has infiltrated our volitional system so that we make wrong choices, or no choices when choices need to be made, or we become passive and weak-willed and follow others to destruction. Our volition is fragmented.

But God, through Jesus Christ, has come into our lives to make us whole and holy. God has come to put the pieces of our lives together. Imagine yourself as a beautiful picture. Someone comes along, cuts the picture into a thousand odd-shaped pieces, puts you into a box, and offers to sell you. How much does it cost to buy you back? It costs everything. The seller demands that the price is another life for your life. And this is what God has done. He gave his life for you and you now belong to him. He bought you but when he got you, he got you in a box, so to speak, cut up into those thousands of pieces and no longer reflecting the beautiful picture you once were. You have been saved, yes, you now belong to him. But now God's work is to open the box and carefully start picking out the pieces and arranging them on the table. Slowly, piece by piece, he puts the picture together. That which was fragmented begins to take its original form. That which was scattered and broken begins to become whole, a unity, a beautiful picture that God made.

Do you see now what Paul was talking about in Ephesians 1? Let me read the verses again:

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.

God knew what sin would do to us even before sin entered the world. God knew it would break us into a thousand pieces, but he also knew our being broken apart was not beyond the remedy of his grace.

This is what God wants to do for you. He wants to make you holy. He wants to make you whole. He has said, "be holy for I am holy," is a call to rescue, to integrity, to wholeness, to beauty, to peace, to joy, to happiness as we become what he originally made us to become.

This is God's plan for all creation. God is making all things new. He will banish all that offends, all that rejects, all that refuses to come into compliance with his life. Colossians 1:20 tells us that his goal is to reconcile all things to himself through Christ, whether they are things in the heavens or things upon the earth. Everything, one day, will be brought into peace, oneness, and wholeness. This is what he wants to do with you!

This is the reason we preach the Gospel. The Gospel to all the nations is the beginning of the restoration of all things. We, at WGS are thrilled to be part of this. This is the reason we ask you to join us in prayer, in giving, in encouragement. We are not content just to give nice little Bible

studies. We want to impact our country, and other countries with the Gospel. Will you stand with us in this?

But now let me focus this final thought with you. Do you wish to be holy and whole? Or, do you wish to be fragmented? Let Jesus Christ have his way with you. Turn from your sin, let him be your Master in everything. Let him put the pieces of your life together. Let him make you holy and happy for his glory.