

## Introduction

The song Blessed Assurance describes the kind of life we want, not a life of seeing how much we can get away with, not a life of half-heartedness, and not a life of reluctant, begrudging obedience, but a life of happy holiness. Let's learn more about it.

## 263 05 HH – Holiness Looks Like Jesus – 3

Why would we think that we can define holiness in some technical theological way rather than just saying, "Let's just look at Jesus and we will discover true holiness."

As most of you know, we are in the midst of a teaching series we call The Happiness of Holiness. I have shared with you that I was inspired to create this series after reading a book by John Eldredge called *The Utter Relief of Holiness*. I still love that title. It is so true – walking in step with the Spirit of God rather than walking in the flesh is an utter relief and it brings the fullness of joy. None of this stereotyped, severe, frowning, gut it out type Christianity but freedom, joy, and happy obedience to God. I am reminded of the great Gospel song by Fanny Crosby - Blessed Assurance. Here's verse 3:

Perfect submission, all is at rest;  
I in my Savior am happy and blest,  
watching and waiting, looking above,  
filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

That's the kind of life we want, not a life of seeing how much we can get away with, not a life of half-heartedness, and not a life of reluctant, begrudging obedience, but a life of happy holiness.

We looked in our previous broadcast at Jesus. We looked at two events in his life to see if we could get an idea of how holiness looked on him. We discovered that this perfect man was also the most approachable of men. We discovered that he walked in humility. He did not come to flaunt his holiness and overwhelm people with their sense of unworthiness. Most already knew their desperate condition. He came to be one with them and to lift them. We also learned that Jesus avoided the several traps in his day to fight the wrong enemy. Jesus refused to pick up the sword and fight Rome. Instead, he picked up the sword of the spirit, the word of God, and fought the evil one. He did not fight Romans or the religious leaders. Instead, he fought the powers behind them which is what enabled him to focus on loving the Romans and his people.

When we imitate these two characteristics of Jesus, we will make considerable progress on the highway of holiness. Let's look at two more today.

Jesus came to set people free. After his 40 days of trial in the wilderness where he focused like a laser on the real enemy and defeated him, Jesus returned to Galilee. Luke 4 tells about Jesus entering the synagogue, reading from the Scripture and teaching. Jesus read from Isaiah 61. This is how it is recorded in Luke 4.

“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,  
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.  
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,  
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,  
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,  
<sup>19</sup> TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”

Jesus describes his people in four ways. He calls them the poor, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. What a sorry state for the people of God! These were to be the holy people of God. These were to be the ones God would set high above all the nations. These were the ones who were to be a light to the world. But they had sunk to poverty, to captivity, to blindness, and to oppression.

Why were they this way? - because of their sin. They brought it on themselves, first through idolatry, then through their narrow nationalism and preoccupation with the letter of the law that caused them to miss the spirit of the law. But look at Jesus’ response to this condition. The poor get good news preached to them, the captives are released, the blind see, and the oppressed are set free. Jesus said he had come to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord to them. He had come to grant grace to God’s people. He had not come to judge them.

This is the third mark of his holiness. Jesus had come to set people free. First, he came with humility. Second, he came to face the true enemy. Third he came to release people from their bondage.

After he read the passage from Isaiah he closed the scroll and gave his sermon. I love it. It’s an 8-word sermon, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” Perhaps he wanted to say more but immediately some of the synagogue leaders began taking offense and that disrupted the service. The leaders wanted to kill Jesus, but he departed from them and did exactly what the prophecy said. He preached good news. He released the captives, gave sight to the blind, and set free the oppressed.

We must go one step further than this. Jesus celebrated with the people. Let me give you an illustration to give some framework. I’m sure you’ve been to a doctor who gave you a proper diagnosis, but you were not pleased with him. He comes in and hardly greets you. He looks at your chart. He asks a few questions while he looks at your chart. He pulls out some instruments and examines your body. Then he writes a script, tells you what to do or not to do, barely shakes your hand and walks out. He was more like a robot than a human. Have you ever had that experience? Yes, he helped you. Yes, he gave a correct diagnosis, gave you the proper medication, and you got better, but that was it.

Jesus was not this way. Jesus celebrated with the people. Think about the story of Jesus and Matthew. Jesus asked Matthew to follow him, but I think there is a lot to this story that is unsaid. I believe Matthew and Jesus had some interaction before that event. I believe Matthew heard Jesus teach and that they talked about the kingdom of God, what Jesus was doing, and what Matthew was doing in his profession as a tax collector. I believe Jesus planted seeds deep within Matthew and that Matthew’s heart was burning with conviction and hope when Jesus walked up to him and said,

“Matthew, follow me.” All the obstacles that kept Matthew from God crashed. Matthew left his toll booth and with unhindered joy said, “Jesus, I will follow you. Will you come to my house for dinner tonight?”

And Jesus said, “Yes, Matthew, I would be delighted to be the honored guest in your house.”

One wonders if Matthew said, “Jesus, I have so many friends who need to hear what you are saying. May I invite them also to my house, so they can hear your life-giving words?” And Jesus said, “Matthew, invite them all. This is the reason I have come. This is the reason I am here.”

And so, they went home together and sometime during the evening before the meal was served Jesus must have said, “Matthew, I want this to be a special occasion. I want you and all of your friends to recline at the meal tonight in celebration of God’s goodness and in celebration of His kingdom.” Jews would normally sit upright at a table for their meals but on special occasions such as a great festival – like Passover – they would recline at their meal. Jesus wanted to recline with them.

Why? - because he was announcing through this meal that something special was taking place. The kingdom of God was coming to the house of Matthew and his friends. It was an evening to celebrate.

What a difference between Jesus and the doctor I described a few moments ago. No cold, indifferent diagnosis as if Jesus were looking at a piece of machinery and then going his way. Jesus came to set people free and to celebrate that freedom with them.

You know what else happened that night? The dinner must have been on one of the days that religious people fasted because they came to the party that night during the festivities. They did not come to join the celebration. They came to express their displeasure at what Jesus was doing. They went to Jesus’ disciples and said, “Why does your master not fast?” But Jesus must have overheard the conversation for he answered the question. Jesus said,

“Those who are healthy don’t need a doctor.” He paused and let his words sink into the ears and the hearts of all who listened. Then he looked at his new friends who reclined with him and continued,

“I did not come for healthy people. I have come for those who are sick. I did not come for those who are righteous. I came for those who are sinners and who need to repent of their sins.”

He turned to the Pharisees and quoting the prophet Hosea he said, “Go and learn what the prophet meant when he said, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice. I desire compassion, not religious duty.’”

And while the Pharisees walked away grumbling, Jesus continued feasting and celebrating with those he had set free.

We could talk about many more aspects of his life, but I have selected these four to give you a picture of the life of the only man never to have sinned, the holiest man ever to walk the planet. He walked in humility with sinners, not in judgment against them. He faced the true enemy that had put them into bondage. He set them free from their sin and the awful consequences it had brought,

and he came to celebrate with them. This was holiness in action, and this is something we must take a long look at as we seek to make progress in our lives so that we can be happy and holy. The holiest man ever to live was feasting with sinners and was full of joy.

We are at the half way mark now in this 10-part series. In our following broadcasts I am going to get into greater detail about what holiness should look like for us. But if we can pause here and reflect upon the character of the holy God who is full of joy and the God who became flesh, brought freedom to sinners, and celebrated with them, we see how we can be holy and happy. This is the happiness of holiness.

Friends, whenever I tell these stories about Jesus, my heart rejoices, and I want to spread his stories over the entire world. I want to spread this true picture of holiness over the entire world. But we cannot do it without your help. Your notes to us about praying for us are so encouraging. Your gifts to us that go into the ministry lift our heart as we seek to expand it throughout the U.S., and into other countries of the world. Join with us in this joyful adventure to spread the happy holiness of God.