

'THE REALLY GOOD LIFE'

(*The Life of Christ Series*)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Un-Scrooged

Charles Dickens' classic holiday tale 'A Christmas Carol' is a favorite play and movie this time of year. Most can recall the grouchy miser of London and his restless night of angelic visitations. Who can forget the winsome 'ghost' of Christmas past, the whimsical 'ghost' of Christmas present and the foreboding, austere 'ghost' of Christmas future once they have spent the night with Mr. Ebenezer Scrooge. Certainly Dickens' point was more than mere holiday entertainment; his underlying philosophical reminder is just as vital today as in decadent 19th century England; as Jesus said it long before anyone else: ***"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses."*** (Luke 12:14). At this time of year let it be our prayer that the one and only Holy Spirit will get the attention of many caught up in the secular, commercial, covetousness of our day, changing their lives by making them face the realities of their past, present and future. During the Christmas season this year, may the Holy Spirit of eternity past cause people to consider the wrong decisions and the sinful choices that have made them who they are today (John 14:16-17). May the Holy Spirit Who is here and now make those same people face the truth of how empty life is when it's spent wallowing in material acquisition devoid of spiritual relationships (John 15:26-27). And let's hope and pray that the Holy Spirit of eternity future will convince many about their eternal destiny and their need to repent before Christ our Savior (John 16:8-15). Of course, one of the powerful things used by the three spirits in Dickens' conversion of Scrooge was the family of Bob Cratchett. Though very poor and facing many trials there was a love, joy, and peace in that family that proved to Ebenezer the truth that there are many things that money can't buy. Christians and Christian homes are supposed to be the Holy Spirit's best exhibit 'A' of the love, joy, and peace that comes not from having things but from personally knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. In the days remaining for the holiday season, let's pray that the Holy Ghost of all eternity will touch the hearts and lives of many miserable non-Christians by giving them a season of restlessness and reflection that will cause them to repent and receive God's Gift of the Lord Jesus Christ for Christmas. And let's be sure that we and our families are spiritual advertisements He can use to attract many to our Lord and Savior. Looking back at Christmas 2018 may God enable us to proclaim like 'Tiny Tim' Cratchett (in the arms of an un-scrooged, jubilant Ebenezer), **'God blessed us, every one!'**

When The Savior (not Santa) is Coming to Town...

(*Zacharias' Happy Holidays Celebration / Luke 1:57-80*)

...Believers Return to God

(3 Proofs That You're Back In God's Favor)

Prayers Are Answered

"Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her."

1:57-58

Monday meditation: Answered prayers are a reward for faithfulness to the Lord (1 John 3:21-22). When we are not right with the Lord, He will not answer our prayers (Psalm 66:18). When you turn back to the Lord, answers to prayers will happen...and rejoicing is soon to follow. What needs to be cleared up with God, so His 'great mercy' in the form of answered prayer and blessing can flow to you again?

Scripture is Obeyed

"So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." So they made signs to his father – what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled."

1:59-63

Tuesday devotional: Are you willing to follow through on things from God's Word and His Spirit that you know haven't been done yet? Chastisement for sins of commission or omission aren't lifted by mere intention but by actually obeying God's Word about that thing. What are you waiting for? Don't worry about what family and friends think about it; obey God so they can see how blessing follows obedience.

Ministries Flourish

"Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea, and all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him." **1:64-66**

Wednesday thought: If you've been away from the Lord and now come back, it's essential that you find a ministry to serve in right away. The way you must show your thanks is not just verbal but physical as well. You must discipline your flesh (which probably led you away in the first place) to understand its purpose and need is to actively and faithfully worship and serve God. You must volunteer to do something for the Lord that requires discipline, faithfulness and sacrifice or you will not stick with this rededication of your life. Pray and ask God what it is you should do; then contact a church leader about serving HIM...ASAP!

...Believers Return to Bible **(3 Proofs that You're Back and Fruitful)**

Claiming God's Promises

"Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people; and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began; that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life." **1:67-75**

Thursday thoughts: Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit because he was full of scriptural knowledge. Being filled with the Spirit doesn't last long without the promises of God to sustain it. If you're genuinely sincere about 'raising the bar' of your spiritual life, you will discipline yourself to read, study, meditate and apply God's Word to your lifestyle and vocation. If you really mean it, start reading through the rest of the gospel of Luke immediately (about 10-15 minutes a day will give the Holy Spirit opportunity to fill you).

Called to God's Purposes

"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the Face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." **1:76-79**

Friday meditation: Don't you think John's father told him these verses often while he was still alive? Are you letting your heavenly Father inspire you to greatness through reverent study of His Word every day? He wants to use you for far more than just scratching out a living for the next 50 years! You were born into His family for eternal purposes of pointing those in darkness about Him to Jesus Christ for salvation. And, ask yourself this, "what children or young people am I inspiring toward biblical greatness in the sight of God?" Zacharias' influence continued after his death through the boy he had inspired. Who will remember you after you're gone for the spiritual influence you had upon them?

Choose God's Priorities

"So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel." **1:80**

Saturday devotional: After Zacharias and Elizabeth left this life, John continued to grow strong in the ways of God apart from all worldly influences. We don't know exactly where he went for the interim time before he went public for Jesus, but it was private, quiet and solitary. Do you have such a place where you can go daily and get away from the racket and distraction of this world? You need somewhere that God can prepare your heart and soul before 'your manifestation' at home, work and church. Spend a little time there today getting ready for worship tomorrow.