

THE REALLY GOOD LIFE

(Life of Christ Series)

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Beware the Grinch

Most people are familiar with the story of *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*. It is a clever traditional holiday tale that has a storybook ending as the weird, diabolical creature is converted by the love of all the kind citizens of 'Whoville'. I wonder if Dr. Seuss got the idea for his story from the Bible records about the angelic archangel Satan's scheme to keep Christmas from happening in the first place?

The Bible records that in the Garden of Eden God declared war on Satan and all the human race descendants of Adam and Eve under his control (**Genesis 3:15**). From that day on the devil knew that some 'Seed' (a male human descendant) would come into the world to destroy him and his weapon of mass destruction, 'death' (**Hebrews 2:14-15**). He was able to track the lineage and keep an eye on all high potential Messiahs through the ages. If he did get confused, he resumed his stake out of planet Earth after the flood by watching the sons of Noah, especially Shem. When God chose Abraham and Sarah to give birth to Isaac, he repeatedly tried to annihilate or assimilate the nation of Israel through many wars and captivities. When the prophets foretold that Messiah would be born of a virgin (**Isaiah 7:14**) and that His nativity would be in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**), he gleefully kept his focus on the lineage of David waiting for the perfect opportunity to stop Christmas before it even began and make God a liar Who can't deliver on His promises. **Daniel 9:24-27** gave the enemy an approximate time table to work with but then the prophetic intelligence went silent for about 400 years after Malachi. Then Gabriel began his missions between heaven and earth to Zacharias, Mary, and Joseph indicating that God was beginning to move His key operatives into strategic position and equipping them with spiritual resources to deliver the One Who would crush the devil with the 'shock & awe' of the cross (**Psalms 22 & Isaiah 53**).

Of course we know now that Satan, the original Grinch, did not stop or steal Christmas, but that's where the similarities of the two stories ends. Satan was not converted (and can't be -**Hebrews 2:16**); he was disarmed of his weapon of mass destruction, death (**Hebrews 2:14-15**); he was mortally wounded and weakened from what he was before the cross. Satan now schemes to deceive sinners into thinking they don't need a Savior (**2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 11:13-15**) and is seeking to again prevent Christ's return to Earth. This spiritual grinch and his grinchling demons can't mortally wound any born-again follower of the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 16:20, James 4:7-8, 1 Peter 5:8-9, etc.**). Satan, the grinch, will fail again in trying to stop Christ's return (**Revelation 12:9-12, 20:1-2, 20:10**). He is very aware of God's commitment to fulfilling **Genesis 3:15** in the end and can only cause as much pain and mayhem as possible on the way to his eternal death sentence in the Lake of Fire. He can't stop Christ from anything except from coming into the heart of people who chose to continue in sin and not turn in repentance and faith to Jesus. The very best Christmas present you can give the Lord Jesus this year is a friend or relative or neighbor who has become a citizen of 'Whoeverville' (**Romans 10:13**) by turning to the God Who saved Christmas by sending His Son to become our Savior and Lord (**Colossians 1:12-14**).

A Very Merry, Mary Christmas

(The Immaculate Conception of Jesus Christ)

Luke 1:26-38 (Part 2)

God's Clean Vessels

(Mary's Immaculate Moral Purity)

"And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'... Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His Name Jesus'... Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

1:28-34

*God still looks to use those believers who have personal high moral standards. Christians who truly guard their physical bodies as *temples of the Holy Spirit* prove that they have an extra heightened level of awareness of their Lord's constant presence and ownership of them "spirit, soul and body" (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).

MONDAY READINGS ON THIS SUBJECT: *Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 & 6:18-20*

Suggestion: Cleanse your life before the Lord by 'washing' at the foot of the cross as you confess specifically what needs cleansing. In prayer rededicate yourself to holiness. Watch God use you now!

TUESDAY READINGS ON THIS SUBJECT: *1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 & 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 2:20-22*

Suggestion: Ponder what kind of household vessel (pot, pan, vase, etc.) best illustrates the level of service you can be used for. What higher purposes do you aspire toward as you keep yourself clean for God? Pray for His leading.

God's Filled Vessels

(Mary's Immaculate Enablement)

"And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One Who is to be born will be called the Son of God." **1:35**

*Whatever God calls you to do will be too much for you to do in your own ability. Don't restrict Him to things you already can do; God's callings usually stretch us into areas we feel incapable. Whatever He calls you to do will also require empowerment of the Holy Spirit so that the Lord Jesus will be glorified through its accomplishment. 'Where He leads, He enables, provides, and blesses!'

WEDNESDAY READINGS ON THIS SUBJECT: *John 16:12-15, Ephesians 5:18-21, Philippians 4:13*

Suggestion: Meditate on this question: 'What would you like to do for the Lord if you knew you could not fail?' Let the Holy Spirit refine that idea in your mind for a day or two and then admit to Him that you know you can't pull it off in your own strength but KNOW that He can. Ask Him to simply use you as His vessel to make it happen in His way and in His time.

God's Other Vessels

(Mary's Immaculate Fellowship)

"Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." **1:36-37**

*Faith needs company to grow. When you embark on a new ministry or discipline or project for the Lord it would be wise to get around really spiritual people more often than usual. Unbelievers and the world are a real drag on faith (*1 Corinthians 15:33*), so it's best to minimize your time with them except to witness to them. Pick out some Christians at church who seem to be inspiring leaders or friends and find a way to get together with them. 'Birds of a feather, flock together'.

THURSDAY READING ON THIS SUBJECT: *1 Thessalonians 4:9-12, Hebrews 10:23-25, 1Peter 4:7-11*

Suggestion: Honestly consider the friends you usually socialize with by choice. Are they inspiring to your faith, neutral, or detrimental? If you could be like a certain gracious, inspiring Christian, who would that be? Pray and plan how you can get around people like that more often and ask God to make you that way, too.

God's Humble Vessels

(Mary's Immaculate Submission)

"Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." **1:38**
And the angel departed from her."

*Faith and submission are as valuable to God as silver and gold! Humble people who are rich in ability to trust God are the truly affluent ones in God's estimation. When God sees someone read and/or hear His Word and then look up to Him and say 'Okay!' He is deeply moved in His heart. Once our heavenly Father hears our humble prayer of submission to His will, all 'props' are taken away (even angel messengers) because 'mission impossible' has become 'mission accomplished!'

FRIDAY READING ON THE SUBJECT: *Hebrews 11:1 & 6, Romans 10:17, James 1:5-8 & 5:16-18*

Suggestion: You can see that 'faith' is absolutely essential to being blessed by God. Real faith is trust followed by obedient action. Real faith needs nurturing through Bible study and prayer. Real faith dismisses doubt and does great things. What is something biblical and personal you can trust God about today? As you pray about it don't doubt! Instead thank God for it in advance before it happens.

SATURDAY READING TO PREPARE FOR SUNDAY WORSHIP: Read *Luke 1:39-45* & pray for CBF!