

God Has A Surprise For You...Simple Joy!

Luke 2:8-20

December 23, 2018

4th Sunday of Advent

One of the great joys of the Food Pantry ministry is this candy jar!!!

All the children who have been with their parents before anticipate the simple joy of reaching their hands into the candy jar and pulling out a handful of candies.

There is such a smile on their faces!

As you can tell there is quite a variety of candies. What I find interesting is that for the most part candies have become a combination of nuts, nougats, flavors, coconut, caramel and other varieties to make the candies more complex.

One of the candies that has lasted for over 110 years is a simple candy. It is nothing but pure milk chocolate. Anyone want to venture a guess as to the candy I am referring to? Let me give you a clue. (Make a kissing sound!)

A Hershey's kiss!

Hershey kisses were introduced in 1907. At first they were wrapped by hand. In 1921 a machine was invented to wrap the chocolate drops and it was then the plume was added to make it easier to open the simple chocolate kiss.

Kisses are the 5th most popular candy in the U.S. Over 60 million Hershey's Kisses chocolates are produced each day at the company's two factories. That's a lot of simple chocolate joy!

There are currently 15 varieties of the chocolate kiss. The original milk chocolate, milk chocolate with almond, candy cane, pumpkin spice, hugs (white chocolate hugged with solid milk chocolate inside) and 10 other varieties.

The story is that Hershey Kisses got their name from the depositor that pumps the small drops of chocolate onto a cool metal plate. As the chocolate hits the metal plate and is formed into the simple familiar-pyramid shape, the depositor makes a sucking noise similar to that of a kiss, hence the Hershey "Kiss."

A simple candy, that brings a simple joy to all who reach their hand into the candy jar, young and old alike!

The simple Hershey Kiss gives us a simple joy and a simple reminder of the joy we are to experience and reach into with our lives.

God has a surprise for you...a KISS!

K.I.S.S. **Keep It Simple!**

The surprise God has for you is a simple joy!

In order for us to experience this simple joy we need the KISS!
We need to **Keep It Simple!**

We find ourselves each day waking up to a culture of complexity! There is the complexity of our media saturated, 24 hours connected cable t.v., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram culture. We are in a culture of constant pressure to perform and to dress the part. We find our complex culture a noisy culture. Can you find a space where there is total silence in your life? The chaotic events of life, family, the crowds, work, the uncertainties of the complexity seem to reach into our every space and time of our busy lives.

It is hard for us to go 24 hours without our connection to the complexity of technology. If you disagree, I challenge you to go 24 hours without the complexity of your smart phone, computer and t.v.!

Complexity is intentional, developmental and individual.
We choose to make our life complex by reaching our hand into the culture's jar of busyness, possessions, time wasted, self-interest and desires to look important.

Simplicity is intentional, developmental and individual.
We choose to make our lives simply simple by reaching our hand into God's jar or journey of simple joy.

God is a God of simple joys!
We see God keeping it simply simple in the birth of Jesus.
The shepherds were simple people.
The message was a simple message of Good News of God's love.
The sign was a simple sign...a baby born in a manger.
The discovery was a simple discovery of the Messiah wrapped in strips of simple cloth.
The joy was a simple joy that the shepherds let loose with as they returned to their simple lives.
The simple joy was for all people who were willing to simply place their trust in the jar of Jesus' simple hope, peace, love and joy!

This simple joy came to the humble, lowly and expectant hearts of simple-minded shepherds. They were not even a part of the main stream culture. They were not a part of the culture's complex norm. They were simple shepherds...common folk... simple people.

What a paradox of the incarnation of Jesus, the coming of Jesus!
We have heard the words so often they become too familiar:
"A Savior...Christ the Lord...a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

God surprised the world with the simple birth of the Messiah!
God surprised the world with the simple joy of Jesus' simple birth to a simple couple in a simple stable, with a simple message!
There was the stripping away of the culture's pride before the immense simplicity of Jesus' birth announcement to some simple shepherds.

The simple joy didn't stay in the manger. Jesus grew and lived the simply simple life. He grew up in a carpenter's home. He was Emmanuel...God with us. He lived simply so others could simply live.

In simplicity and humility the life of Jesus began, so it was with simple people in simple places that most of his work was done. The homes he knew and stayed in were the simple houses of ordinary folks.

He reached into the lives of simple people in their ordinary occupations.

His lessons of life were drawn from the jar of life's daily simple experiences.

Much of what Jesus did with people was to encourage them to experience the worth of who they were in his eyes.

His message to the people was a simple message of God's love.

Jesus' KISS on the lives of people was to lead them away from the evil complexities of life to the simple life of his hope, peace, love and joy.

Jesus called the people to follow him as a simple child. In fact, he told them that if they didn't keep it simply simple as a child they would not enter into his kingdom. (Matthew 18:4-6)

Not only does a child show us the simple joy of reaching their hands into a candy jar; they are our leading example on how to Keep It Simply Simple in life!

Hang out with some young children and discover how they keep life simple.

They keep it simply simple in their trust in the ones who love them.

They keep it simply simple in their wonder of the beauty and newness of life each day and God's creation.

They keep it simply simple in a love that is unconditional.
They keep it simply simple in forgiving others.
They keep it simply simple in their honesty about life.
They keep it simply simple in what brings them the belly laughs and giggles in life!
They keep it simply simple in what brings them joy in their lives.

Is it any wonder that Jesus said, **"Whoever becomes simple and elemental again, like this child, will rank high in God's kingdom."** Matthew 18:4 Message bible.

We still have that choice of which jar of life we desire to reach into: complexity or simplicity?

Keeping It Simply Simple does not equate with laziness or inactivity. Simplicity seeks to remove the complexities of the clutter of our culture that threaten to steal our sense of peace and joy and intimacy with Christ.

We are to keep it simply simple when we develop our attitude and life of faith, hope and love.

We are to keep it simply simple as we celebrate our relationship with Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us.

There is a rich simplicity that is discovered when we simply seek to be who we are in Jesus.

The Apostle Paul shared this truth with a young follower by the name of Timothy when he encouraged him with these words:

"A devout life does bring wealth, but its the rich simplicity of being yourself before God." I Timothy 6:6 Message bible

We witness so much pursuit of people reaching into the jar of our complex culture. The desire of possessions over people...#me over #serving others...busyness over stillness...doing over being...hating over loving...arguing over listening...complexity of culture's lifestyle over simplicity of Christ's lifestyle.

There is a wise statement out of the book of Proverbs that confirms the life of simplicity:

"A pretentious, showy life is an empty life, A plain and simple life is a full life." Proverbs 13:7 Message bible.

God desires us to Keep It Simply Simple!
God has a surprise for you...simple joy!

Unclutter the clutter and keep it simply simple.
There is an old Shaker hymn that sings true of the joy of keeping it simply simple in our lives:

*"Tis the gift to be simple, tis the gift to be free,
Tis the gift to come down where you ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be the valley of love and delight."*

We can keep it simply simple by **"filling our minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious---the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse."** Philippians 4:8 Message bible

God daily wants to surprise us with the simple joys of His hope, peace, love and joy.

To do so we are to come to Him daily with the simple expectancy of a child?

The simple joy of Jesus in our lives is a joy we can let loose with daily as we reach our hearts into his presence in our lives.

Daily we can seek His joy in the simple people, the simple message, the simple signs, the simple discoveries and the simple joys He brings us to see and experience.

Keep It Simply Simple!

God has a surprise for you...Simple Joy!

