

Denice Leslie
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Isaiah 49: 1 – 7
John 1: 29 – 42

Good News!

Intro: Joy of Good News

You know one job I think would be a lot of fun? Being on the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes Awards Team that surprises the winners.

Just imagine driving up with a check for a million dollars, a big bouquet of flowers, helium balloons --- running up to the house, ringing the doorbell and knocking the socks off the winners -- ordinary, everyday people from all walks of life! Watching their reactions! What fun that would be!

Publishers Clearing House is missing the boat here—they really don't need to hire people to do this. They could make a lot of money selling the opportunity to be on the award team!

Because in a bad news world, there's nothing like giving someone good news! It's a great joy for the winners and a great joy for those who get to share it!

If I got to do that, I'd be telling every body about it! I'd be elated, higher than a kite, jabbering to one and all!

We always think winning is everything—but there's something to be said for enjoying the joy of the winners!

For celebrating with them --- for sharing in the joy of their great good fortune!

Longing for Good News.

There's a lift in lifting up others.

In every act of kindness, joy and consideration of others there's an assurance that life is worth living. That good things can and do happen to people. Things that make the heart glad! And that we can be part of making it happen! We WANT to make goodness happen!

Deep inside it's a huge longing to receive and to be about giving Good News!

Because it's a grace I that we long for isn't it? A sought after relief from the anxiety of existence. A sense that in joy we are closest to God's desire for us.

We all long for good news to fulfill the best in us and all of creation.

We Win the Grace Sweepstakes

This is where John the Baptist strides into our Sunday morning, knocks on our hearts and announces we ARE the winners of great Good News: John runs up to our door, rings the bell and announces: We are the winners of God's Grace Sweepstakes! And just what is it that bestows this great grace upon us? John turns to a man striding toward us and says—There—look there: "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John makes sure we understand that there is no doubt that we are the recipients of a great good fortune in this man named Jesus. He goes to great lengths to assure us of the validity of this award.

He says, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove.....I myself did not know him, but the ONE who sent me told me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the One.'"

John is the Award Team. The prize is Jesus. The recipients are you and I!

The Lamb of God

We are the recipients of the Lamb of God! So just what is that we have won here?

The Lamb of God---The LAMB— In the Old Testament, an unblemished lamb was an acceptable animal a person could slaughter as a sacrifice to God for the atonement or forgiveness of one's misdeeds—one's sins—that would make one right again with God.

Only this Lamb is a man. A man chosen by God. A man in whom God is present.

A self-offering for us – a complete and unexpected offering. An act of generosity and love, unmerited. Totally a surprise! We didn't even enter the sweepstakes and we've won! A complete God surprise. A God act for US!

The Good News

THIS IS GOODNEWS:

Jesus is the Lamb of God because in Jesus "God is the ultimate victim of all human cruelty. God bleeds for every human wound. Inasmuch as we do good or ill to any human person, it is done to God. Forgiveness is not only a matter to be settled among ourselves--or left unsettled because of our inadequacies. It is God's affair, too.

And the good news of Christianity is *that, since God suffers human pain, since God is the victim of human injury, then there is beyond all our sin a love that is inexhaustible. God's love for this creation never comes to a point where it can take no more.*"¹

What an amazing gift. What an unexpected, surprising turn of events in human existence! Behold the Lamb of God! What great Good News! Unlike a million dollar sweepstakes, this is award will never be completely spent—it will never run out—it is an inexhaustible source of goodness, well being, forgiveness and unconditional love for us!

For us??

Andrew

In our bible story for this morning, one of the recipients of this great good news is Andrew. Think of him as Andrew-Every-Disciple. Andrew you and me.

Andrew is like one of the neighbors out mowing his lawn when the Publishers Clearing House van drives up in his neighborhood. He stops and looks up to see what's going on.

He sees John standing there with Jesus. He sees the balloons and the flowers---- He runs over and Jesus seeing him waves, and shouts, "Come and see!"

So Andrew does come and see. He sees everything. He witnesses it all! He goes in and stays with Jesus. And he comes out realizing he's a winner—Andrew comes out feeling he's won something beyond measure.

Bouncing off the pavement, he can't wait to share his good fortune. He runs home and he tells his brothers: "We have found the Messiah!"

Translation: We have found living hope—God given, God breathed, God gifted, and God with us!

Yes Andrew Every Disciples, God loves us.

God is here for US in this person named Jesus: For you and me and everyone who wants to come and see.

Andrew Every Person's Mission

We are Andrew. Each of us is a winner of God's Grace Sweepstakes. Each of us who accepts Jesus invitation to "Come and see" who Jesus is. We are called to follow Andrew's example by inviting others to "Come and see." That's our mission.

"Christ invites us to enter into a shared life with [him] our Gracious Host. From this point on, the way to truth will be in [personal relationships formed and founded in Jesus.]

Our living for him is simply a reflection of this truth. Andrew invites Simon to come and see. [We invite because we received an invitation.] We welcome because we were welcomed ourselves.

¹ Ibid.

Come and See!

John wants us to see that simple words of invitation are more crucial to the life of redemption than even proclamations of faith. T

[After all] this is how the church begins.”²

It begins with a surprise! A complete surprise: An unexpected win. An invitation to receive an unmerited gift. An unexpected win fall!

That we the Human Race should be the recipients of so much good will, love and sacrifice, forgiveness and hope. And you KNOW in your gut what HOPE means!

Yes! There is a future.

A future independent of our own efforts.

Independent of a failing economy, independent of good or bad health. Independent of youthfulness or age, independent of our own efforts to be

good people.

Independent of the presidential elections.

Completely dependent on our relationship with the Lamb of God who takes on our fallibility and destroys death’s anxious grip on us—it’s power to immobilize and self-defeat us.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world destroys death itself—freeing us for life!! Freeing us for joy—

NOW and ALWAYS.

His invitation is God’s sweepstakes win for all:
“Come and See”

² Homiletics Illustrations