

## **“Life as a Do-Over”**

Luke 4:14-21; Lev. 25:8-55

January 21, 2007, 8:56 am Rejoice!

- I. It seems like all of us are in some kind of debt these days.
  - a. Credit cards
  - b. Car payments
  - c. House payments
  - d. College loans
    - i. How nice it would be to be completely out of debt. Amy and I were joking the other day about winning 50K in a drawing and I couldn't help but thing –after taxes – I would still owe money (Duke is VERY expensive)!
  - e. Some of our debt has to do with mistakes we make – bad financial decisions, misplaced priorities, and trying to live in an affluent community – and some of our debt just comes with living. With gas prices twice as much as it used to be, health coverage more expensive each year, sales tax going up in Savannah, there are plenty of expenses that have increased on us that have nothing to do with our mistakes.
  - f. How nice it would be for all that to be wiped away.
- II. Year of Jubilee
  - a. Old Testament Jubilee – Every 49 years, everything was restored to its original state. Land was not to be planted or harvested. Any “volunteer” plants were left for the poor. Slaves were released. Debts were erased. Ownership of land returned to the folks who owned it 49 years before.
  - b. The point of all this was that God was the true owner of everything – not the rulers or leaders. The Hebrew people were merely using the property, using the labor. Rich and poor were not determined by what a person had, but by trusting in God.
  - c. It was also a response to how God was good to us. Just as God delivered his people from Egypt and captivity, so we now should deliver our brothers and sisters from the captivity that the world may have brought upon them. Economics and property, debt and slavery, all this went away in the Jubilee year. As God showed his people mercy, so should they now show mercy.
  - d. It also brought things back to their original state. Before sin, people were free. Before sin, God owned everything. Before sin, there was no debt. Before sin, people trusted God for everything. The Jubilee was an attempt to bring back the natural order of things.
  - e. Jubilee also reminded people that you do more than worship God with your hearts – it effected all parts of your life. As you spent that year trusting God that you had saved up enough food for the coming year, you remembered that your life was in God's hands. As you gave up your slaves, you trusted that you would somehow survive until the next year. As you forgave debts and returned land, you realized that God wasn't interested in people becoming rich. God's order was about following him. Power came from above – not on earth. The poor and

enslaved realized that they didn't have to wait until their death to embrace paradise.

- f. Of course, that's a nice thought, but Scripture is filled with people breaking the Jubilee. Slaves were released and then immediately recaptured. No credit was given the year before Jubilee. The property rules were ignored – as eventually all the rules were ignored.
  - g. The words Jesus read were from Isaiah during a time in which the major theme is a restoration of Israel. It is in keeping with this that the prophet would bring mention to the Jubilee, in which things will go back to as they started. The year of the Lord's favor is the year of the Jubilee. Once again God would have delivered them from captivity. And once again, they would remember this by keeping God's commandments. Of course, all this is forgotten after they are delivered, as explained in Nehemiah 5.
- III. What Jesus is saying is that are to go back to the Future
- a. So often, we equate the words of Christ as something new and revolutionary but in reality, His ministry on this earth was to take us back to the beginning – to reset life in God's Creation. His desire was for us was to go back to the way things were in Eden, with us being perfect in God's eyes, to be in communion with the Almighty, to go back to life without the need sacrifices and sin.
  - b. But in order to do that, people would have to understand a very important word: grace.
    - i. Grace is God's unmerited and unconditional love. You can't help but tie grace into Jubilee. Jubilee was unmerited and unconditional. If it was followed to the letter, it would have done something very similar to what Christ was trying to do: return things back to the way they were at the beginning.
    - ii. God's grace went beyond the Jubilee, though; it took away not only your debts but your spiritual debts too. It made life do-able. It gave and gives us new life, a new chance, a new opportunity.
- IV. Life as a do-over
- a. Show clip from City Slickers
    - i. Your life is a do-over.
  - b. In a nutshell, that is grace. Your life is a do-over. What has happened happened. It is in the past. But we are living in today and looking to tomorrow. What if we could ignore the past and move into tomorrow? What if we could live today without the weight of yesterday upon us? This is the beauty of grace ... if we accept it.
- V. And that last part is the challenging part.
- a. Anyone can say, "I am a Born-again Christian" but if they don't get what that means, it just means you attend a charismatic church and are judging other Christians against your term "born-again". But what that originally meant – according to Jesus – was that your life was a do-over, if you wanted to be.
  - b. For many of the early Christians, they were living lives that were radically opposed to Christ. They were prostitutes, tax collectors, murderers, adulterers, idolaters, and even worse things. To say life could be a do-over to them meant far more than tax credits and loan forgiveness; it meant life without people saying,

“Wasn’t she a street walker?” or “Wasn’t he a Roman guard?” It meant people would say, “Did you hear that Sheila became a Christian?” and realizing that if God could save one person, God could save anyone.

- c. But a person had to accept it. And that is the hard part. We all have pretty comfortable lives. We eat good and relatively healthy foods. We have shelter and heat and AC. We have an abundance of clothes. We have a loving community. And on top of that, we live in huge houses that costs thousands of dollars a year to heat and cool, we spend thousands on entertainment, we have mp3s and dvds. It is hard to imagine that we need a change in our lives.
  - d. And yet, that is the requirement of grace, of Jubilee – in order to get the full benefit, we have to realize that we need it. Because in all our wealth, we are sinful people no better than a prostitute or murderer. We need Christ changed lives because, underneath it all, we are not happy with all that we have acquired. We need Him because when we live a life for His purpose, we have meaning. We know love. We know that thing we have been searching and striving for all our lives was searching and striving for us at the same time.
  - e. That is what Christ came to proclaim – that our lives can be a do-over, if we let them be. We no longer have to be known as anything but a man or woman after Christ’s own heart. Another person called us “used-to-be’s” because that is what Christ creates: we used to be one thing, and today we are this.
- VI. Life is a do-over if we call it
- a. Out on the playground, you had to call a do-over to get to do it. It was a minor loop hole, but it was part of the game. And the sooner you called it, the better the game went.
  - b. Christ requires us to call a do-over. It won’t mean that the mistakes we have made in life will go away. It means that the future we live won’t be multiplying and magnifying them with guilt and stress. It means if we accept Christ’s grace, all those things that were a detriment will become an asset. As our priorities change and our debt decreases, we can give glory to God and show the change he brought. Our witness becomes the change.
  - c. God doesn’t offer us a debt-free card; he offers us a new life. He doesn’t offer us earthly riches but He does offer us spiritual riches.
  - d. That is the good news. That is the Jubilee. Are you calling a do-over – or are you still trying to make an impossible situation work? The call is yours.