

Introduction

Good morning. This is the third week in our sermon series – Kamikaze Hearts for God – How Faith and Action take us to the Edge. Last week we looked at Abel and how he practiced Kamikaze giving. We learned that God isn't looking for our money – but that He is looking for faith. And that as we practice Kamikaze giving – letting our giving be directed by His divine wind – we will both exercise our faith muscle and grow it.

This week we are going to look at the life of Enoch – a man who walked with God – a man who pleased God. Today God wants us to learn a little more about walking with God and pleasing Him. Let's pray.

Prayer -

Our Innate Desire to Please

There is something innate in us that causes us to want to please others. We want to hear others express that they are pleased with us – we want to be the object of another's pleasure. Even the most rebellious teenager - wanting nothing to do with the parent you know – Drop me off a couple of blocks from the Junior High – even then our teenagers have latent feelings about pleasing the parent – even though it may come out as a negative - something like “I can never please them. They think I am good for nothing.” Deep down, they want to please their parent. Several years ago, a friend of mine was having very serious problems with his son - and one morning God got me up at about 4:30 and told me to go over to the house and walk around their house and pray. Shortly after I got there, the house was in turmoil, the son was wielding a kitchen knife and threatening the family. When the police arrived and subdued the son – as he was taken away in handcuffs – he walked by me and muttered under his breath – “Now they will really hate me.” It was a heart cry of one who deeply wanted his parents love and approval – to please them.

As adults – our desire to please others is often misdirected. I have been and continue to be someone who wants to look good before others – to be a people pleaser. I remember years ago I was working at an engineering firm – and whenever I would work a little late, I would walk out to my car in a way that would take me past the Vice-President of Engineering's office. But when I would leave early or on-time, I would go another way. One day, as I was heading home – past the VP's office, the Lord spoke to me.

Bob – Why are you going this way?

Does God ever ask you questions that you don't need to answer but that need to be asked? I hadn't realized what I was doing until He asked the question. In a flash – I realized that I was trying to appear good – without necessarily doing good. And that little question has started me down a path – one that I would say I am still on – rooting out those areas in my life where I am playing the game of life for appearance sake – and not for real. Trying to please others by appearing to do right.

I suspect that I am not alone in this. In a thousand ways every day – all of us – in our desire to please others – do things – that if God asked the question – “Why are you doing this?” - we would have to answer – “To appear better than I really am.”

Learning What Pleases God

Those of us whom Jesus has grabbed hold of have heard the call to change our ways - to please God rather than continuing to be people pleasers – To change our orientation from being man pleasers – to becoming God pleasers. To take our innate desire to please others and focus those desires toward God.

We encouraged to do this in the Word. For example – Paul’s words in Ephesians 5 :

⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),
¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

I want you to notice the effort involved in Paul’s exhortation – we must “try to learn what is pleasing to God.” It’s not as simple as just obeying God. He’s saying that we are to learn how to please God. There is so much to pleasing God. We make strides – but then we still have a long way to go.

Excelling at Pleasing God

Listen to what Paul says in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica chapter 4 :

¹ Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you actually do walk), that you excel still more.

If you are like me, I suspect that this is a desire of yours – you want to make this part of your life – you want to walk with God and excel in pleasing Him. Our Scripture today tells of one who did just that. Enoch.

- Enoch - who was seven generations from Adam
- Enoch - who was the father of Methuselah and great grandfather of Noah.
- Enoch – who didn’t see death – but at the end of life was transported into the very presence of God.

Enoch is listed in our hall of faith as one to model our lives after.

The Scripture

Let’s see what the Word of God tells us about Enoch and see if we can take one or two steps forward in learning how to please God / learning how we can excel at this.

Hebrews 11:5-6

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death; AND HE WAS NOT FOUND BECAUSE GOD TOOK HIM UP; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please Him , for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

What can we learn from Enoch about Pleasing God?

By faith Enoch was taken up. What is this saying? Follow the logic of this passage with me. Enoch and Elijah were the only people who did not die / they were transported / they were translated / taken directly to heaven. Notice that our passage says this three times just in case we didn't get it the first time.

Now from the first week - Faith is assurance of things hoped for – evidence of things not seen. It doesn't seem to me to require a lot of faith to be taken up while its happening. There must have been faith before the fact. And in fact – that is what our text says – before he was taken up he obtained the witness that he was pleasing to God.

And since you cannot please God without faith – Enoch must have been believing that God was going to take him up. And that means that God must have told him ahead of time. Now that would be something hard to believe – “You're not going to die.” Yet it seems that Enoch pleased God by exercising faith before He was taken up.

Now the Holy Spirit gives us another definition of faith:

- Believing God is
- Rewards those who seek him

“Believing God is” – that sounds simple – but not believing when He is revealed – but believing when he is not seen. We don't doubt that God is when the Red Sea is parting – but we do when a good friend is dying – when a mothers body is riddled with cancer.

But not just “Believing God is – but believing that He rewards those who seek Him – not believing while He is rewarding – that's not faith – but believing when you don't see the rewards – We don't seek for something that is found.

It is Possible to Please God

One of the great messages that is woven throughout the Word of God is that:

It is possible to please God

Most of you know people with very high standards that are impossible to please. Maybe a spouse or a boss or parent – they have such high standards – that they are impossible to please. And how dreadful for us as parents if our children don't know that they can please us. Some of you had parents that were impossible to please. And if you think your parents have high standards. The holy God has impossibly high standards – holiness is completely unattainable to any of us – “Be holy as I am holy” – “Be perfect – even as I am perfect.” We can read these Scriptures and become discouraged.

We read the scriptures – and know that we were people pleasers and now want to be a God pleaser. But God's standards are so high – we continually fall short. We continually miss the mark. When I started on this walk 36 years ago – I really thought that by now my actions and my thought life would be perfectly lined up with God's Word by now. That my critical spirit would be long gone. That my deep seated pride would be completely rooted out and replaced with humility. That my self-centeredness would be completely transformed to

Christ-centeredness. I mean we're talking 36 years of walking with God – shouldn't these be gone by now?

And yet the good news of the testimony of Enoch is that even in our imperfect state

It is possible to please God.

That is very good news. And not only that – but our scriptures tells us that we can know that we are pleasing to God.

for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God.

Notice that Enoch obtained some kind of indication from God that he was pleasing to Him. Enoch heard from God that He was pleased. It is not only possible to please God - it's possible – in this life – to hear God's encouraging words – “You are my son – you are my daughter – I am well pleased with you.” That's part of what Enoch has to tell us – he is part of that cloud of witnesses cheering us on. You can please God – and He will reward you with His words of encouragement – He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

I've talked to a number of people this week asking them if they have ever experienced God's pleasure – ever known that they were pleasing to him. Remember Eric Liddell's

I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure.

Not many of us can honestly say that we know that we are pleasing to God. But the good news that Enoch has to share with us is that not only that we can please God – but we can know that God is pleased with us.

How to Please God with our Actions

Let's take a few minutes and look at what other Scriptures say about pleasing God.

Pleasing God by Refraining from Ungodly Actions

Enoch is mentioned three times in the scriptures – in the historical account in Genesis 5:24-25 and in the Epistle of Jude. Jude quotes from a prophecy from Enoch.

Did you ever wonder where that was from? Well it is word for word from the Book of Enoch.

The book of Enoch has an interesting history: It was considered Scripture by many early Christians. The earliest Christian literature of the 2nd and 3rd centuries is filled with references to this book. After the Council of Laodicea decided that it was not wholly canonical (which having read the book – agree) it gradually passed out of circulation and eventually was lost until 1773.

Although not completely inspired, the book is filled with prophecies of Enoch about coming judgment and the coming Messiah. In fact, in spite of the book having very specific prophecies about the history of Israel that have come true, it has been rejected by the Jews

as part of their canon because of the emphasis on the Messiah as the son of Man – the book of Enoch speaks clearly about how the Messiah was going to be both God and Man – how He was going to be eternal – the Ancient of days. For the Jew’s the book of Enoch was just a forgery of Christians trying to connect Jesus to the Old Testament saints of Enoch and Noah. All of this changed in 1948 when a number of copies of the book were found among the Dead Sea scrolls – dating it hundreds of years before the coming of the Messiah.

From Enoch’s prophecy we find what displeases God – people who

- Do Ungodly deeds
- Done in Ungodly ways AND
- Speaking Harsh things against God

Other Scriptures tell us that we will please God if we refrain from doing certain things

- It pleases God when we flee immorality¹
- It pleases God when we live a life of sexual purity²

God is calling His people to a life a moral and sexual purity. And it pleases Him when we make those kind of choices. Many of us here are just one wrong choice away from destroying our family and all that you cherish. There are some of you that are struggling with pornography. And you know that this does not please God. You don’t need me to tell you that. But God says he is pleased when you flee immorality – he is pleased when you develop a lifestyle – a habit of sexual purity. If it is possible to please God – it is possible to flee immorality. This gives the Father great pleasure to see his children walk in this way. Do you want to learn how to please God this morning – learn how to flee all kinds of immorality.

Pleasing God by doing Godly Actions

But as parents, if all our children do is to **not** do things that displease us – that is a far cry from those things they do that bring us sheer delight. If you are parent, think about those things your kids do that bring you great pleasure. We don’t end the day thinking – “Well I am so pleased that Johnny didn’t pound the living daylights of his brother today.” No – we think about little strides towards maturity – little steps towards expressing creativity or skill.

So let’s briefly look at a few instances where God specifically tells us things that please him.

- It pleases God when we ask for wisdom instead of material wealth³
- It pleases God when we praise him⁴
- It pleases God when we give to Him⁵
- It pleases God when we bear fruit⁶
- It pleases God when we grow in our knowledge of Him⁷

¹ Ecclesiastes 7:26

² I Thes 4:3-5

³ 1 Kings 3:6-14

⁴ Psalm 69:30

⁵ Philippians 4:18

⁶ Colossians 1:9-11

⁷ Ibid

So God's word is full of do's and don'ts that we can do and refrain from doing that can please him. But let me ask a question.

The Role of Faith in Pleasing God

Do you think that you can praise him, build His church, give to Him – be like Enoch and walk with God and hear from God and yet not please Him?

What does our Scripture say to us this morning?

without faith it is impossible to please Him,

Our text this morning says that we can do all kinds of good things – we can avoid doing all kinds of bad things – And God says that if these are not done in faith – we cannot please Him.

Now this starts to unfold one of the great mystery's of God. And that is the role of faith and action. God's word is clear about the actions that please Him – but He doesn't let us forget that it is not just the actions alone – all of our actions need to be done in faith. How do we do that?

Enoch demonstrated faith - walked with God – had a relationship with God - If walking with God means a relationship that is always visible – where is faith? Let's think about this in terms of a human relationship. Walking through life with a spouse or a friend. Where does faith come into play here? When do we need to have faith in our friend or our spouse? Not when the communion is full and the times of intimacy is deep. No it's during times when they have done something or said something that we don't understand. That seems to run contrary to who they are or what that have previously told us. We need faith in that person when we are apart. Trust them to remain faithful to us – even when we don't see it.

It's the exact same thing with God. Faith is believing that God is – not when He is revealing Himself to us – but when He is not. Faith is believing that God is – not when we see Him – but when we don't. Faith is believing that God rewards us. Not when we get the rewards. But when we don't. Seeking God implies that we don't see Him – we don't understand something about Him. You don't seek for something seen – you seek for something that is hidden or unseen.

For Enoch – God spoke to him about coming judgment. He didn't see it fulfilled. But our text says that he believed it – even without seeing it. Enoch's prophecy in Jude foretells of God coming to earth. Enoch never saw that. But he heard God's word and believed it and acted on it.

Conclusion

God has given us an example in Enoch – It is possible to please God – and that is very good news. In spite of God's incredibly high standards – it is possible to please God. And it happens with faith and action. It starts, as it did with Enoch by learning to walk with Him. Walking with Him – getting to know Him – to know what pleases Him – know what is on His heart today.

And then doing it – speaking His words to others – making choices that please Him. And doing this all knowing that we do it imperfectly – knowing that these choices alone will not please Him – we need to trust Him that these actions please Him. And that faith and action are inseparable – both are required.

But the good news is not only that we can please God – Enoch tells us that we can know that we please Him – it is one of the rewards that God gives us for seeking Him. Sometimes we can experience His pleasure as Eric Liddell did when he ran. Most of the time it comes after a period of stretching that faith muscle. Acting on His word – even when we don't see how it is true – going to the edge with Him. And then – and I cannot tell you when it will happen – but then – God will let you know that He is pleased with you.

I would like to close with a video clip from the mini-Series “Jesus of Nazareth.” The scene is at Joseph the carpenter's workshop and I want you to watch for the delight of the father.

Video Clip – [Joseph tells some boys about how God uses the creativity He gave to man to make things like plows and wheels and ladders. He tells them that ladders can be used to reach high - even to heaven. Joseph is pulled away from the group to handle a customer. Jesus (about 5 years old), goes to the ladder and begins to climb it. Joseph sees his son climbing the ladder to the roof and is, at first, alarmed. But then his face lights up with delight when he sees what his son has done. Jesus, upon reaching the top – begins to look around Nazareth and the surrounding hills with great delight as only a 5 year old can portray]

Did you see the delight? The father was responding to the faith actions of the son. The son heard the father's word about the ladder, believed them, and then took a risky action. Put his father's words to the test. The son went to the edge. And Joseph was delighted.

Our heavenly Father is delighted when we hear His word and act upon it in faith no matter what the risk.

The clip had one other piece to it. Jesus, the incarnate Son of God was getting a glimpse of the larger creation that He made for the first time. Did you see His delight? Our Heavenly Father looks down upon us – His creation and says – “You are very good.”

All of our actions need to line up with what we have heard from Him as we walk with Him – from His written Word and from His spoken words. And then having done all – believe that, in spite of the very imperfect way we do this – we know that He is pleased because Jesus was pleasing to the Father and we are trusting not in our works – but in the work of Christ.

With faith and action it is possible to please God and to know that we please Him– and that's very good news.