

UNFROZEN

Advent Message Series

We live in a spiritual world where it is “always winter but never Christmas.” This Christmas, discover how God’s love breaks the freezing power of sadness, conflict, anger and despair.

Frozen Bleak

Romans 15:7-13 NLT

7 Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. 8 Remember that Christ came as a servant to the Jews to show that God is true to the promises he made to their ancestors. 9 He also came so that the Gentiles might give glory to God for his mercies to them. That is what the psalmist meant when he wrote: “For this, I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing praises to your name.” 10 And in another place it is written, “Rejoice with his people, you Gentiles.” 11 And yet again, “Praise the LORD, all you Gentiles. Praise him, all you people of the earth.” 12 And in another place Isaiah said, “The heir to David’s throne will come, and he will rule over the Gentiles. They will place their hope on him.” 13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Weekend of November 29, 2014

Frozen Bleak

Romans 15:7-13 NLT

1. The World's Frozen Treats

- a. God-is-Dead Blizzard
- b. Make-your-own-God Sundae

2. The Divine Defroster

- a. God sent his son
- b. God accepts us
- c. God is our hope

Resource Questions:

Romans 15:7-13

- 1) When people no longer believe in God, where do they place their hope?
- 2) What are some larger social problems that arise when people pick and choose their own personal moral code?
- 3) Christmas is ultimately about God sending his Son into this world. What are some ways you Christmas traditions that celebrate God entering the world through the normal experience of life (birth, learning to walk & talk, experiencing parental love and care, etc.).
- 4) Often we talk about “accepting Jesus Christ” but Romans 15:7 says that Jesus Christ has accepted us. What are some ways you can imitate Christ in accepting others?
- 5) What is the difference between God being the source of our hope rather than some event or action or person?
- 6) In Dante’s Inferno the gates of hell had the inscription: “Abandon all hope - Ye Who Enter Here”. How does this connect Romans 15:7ff.
- 7) Where in your life do you need to experience the warming thaw of God’s hope?

UNFROZEN

Let us rejoice, Christmas has come!
The freezing power of conflict is conquered.
The birth of Jesus gives us peace.

Frozen BROKEN

Luke 4:16-21 NLT

16 When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. 17 The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: 18 “The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, 19 and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.” 20 He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue looked at him intently. 21 Then he began to speak to them. “The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!”

Weekend of December 6, 2014

Frozen Broken

Luke 4:16-21 NLT

1. No Peace

- a. Global Conflict
- b. Family / Relationship Conflict
- c. Inner Conflict

2. Prince of Peace

The peace (shalom) of God comes through Jesus.

3. Person of Peace

“When God brings peace, he will do it so quietly that you just might miss it. That’s the way God’s shalom comes: not with a marching band and hoopla and press coverage, but quietly and to unlikely people.” - Matt Woodley

Resource Questions:

1. What are the most concerning conflicts you see in the world right now?
2. Do you see signs of peace in those regions?
3. Christmas is a time when families gather and often this reminds us of various conflicts and brokenness in our relationships with others. What are some ways people cope with relational brokenness at Christmas?
4. Why do you think people experience inner conflict? Why are some things you do to help you experience inner peace?
5. In Lk 4, Jesus reads a bible passage and says it is fulfilled in him – he is the one who brings God’s ultimate peace, restoration, and salvation (i.e., Hebrew=’shalom’) to the world. How does this connect to Luke 2, when the angels announce Jesus birth bringing peace?
6. How does the quote from Matt Woodley (see outline) connect to Matthew 5:5,9?
7. Being a person of peace is an important way to follow Jesus. Name three practical and positive things you can do this Christmas to practice peace in your family and relationships.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

UNFROZEN

Let us rejoice, Christmas has come!
The freezing power of despair is set aside.
The birth of Jesus gives us joy.

Frozen Blue

Luke 2:8-15 NLT

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." 13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." 15 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Weekend of December 12, 2014

Frozen Broken

Luke 4:16-21 NLT

The good news of Jesus' birth frees us from fear and gives us the choice to rejoice.

1. The Choice: Mega-Fear to Mega-Joy

Luke 2:9-10: "...They were terrified (gk "mega-fear"), 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy (gk. "mega-joy") to all people."

2. Good News that leads to Joy: The birth of a Saviour, the Lord Messiah

Luke 2:11: "The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!"

Our joy flows from the good news of our ...

- Hope in God
- Peace with God
- Love of God

3. Person of Joy

- Believe the gospel
- Fix your thoughts (*Philippians 4:8ff*)
- Make a choice to rejoice (*Philippians 4:4*)

Resource Questions:

1. What are some of the reasons people get sad at Christmas time?
2. If you have a friend or family member who is sad during Christmas what do you do to help them through the season?
3. It was an ordinary night for the shepherds and then an angel appeared to them. Why do you think they were "very afraid"?
4. Luke uses the word "speak good news" (e.g., evangelize) more than any other New Testament writer (1:19; 2:10; 3:18; 4:18, 43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1 and 15 more in Acts). Why do you think speaking and hear good news is such an important idea for Luke (cf., 4:18)?
5. Joy is hard to explain with words but you know it when you experience it. When you think of some joyous moments in your life, what are they?
6. When you struggle believing the good news that God accepts, forgives and adopts you as his child (it is normal to struggle from time to time), what "not-good-news-thoughts" plague you the most?
7. What are some things you can do to cultivate more joy in your life?
8. How does Philippians 4 help us make a choice to rejoice?

UNFROZEN



Let us rejoice, Christmas has come!
The freezing power of anger is extinguished.
The birth of Jesus gives us love.

Frozen Bitter
Romans 8:31-39 NLT

31 What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? 32 Since he did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won't he also give us everything else? 33 Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? No one—for God himself has given us right standing with himself. 34 Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. 35 Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean he no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? 36 (As the Scriptures say, "For your sake we are killed every day; we are being slaughtered like sheep.") 37 No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. 38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Sunday, December 21, 2014

Frozen Bitter

Romans 8:31-39

God's love for us roots out our bitterness toward others.

1. The Root of Bitterness

- **The Darkness**

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior." Ephesians 4:31 (NLT)

- **The Danger**

"... Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many." Hebrews 12:15 (NLT)

2. The Demonstration of God's Love (vv.31-34)

"The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" Luke 2:11

- **Beyond Bethlehem**

3. Changed by the Steadfast Love of God (vv.35-39)

"...nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God..." Romans 8:39b

- **Our love for God – frail, fickle, & faltering**
- **God's love for us – Faithful & Persevering**
- **Our love for others - releasing & forgiving**

Resource Questions:

1. Ephesians 4:31 connects bitterness with anger. Can you think of examples of this from life?
2. Why do you think the "root of bitterness" is called 'poisonous' (cf., Heb 12:15)?
3. How does Romans 8:31-34 show us the extent of God's love for us?
4. How does Romans 8:35-39 shows us the quality and character of God's love for us?
5. Why do you think people struggle believing that God loves them?
6. How does basing our loves on God's love for us (instead of our love for God) make a difference?
7. What changes in our relationship with others when we base our lives with God on his love for us instead of our love for him?
8. Since it is God's love for us that gives us confidence in our salvation and future hope, how can we practically demonstrate that others are loved by God, just like us? How will this change us?
9. Since love comes from God (1Jn 4:7), pray for a fresh understanding of God's love for you. Pray for a renewed desire to show his great love to others.