

# **“LIFE IS DIFFERENT”**

**Pastor Mike Corwin**

**TEXT: LUKE 2:21-40**

**GOD’S WORD: GALATIANS 4:4-7**

## **I – GRINCH:**

Okay...it’s official. I don’t want to be the Grinch anymore! I’m tired of doing the part of always being negative, always seeing the downside of everything. I think I have an ulcer from doing it. I’ll never admit this when Pastor Becky is present but, “I WANT TO BE CINDY LOU WHO!” I want to see the good in everything and everybody. I want to be happy!!!!

The good news is that I can be. The end of the Grinch story is that after trying to steal Christmas and then finding out the Who’s were not phased, but Christmas came anyhow...

*And what happened then...?*

*Well...in Who-ville they say*

*That the Grinch’s small heart*

*Grew three sizes that day!*

*And the minute his heart didn’t feel quite so tight,*

*He whizzed with his load through the bright morning light*

*And he brought back the toys! And the food for the feast!”*

The story ends by telling us that the Grinch changed! That Christmas changed him. Changed his heart. So I can change and be Cindy Lou if I want (take off Grinch sweatshirt and throw it down. Maybe even do away with the cutouts).

We need to make sure that as we close out this season of Christmas, we understand that Jesus came so people could change. Jesus came on Christmas and if we embrace him then LIFE IS DIFFERENT. No matter our past, no matter what we’ve done or how we’ve been life is different.

## **II – GALATIANS:**

As we look at this dimension of Christmas I want to go back to our service and my message on Christmas Eve. I asked the question “why” about Jesus birth on the time and place he was born and I told you the answer quite simply was that people needed him. I see that in this morning’s reading from the letter to the Galatians.

It answers my question from Thursday night pretty well. It tells us that God chose just the right time to send his one and only Son into the world. To have him born into the flesh of the Creation. It also tells us that he sent him for a reason. God sent Jesus into the world to change us. To make it possible for us to have a different life. He sent him to gain us the forgiveness of our sins. There was no way for us to obey God's commandments let alone all of the ones put in place by the religious rulers. We needed help. He sent Jesus to be that help. To free us from the slavery of the law and sin. He did it to make us acceptable in his sight so he could adopt us into the family.

And talk about a different life, a changed life, look at what it says next. It tells us that if we allow Jesus to enter into our hearts we can look at God not as some vengeful deity, not as some standoffish Creator, not someone who lives in heaven and just looks down on us. When we have Jesus in our hearts we have an intimate connection to our God. We call him Father. You become a true son or daughter of the living God. I'd say this allows you to have a life that's is different! The question then becomes "How does it change?" What's different?

### **III – TEXT:**

As I look at the conclusion of the birth narrative in the Gospel of Luke I see the start of the answer. Jesus has been born in the stable, the angels have sang the birth announcement out, and the shepherds have made their visit and found their lives different. Then we read this as this stage of Jesus' life is concluded by Luke.

#### **Luke 2:21- 40 (NLT)**

##### **Jesus Is Presented in the Temple**

<sup>21</sup> Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

<sup>22</sup> Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> The law of the Lord says, "If a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the LORD." <sup>24</sup> So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—"either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

##### **The Prophecy of Simeon**

<sup>25</sup> At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout and was eagerly waiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him <sup>26</sup> and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. <sup>27</sup> That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

<sup>29</sup> "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,  
as you have promised.

<sup>30</sup> I have seen your salvation,  
<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared for all people.  
<sup>32</sup> He is a light to reveal God to the nations,  
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

<sup>33</sup> Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. <sup>35</sup> As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

### **The Prophecy of Anna**

<sup>36</sup> Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. <sup>37</sup> Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. <sup>38</sup> She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

<sup>39</sup> When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. <sup>40</sup> There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.

The passage starts out by telling us that Mary and Joseph were good Jewish parents. They knew the law and they fulfilled it. They took Jesus to the Temple and had him circumcised when he was 8 days old. They then gave him the name the angel Gabriel had given them before he was even conceived...JESUS. Then Mary went through the Jewish religious rule that she had to go through a period of purification of 40 days for giving birth to a boy, and then they went back to the Temple where they obeyed the law that their first born male child had to be dedicated to the Lord. They made the necessary sacrifice and did as the law required.

It’s at this second appearance at the Temple that I see lives changed by Jesus. The first is a man named Simeon. He was a very religious and devout man. He knew the prophecies of the coming Messiah and was waiting for him to come as promised by the Prophets. He wasn’t just counting on the prophets but had been told by God’s Holy Spirit that he would live to see it happen. On this day the Spirit led him to the Temple where he encountered the Holy family. He saw them, went to them and took the baby Jesus in his arms and commenced to praising and thanking God, saying:

<sup>29</sup> “Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,  
as you have promised.  
<sup>30</sup> I have seen your salvation,  
<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared for all people.  
<sup>32</sup> He is a light to reveal God to the nations,  
and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

His life was so changed by his encounter with Jesus that he said he was now ready to die, that he wouldn't fight death but embrace it because of this child.

Then he goes on to tell that many people's lives will be different because of this child. Some lives will change for the better as they embrace Jesus for who he is, some for the worse for those who oppose him and his message of Salvation. Even his parent's lives will be changed by who he is.

Then let's not forget Anna. A widow who was very old and never left the Temple of God. Once she saw Jesus her life became different too. She began praising God and told everyone who would listen about this child and what he meant to his people.

#### **IV – CHANGING LIVES:**

So I guess the real question for this Sunday is, "HOW WILL YOUR LIFE BE DIFFERENT?" And I'm not talking now about all the stuff the Grinch kept talking about as we went through the season of Advent. I've heard enough about how our lives have been affected by Covid, by politics, by social unrest, and the long litany of the world's ills. I want to move forward, not stay on top of Grinch Mountain where life is miserable. I want to live in Who-ville where everyone is happy no matter what befalls them because they realize the miracle of Christmas transcends it all.

As we go forward into the New Year I want us to realize there's always going to be something wrong with life. There are always going to be challenges and problems. What I want us to concentrate on is the fact that the way you handle them without Jesus and the way you handle them with Jesus are two vastly different things. You can move through life miserable or you can move through life like Simeon and Anna, full of joy and praising God for the birth and life of Jesus the Christ. There life was different when they encountered Jesus and so will yours be!

#### **V – NEW YEAR – NEW LIFE:**

In a matter of a few days we will celebrate the arrival of a New Year. What I am praying you will do is not only look at the year as New, but look at your life as New too. I ask that you look at the miracle of Christmas and make it an everyday part of your life instead of just a season of the year. I want you to hold the baby Jesus as tight as you possibly can, not in your arms but in your heart. If you do that better than you've ever done it before then your life will be different.

And I'm not talking about just your Salvation. I'm talking about the way you think, talk, and act. I'm talking about your heart growing three times larger with the love of God, through the Spirit of Jesus in your heart, and then letting your life be different because it's guided by Jesus and his example and teachings.

The Grinch is gone and Jesus is our Lord! (knock down Grinch cutout?)

AMEN