

It's Leap Day!

As a child, I remember feeling a sense of mystery and intrigue about Leap Day and the whole process of a Leap Year, quite frankly. Here is this “extra day” out of nowhere... Why is it only every four years? What if you're born on a Leap Day; does that mean you only celebrate your birthday every four years? Yes, it probably surprises none of you who know me that I was the kid who asked the unlimited string of questions that would drive my teachers and parents insane. You have to admit, though, that there is a legitimate degree of novelty surrounding this day we call Leap Day!

This seemingly magical extra day is what allows our calendars to operate and function correctly. I don't mean to take you back to your elementary school classroom, but it does not just take 365 days for the Earth to orbit the Sun. It takes 365 days and about 6 hours to travel around the Sun. Every four years, we have a Leap Year so that those extra hours do not begin to add up and throw off the calendar. Leap Day accounts for the four years' worth of those extra six hours. You may be thinking, “Who cares?! What difference does six hours really make?” Well, without Leap Days, in 100 years, those extra six hours per year would throw off our calendars by 24 days. Even more shocking is without Leap Days, in 700 years, those extra six hours per year would make our summers BEGIN in December, and no one in their right mind wants that!

In the Gospel of Luke's account of the Beatitudes of Jesus, Jesus talked about a different 'Leap Day,' which may be even more strange than the one on our calendars. In *Luke 6:22-23*, Jesus says, “*Blessed are you when men **hate** you, and when they **exclude** you, and **revile** you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. **Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!***”

For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

This is one of those moments where Jesus says something that if a random person picked up a Bible today and read it without any prior understanding of Christianity or faith in God... they would read it and say, “I think I’ll pass on that!” Do you mean to tell me that I am to LEAP FOR JOY when I am hated... when I am excluded... when I am reviled... when my name is dragged through the mud? How does that make any sense, Jesus?

From a worldly or human perception, all these things are truly awful and should be avoided in every other realm of our lives. But to the Christian, there is no greater honor in this life than experiencing these things for the sake of Christ. Not because we enjoy persecution or suffering but because we get to join our Lord in His suffering. We also get to join all of God’s faithful going back to the beginning of time. When we are persecuted for Christ’s sake, we get to be named among and join all those men and women of faith who came before us who were also **unwilling to compromise their faith to pacify the worldliness around them.**

I wonder if someone is reading this now who feels like everything they are doing to try to follow Christ is upsetting the people around them. Maybe you are being made fun of. Or lies and rumors about you are swarming around that could not be further from the truth. Perhaps those who were once your deepest and most meaningful friends have abandoned you for standing up for what is right. Possibly, everyone is avoiding you and excluding you from their lives. It could be that you look at your life and realize all you have left is your faith in Jesus. If that is the case, **IT’S LEAP DAY!** Rejoice and leap for joy because what more could you need than the Son of God Almighty?! Jesus was made fun of, excluded, lied about, and lost friends

and family for the sake of the Gospel, too. At least we have not had to give our lives like He did (yet). And if it comes to that, I think that's just fine with me (*Revelation 2:10-11*).

-Ben Hogan, Minister of Evangelism

AT HOME DEVOTIONAL:

1. Read *2 Timothy 3:12; James 1:2-3; John 15:18-25* aloud as a family. What can we learn from these passages, and how do we apply them to our lives in Christ?
2. Read *Luke 6:12-16* aloud as a family. This is just a few verses away from the Beatitudes of Jesus. How many of these Apostles named here went on to die for the cause of Christ? Talk about the comfort Jesus' words in *verses 22-23* would have given them as they gave the ultimate sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel.
3. If you are not experiencing rejection, friction, or even suffering and persecution in your life for your faith, why is this the case? Meditate on this thought. Is it evident to those around you that you wear the Name of Christ? How can you make this more evident to your friends, family, classmates, neighbors, or coworkers?