

## **“All About Joy”**

**Isaiah 55:10-13; John 15:9-11**

December 15, 2024

### Introduction

- When I was growing up, we did Christmas at both my parent’s parents’ houses.
  - o First, was Christmas Eve in Lenoir.
  - o Then came Christmas Day in Charlotte.
    - They were different celebrations.
      - My Dad’s family were mountainfolk, working class while my mom’s family was more like gentry.
        - o I loved them both and it was great to get so many presents.
  - o I actually had figured out the moment when the fun all stopped.
    - At the very end of my Charlotte Christmas, we opened stockings that my grandmother got us.
      - It was always the last gift I would receive for the Holidays so it was the moment that happiness ended for me.
        - o It was an unpleasant awareness that would come.
          - Like Christmas was all over for the year.
- It was an immature way of looking at things but I wonder if we all aren’t guilty of doing that as well.
  - o Of being appreciative of the good times and dreading the bad times.
    - I think that’s only human.
- But it puts us at odds with a wealth of Scripture, believe it or not, most directly, hear these words from Philipians “*Rejoice in the Lord always, I Say again, rejoice.*”
  - o Paul isn’t saying rejoice while they’re still presents to be opened.
  - o Paul isn’t; saying rejoice only when the sun is shining.
  - o He’s saying REJOICE ALWAYS.
    - When the presents end.
    - When the rain pours.
    - We’re called to rejoice.
- How is that even possible.
  - o I’ll never forget how empty I felt after my sister died suddenly. That whole fall and winter, I was just in a fog of sadness and sorrow.
    - But then, on the way home from the Christmas eve service, something happened.
      - JOY
        - o Joy arrived and it didn’t take away the sorrow but it made everything clear.
          - Amy was safe with the Lord.
          - I was safe with the Lord.
            - There was Joy to be had in every moment.
  - It reminded me of a lady I visited when I was at River Hills Church.
    - o She’d been through what I’d consider a tough life.
      - Lost one child in an accident.
      - Another child was left incapacitated due to an automobile wreck soon thereafter.
      - But she always said, “The Lord’s been so good to me.”
        - She explained it to me once, saying essentially that it had taken her into her seventies to see it but that in good times and in bad, what make it all possible was God and God made it all good.
          - o In a way, she recognized that it was closeness to God that assures us of our ongoing JOY!

## God's Presence is the Source of our Joy

- The Psalms are a wonderful resource for growing our faith and, in turn, maximizing our joy. In Psalm 16, the author comes to a brilliant point:
- **Psalm 16:9-11:** *"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will You let Your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; You will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand."*
- God is the Source of our joy and it is enhanced through our growing relationship with Him.
  - o Want to be a more joy-filled person, deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ?
    - This is a great time of year to do it
    - Advent is supposed to be a penitential season, one in which we examine ourselves and our walks with Jesus Christ.
    - This Advent season, do more with Jesus.
      - Wake up early and read a devotional, let that start your day instead of dopamine scrolling.
      - Before you go to bed, read just a psalm to sleep on, so to speak.
        - o Allow the final words in your day to be the Word of God.
- Draw near to Jesus and He will draw near to you.
  - o I had a parishioner get diagnosed with cancer once.
  - o He began waking up in the middle of the night, filled with anxiety.
  - o In order to go back to sleep, Tom began reading the Bible.
  - o Soon, he began to enjoy those late night hours with Jesus.
  - o Now, he still wakes us early in the morning to continue that tradition of scripture reading and prayer early in the morning.
- **Our Obedience to God's Will maximizes our JOY**
  - o **There is another way we can be joyful, through our obedience to Jesus.**
  - o **John 15:10-11:** *"If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."*
  - o Count obedience as a means to bring greater joy in your life.
    - It makes sense, we all know how sin brings you down. Well, in contrast, being faithful makes you joyful over time.
      - Think about it like this, I've really let this go during the Holiday season but I'm trying to eat more healthy.
        - o I'll have something healthy waiting at home for me but soon, all I hear in my head is a familiar tune.
          - "Two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce cheese, pickles onions on a sesame seed bun."
            - Next thing you know, I'm in the drive through at McDonald's.
              - o Super size that? Sure!
            - But what happens after I eat a Big Mac?
              - I sure don't feel healthy, that's for sure.
  - But when I eat a salad man, do I feel better one hour later.
    - o It's the same way with sin and faithfulness.
      - One is the pathway to misery and isolation.
      - The other is a stroll to joy.

God's Presence is the Source of our joy and we can maximize it through our faithfulness. But joy can even exist under the worst circumstances

## God's Joy in Bad Circumstances

- Paul writes to rejoice always in the Lord which necessarily means that joy is available to us in times of distress

- It's important that we know the difference between happiness and joy.
  - One is circumstantial.
    - Root of the word is HAP as in happenstance, chance.
      - You are happy by chance most of the time.
  - The other is trans-circumstantial.
    - Meaning you can have joy all the time.
      - Why?
        - Because JOY IS PROXIMITY TO GOD AND GOD JOINS YOU BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- We are able to find joy even in times of our worst trials because we know the Author and Perfector of our faith, Jesus Christ.
  - He Himself was a man of many troubles who wore a crown of thorns and yet found ways to experience the joy of relationship to God the Father.
    - Joy comes as you realize that the man in charge of all of creation isn't a tyrant, isn't uncaring.
      - But is instead a "Wonderful Counselor and Prince of Peace."
- Joy emerges from the chaos when your heart settles and you realize something.
  - That the reason this world makes so little sense at times is because we're not from here.
    - Our citizenship is in heaven.
      - And after this world is over, we who believe in Jesus Christ will go on to live in an eternal kingdom.
        - Where there will be so sadness or sickness, no death.
          - Joy emerges when you realize that, no matter what happens in the world, you are guaranteed heaven.
            - Not because of what you've done or left undone, rather it is ALL because of Jesus Christ.
  - GK Chesterton once wrote – "Man is more himself, more manlike, when joy is the fundamental thing in him, and grief the superficial. Melancholy should be an innocent interlude, a tender and fugitive frame of mind; praise should be the permanent pulsation of the soul. Pessimism is at best an emotional half-holiday; joy is the uproarious labor by which all things live. Joy, which was the small publicity of the pagan, is the gigantic secret of the Christian."
    - We're called to be joyful and that joy will emerge over time in a Christian's heart.

#### Maximizing Joy

- Obedience to God.
- Serving others.
- When you really get this thing, you realize that your joy is bound up with others and you begin to live life as a servant.
- The most joyful Christians I know are the ones in service.
  - We had a woman, Nancy at al old church, no matter what, she was joyful.
    - She lost her husband.
    - Found a way to serve others.
    - Was joyful.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.