

Series: Advent 2021- On earth as it is in heaven

Week 3: The Joy we've been given, and the Joy we give

- **What gives you Joy?**
- **Harder to answer than you might think. Many people could tell you things that they ENjoy, things that make them happy, at least temporarily, but there's the sense that JOY is about something much more profound.**
- **If you think of happiness as being like WEATHER- changes with passing circumstances, can change quickly at times.... Then JOY would be more like CLIMATE. It is something far greater, broader, and it changes very slowly.**

✝ Good News and Great Joy!

- **When the Angels appeared to the Shepherds to announce the coming of the Messiah, they said that the GOOD NEWS of the messiah would bring something for all people. That something was JOY.**

Luke 2:9-11 *An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

- **So far this advent we have talked about the HOPE of Christ, and the PEACE of Christ. Both of these being things that we come to know through our relationship with Jesus, and come to EXPERIENCE on a more profound level when we share them with other people.**
- **We come to a greater experience HOPE as we are bringers of HOPE... we come to a deeper experience of PEACE as we are peaceMAKERS.**
- **TODAY, we arrive at the great promise of JOY. HEAR! JOY is one of the most consistent themes in the New Testament. Scripture teaches we will KNOW Joy through our union with Christ, and perhaps even more, JOY is an essential attribute- essential ingredient- of experiencing the presence and character of Jesus in our lives.**
- **If you described the Christian life as a car- Joy isn't just the awesome stereo system, seat warmers, and glossy paint job. JOY is the ENGINE. Joy isn't just something God DESIRES for us, it is one of His most fundamental PURPOSES for us.**

THIS IS WHAT WE ARE EXPLORING TODAY- BUT First, today is Sunday Dec 12, PE, TO... It gives me great JOY to know that you are with us...

- **When the angels announced Jesus' birth, it made sense to say the messiah would bring Joy. The Hebrews had looked forward to the messiah for generations. To these people living in Darkness, this Good news- this LIGHT OF PROMISE that had now dawned upon them- this was the BEST NEWS they could ever have dreamed of. If we had been one of those shepherds, after we got past our fear, we would have been filled with JOY!**
- **BUT, what no one realized or expected in those days is that the JOY promised with Jesus' birth would be made possible through Jesus' DEATH. Through the cross.**
- **Some 30 years after that night with the Angels and Shepherds, Jesus was gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem, with his disciples, celebrating the Passover. As you know, he would be arrested that very night.**

- **As we discussed last Sunday- this moment was the cusp of Jesus’ suffering, and the most difficult and painful days the disciples would ever experience. AND IN THAT MOMENT, Jesus said this:**

John 15:11 *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

- **What Jesus just TOLD them about was the power of His love- and we will discuss that NEXT week. BUT HEAR THIS! Jesus tells his disciples: MY JOY will be IN YOU, and your joy will be COMPLETE. Permanent. Part of the very foundation of life itself.**
- **Right before they would leave that room, Jesus was praying to his father... in John 17:13 Jesus prayed**

John 17:13 *“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.*

- **That’s an incredible statement. Jesus proclaims that through what he was going to accomplish, that we- his disciples- may possess the FULL MEASURE of HIS joy.**
- **When we consider this, an inevitable question arises. IF THIS IS TRUE, then why do so many believers seem to have SO LITTLE JOY?**
- **ONE ANSWER... because life is hard! Times it feels like things are sucking the joy right out of you. IVE BEEN THERE! All of us over past 18 months have probably experienced this. BUT REMEMBER- Jesus gave his promise of JOY right before the cross. Like His HOPE and PEACE, the JOY God extends isn’t contingent on our circumstances.**
- **NOW, MAKE NO MISTAKE, We DO experience Joy IN and FROM our circumstances of life! Don’t let anyone tell you that it is somehow wrong or shallow to receive JOY from the details of life. I**
- **N FACT, when we increasingly know God’s JOY on a level deeper than our circumstances, this will increase our ability to SEE, FIND, experience joy IN our circumstances. BUT, circumstances change.**
- **EXAMPLE: Like many of you, I receive great joy from MUSIC. I’m the guy banging on my steering wheel... BUT HEARING CAN FAIL. Guess what... my hearing IS FAILING. What if that is my only source of Joy? God HAS GIVEN US THE GIFT OF MUSIC. But He invites us into a deeper source of joy.**
- **Another answer we sometimes give is (really religious answer)... “well, joy and happiness aren’t the same thing.” “I may not be happy, but I have the Joy of the Lord”. IT IS TRUE that happiness and joy aren’t the same- but we can use this as a religious excuse to not let God deal with our misery. IF WE ARE EXPERIENCING THE JOY OF CHRIST, we may not be happy all the time, but we won’t be MISERABLE all the time!**
- **THAT SAID- Depression and mental illness are very real things. Be in more clinical in nature, or resulting from trauma (or both), for many people overcoming depression and mental illness – knowing JOY- can be a long journey and profound struggle. As believers, the love of Christ will lead us to be educated, sensitive, and compassionate to people struggling with depression, whatever its cause.**
- **AND, God will never use LACK of joy as a way to condemn us or cover us in shame.**
- **THAT IS BECAUSE....**

- **JOY IS NOT A FORMULA.** Scripture doesn't tell us that if we just have the right doctrine, right truth, and just do the right things, that **HEY! ALL IS GOOD!**
- **BUT, for virtually ALL OF US, entering into the Joy of Christ doesn't result from a change in circumstance, or just overcoming our struggles.. RATHER, we move into the Joy of Christ as we allow the Holy Spirit to give us a...**

† **A change in perspective**

- **A powerful picture of how the Spirit will change our perspective is found in...**

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

- **Do you see that? On the one hand, from one perspective, in this life we...:**
 - **Are wasting away. And we are. Outwardly.**
 - **We have troubles! "Light and momentary"- remember this is Paul speaking**
 - **Our tendency is to look only at what we see. And what we see in life can be troubling.**
 - **Reality that life, and almost everything about life, is temporary.**
- **That's one perspective. Perspective of our flesh- how we see the world apart from Christ. ON OTHER HAND, perspective of the Holy Spirit in us...**
 - **Inwards, being renewed day by day.**
 - **Yes troubles, but infinitely greater is the Glory we will know in all eternity. This is but a snapshot.**
 - **The hope of what is UNSEEN. What we see, believer, by FAITH. The presence, power, and goodness of God.**
 - **Great hope, JOY, that while this physical life is temporary, God's life is eternal. While we DO experience Joy through things that will prove to be temporary, our true SOURCE of joy is eternal.**
- **This is the perspective of the Spirit, and TO KNOW AND EXPERIENCE CHRIST'S joy is a FRUIT of his Spirit, at work in us.**

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control...*

- **Bottom line, we will come to know the JOY of the God as we live in a dynamic relationship with, dependence upon, the SPIRIT OF GOD.**
- **AND SO our focus isn't upon DECIDING TO BE JOYFUL... UGH! Make it happen! No... our focus is on THIS DAY, choosing to set my mind, set my heart, on the Spirit of God. As we said last week, ultimately, EVERYTHING about the disciple's life comes down to this.**
- **And as we are walking, living, under the influence of the Spirit, we will increasingly know the JOY of Christ.**
- **CHURCH! One way the Spirit will grow the fruit, the JOY of Christ in our lives is by changing our perspective. So, let's talk about that.**

- **We're going to look at several passages- all of which reference JOY in some way. Challenge- with each of these, how do we see, how can we choose, the perspective of JOY? I'll give you the answers up front. Okay?..... FIRST. Holy Spirit will work to give us...**

† The perspective of MY value to Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1-3 *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

- **You've heard this. What was the strength, the motivation, by which Christ endured the Cross? IT WAS JOY. What was the cause of that JOY? YOU! Jesus possessed the powerful strength of JOY because he knew that through God's plan of the cross, HUMANITY could be reconciled to him, be forgiven, made new, and brought into a relationship with Him. THIS SPEAKS to the eternal value of humanity to God and Christ....**
- **In the beginning of his first letter, Peter proclaims that this Joy of Christ's is ours as well.**

1 Peter 1:3-9 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you,⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.⁶ In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

- **This is Christianity 101- but Jesus made it possible for you to know Him, to enter into SALVATION- and this is not just the end result of our faith- not just heaven when we die- it is a reality, a perspective, that we continually receive RIGHT NOW. And that truth, as we even try to comprehend it's magnitude, is a source of JOY.**
- **SO- there is the perspective of your value to Jesus... ALSO, inseparably, there is...**

† The perspective of the value of OTHERS to Jesus.

Philippians 2:1-4 *Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

- **Simply put, we will experience the completeness of Christ's Joy as we live in humility, and value people as Jesus values them. And this is not just a passive, internal perspective, this is an action. A joy bringing question is "Today, how can I make someone's life better. How can the joy I have received by the JOY I BRING.**
- **As an aside, one of the great JOY DESTROYERS is thinking we are more valuable than others- elevating ourselves and our needs above the value and needs of others.**

† The perspective that God is at WORK in my life.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds,

– **Wait, what? We think... I'll Consider it pure joy when God blesses me, when things are going the way I want. That's how I know God loves me, right? Because he blesses me with circumstantial goodness? No- part of lie of prosperity gospel.**

– **RATHER, Consider it JOY, that we are blessed, when we face trials... WHY?**

³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

– **This is deep water faith... but when we consider that no matter what is happening in me and around me, that GOD IS AT WORK... He is leading me, growing me, strengthening me, preparing me.... THIS IS A perspective of Joy.**

– **Another... this is SUBTLE, but important. Near the end of Johns second letter- which is very short- he makes a statement consistent with one of the greatest practical themes in all of the New Testament. This is the...**

† The perspective of **COMMUNITY.**

2 John 1:12 I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

– **Do we hear this? We will grow to experience the Joy of Christ as we share our lives with one another. Face to face.**

– **Someone may say.. well, Ethan, that's not always possible. This is true, but we must always strive for it, and the value of Christian community- fellowship- must never be surrendered.**

– **The greatest threat to the church emerging from COVID is not government overreach. It is an erosion of the value- and high calling- of the church to be a community- to GATHER TOGETHER. Centered in Christ, and loving one another, in relationship with one another.**

– **We see another glimpse of this in the tiny letter of Philemon, as Paul writes a person letter to his friend:**

Philemon 1:6-8 I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people.

– **The word for "Partnership" there is "Koinonia". It means "fellowship"... the spiritual act of sharing our lives with each other. Here God tells us that it is in the context of community, of fellowship, that we come to a deeper understanding of the goodness we share in Christ.**

† The perspective of **GENEROSITY.**

– **In second Corinthians Paul describes what some have called the "Macedonian miracle." In one verse we hear four concepts we would never expect to be together.**

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. ² In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. ³ For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, ⁴ they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. ⁵ And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.

- *The takeaway here is about much more than financial generosity. It is a generosity of our hearts that flows from a life surrendered to God. IN THE MIDST OF SEVERE TRIAL, these believers overflowed with joy.*
- *They were filled with joy because they were able- even in their place of hardship- to be part of God's work, to participate in what God was doing.*
- *In verse 5 Paul tells us the source of their perspective... "The gave themselves first to the Lord." And, being surrendered to the Lord, the Lord directed them to give of themselves to others.*
- *They possessed the Joy of Christ, and they expressed that Joy by giving it to others.*
- *Lastly... lets return to that night prior to the cross. Here, Jesus gives us the ultimate perspective of JOY*

✠ **The perspective of RESURRECTION.**

John 16:20-22 *Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²¹A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²²So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.*

- *We can't miss this. Jesus tells his disciples... you are about to be thrust into a time of grief, of pain. I'm going to be taken away from you. You will look around and reality will claim that ALL IS LOST.*
- *But THERE WILL BE A GREATER REALITY. MY DEATH WILL NOT BE THE END OF THE STORY, IT WILL BE THE BEGINNING OF A NEW STORY. I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN. And when I do, you will be filled with a JOY that cannot be taken away, that you will never lose, though you lose your life itself. FOR THIS JOY is the JOY of RESURRECTION.*
- *In the coming days, the disciples would indeed experience the Joy of Jesus' resurrection. We celebrate this joy as well. BUT WHAT THEY WOULDN'T YET understand for some time, but what HAS BEEN REVEALED TO US, is that Jesus isn't the only one to experience resurrection. IN CHRIST, WE TOO have experienced resurrection.*
- *BECAUSE WE ARE IN CHRIST, WE ARE NEW CREATIONS, set free from death, fear, shame, and the power of sin... FOR as new creations, the OLD HAS GONE, and the NEW HAS COME.*
- *CHURCH. CHRIST DIED AND ROSE AGAIN so that we- so that you- could know him. Not just forgiven BY him, but so that we may KNOW him.*
- *So that each of us.... though our faith in Christ, and our daily relationship with Christ- as we walk by the spirit... MAY KNOW and experience the fullness of God's love. The fullness of his HOPE and PEACE- HIS KINDNESS, PATIENCE, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, and SELF CONTROL.*
- *Hear! Through faith in Christ we have been JOINED WITH CHRIST in His DEATH and RESURRECTION- and an essential part of HIS LIFE WITHIN US is the gift of HIS JOY.*
- *But this isn't just a gift we have received. It is a gift we are called to GIVE... So that we will experience His joy that is in us, and that our JOY WOULD BE MADE COMPLETE.*
- *May it be said of us!*