

Joy Project

John 16:22 (New American Standard Bible)

Therefore, you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one is going to take your joy away from you.

John 16:24 (New American Standard Bible)

Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

John 16:33 (New American Standard Bible)

These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

John 17:13 (New American Standard Bible)

But now I am coming to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

Introduction

People in the church always ask me to pray for their concerns. One time, a lady asked me to pray for the joy back in her life. Others struggle with anxiety, depression, and sadness in their lives, sometimes, for years. They too want to have their joy back. We all have temporary depression, sorrow, and anxiety, which I understand. But when they are prolonged, that’s what concerns us.

Who doesn’t desire joy and happiness in life? We all long for it yet often find none in our lives. So, we begin to wonder what’s wrong with our lives. “*How can we have joy back in our lives?*” we ask. That’s the topic we are going to talk about this morning. *Joy*. I entitled my sermon, “Joy Project” because we are going to do something about the lost joy.

Content

The word ‘joy’ appears over 200 times in the Scriptures. Out of all those references, for today’s message, I have chosen one chapter in the Gospel according to John. Chapter 16, where we see Jesus talk about three joys and how to experience them: *the joy of seeing our Lord again after resurrection (John 16:22), the joy of answered prayers in Jesus’ name (John 16:24), and the joy of knowing Jesus the victor (John 16:33)*. Furthermore, in the following

chapter, chapter 17, Jesus prayed to His Father for His disciples to *have His joy made full in themselves* (John 17:13). Let me tell you. It is clearly God's will for us to have joy in our lives. Not just any kind of joy, but Christ's joy made **full** in us (e.g. like a plant filled with sap all the time). The same Christ, at the right hand of God, is still praying the same prayer for us (John 17:20) to live a life full of His joy! (Romans 8:34). Amen.

Let me expound those joys a little bit here.

First, **the joy of seeing Jesus** (John 16:22): Imagine that your loved one just told you that she is dying. How sad you would be! That's how the disciples felt when they were told by Jesus that they would lose their Master to death. It was the night before Jesus was crucified. They just finished eating their last meal with Jesus. After the meal, Jesus washed their feet and talked about His imminent death. They were warned before, but this time they were really sad. Their hearts were heavy because they were about to lose their master to the cross. Thank God, that's not how they ended their conversation, though. Jesus was assuring them that their sorrow will turn into joy because they will see Him again face to face. Indeed, their joy came back three days after Jesus was crucified. They saw the risen Christ and they were ecstatic! They never lost that joy ever since!

The same promise of seeing Jesus again and the assurance of joy are still true for us in the 21st century. We too will see our resurrected Lord face to face in Heaven, and our joy will be heavenly! As a matter of fact, we don't have to wait until we die to experience the joy of seeing Jesus. We can have it during our prayer time. Yes, you heard me right. We can see Him daily on our knees. I don't know how you understand your time with Jesus in prayer nor what you experience in your time with Him, but I do have an intimate time with Jesus every day. I cannot live even a day without the time with Jesus. I see Him every day. Not visibly but in my spirit. I talk to Him and listen to Him every day. Not audibly but in my heart. If you ask me, I will say that prayer time is the best time of the day. What a glorious joy we have in Jesus when we see Him in prayer! Have the joy of seeing Jesus!

Next, Jesus talks about **the joy of prayers answered** (John 16:24). Who wouldn't be joyful when your prayers are answered?! As a pastor, I have witnessed some young couples finally heard the news that they are going to have a long-awaited baby. I remember a man who prayed for his dying brother, and his brother came back to life. I am sure you too have one or two prayers answered by God as exactly as you had prayed for. Remember the joy you had at the time? Christ wants you to have such joy all the time! But such joy comes only when you ask in His name!

Finally, **the joy of knowing Jesus** the conqueror of the world (John 16:33). He is the victor, not the loser. He has overcome the world. Therefore, take courage! Be joyful! There are times you and I feel depressed with the way the world is going. However, in those moments, do not lose your heart! Jesus is the winner! He has won! Amen!

One of the greatest joys I ever had was to discover who Jesus truly is *in the Bible*. I have read the Bible multiple times and still do every day. Yet, there are days when I discover anew who Jesus truly is. This is what I have discovered so far: He is *the Son of God, the Messiah, Redeemer, the Lord of all, the author and perfecter of our faith, sanctifier*, and the intercessor and so forth. All in God's Word. The most recent discovery was made in John 5:39 where Jesus says, *the whole Bible testifies about Him: You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about Me.* Two simple truths here: *why do we read the Bible?* To have eternal life. *What is the Bible all about?* Christ. Do you get it? Find Christ in God's Word and have a great joy!

Have you noticed that all joys I am talking about so far revolve around knowing and experiencing Jesus either through prayers or the Word of God? All these joys can be found and experienced *in the Lord*. You may wonder "*What about mundane daily joys?*" Of course, God cares about those joys and grants us such joys as anniversaries, birthdays, birth of new life, promotions, new house, and so forth. For me, the joys of having life, health, family, and so forth.

I believe it's worthwhile here to touch two types of joy we have. Ordinary and extraordinary. Circumstantial and transcendent. The joy that anyone can enjoy and the joy that is only possible in the Lord.

Three Hebrew Verbs for Joy:

- Gil (גיל): (root: Go round or about, be excited to gaiety). Used in the context of levity. (E.g. Hava Nagila---Let us rejoice---based on Psalm 118:24).
E.g.2. Zephaniah 3:17. The LORD rejoices over you with singing.
- Ssamha (שמח): (root: flourish, be high, proud). Always used in the context of prosperity and pride. Rejoice, Be Glad.
-It is circumstantial. Your joy is hinged on what has happened (particularly good things) in human eyes.

-1 Samuel 2:1: Hannah's praise---the mother of Samuel when she got pregnant (My heart rejoices in the Lord. In the Lord my **horn** is lifted. My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, because I rejoice in Thy salvation).

-Deuteronomy 12:7: Rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has **blessed** you. ---Anyone can rejoice in prosperity.
- Alaz (אלז): (root: exalt, triumph). It is used in the context of hardship and comfort/encouragement.

-It is transcendent: your joy depends not on what you go through now, but on what ultimately happens in God (ultimate comfort, hope, triumph in God). Temporary setback, but eventual victory.

-Zephaniah 3:14: (to the remnant of Israel) *Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Rejoice and exult with all your heart.*

-Habakkuk 3:18. No animals in the barn, no harvest, no fruit, yet rejoice in the Lord, because you trust in Him.

-E.g. *It is well with my soul* (UMH #377). In 1871, Horatio Spafford lost his entire real estate holdings to fire. Two years later, he also lost his four daughters when their ship collided with another ship and sank in the Atlantic Ocean. As he was sailing past the spot where his daughters perished, he penned the poem “It is well with my soul.” How can anyone have such a peace in such a tragedy! But he did in Christ. “*Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul.*”

The joys Christ gives are the joys that overcome circumstances. They are only possible in the Lord. Such joys God wants us to have not occasionally but all the time.

Conclusion

Remember, my sermon title is “Joy Project”? God wants you to have joys in your life. Daily. So, here’s my recommendation for you.

Action points: Starting today, for one month, let us do three things to restore the divine joy in us: Worship/Praise/Give thanks to Him every day. Pray specifically to the Lord in Jesus’ name. Dig into God’s Word (Bible) to know Jesus. Once again, our goal is to restore the joy in our life.

Have joy in the Lord. Amen.