

St Martins C3 – July 31, 2022

Joy – A Life Worth Living

Sermon Notes:

Today, we wrap up our thematic study of Philippians by looking at a single word that meant so much to the apostle Paul and he wanted the Philippians to adopt: joy.

Read Philippians 3:1; 1:4-5

Sixteen times in four chapters in this book, Paul speaks of joy or rejoicing. For him, joy is found in His delight in the finished work of Jesus and the relationship he has with Him. It is also found in the relationship he has with the people of Philippi.

What is most remarkable about Paul's way of seeing joy is that it is so different to the way many people look at joy. Here is what Paul is *not* saying:

A – Seek happiness above everything

There is a big difference between what our world defines as happiness and true joy. For many happiness is nothing more than fulfilling their desires

Read Philippians 3:18-19

Many look for money, success, possessions, entertainment, and pleasure to make them happy. Paul discovers if you search for happiness your way you will never be satisfied. However, if you give yourself completely to God then you will find him and suddenly discover that happiness gets thrown in too.

B – Just put a smile on – always be optimistic

Paul is not trying to do a personality replacement where the pessimists suddenly become optimists. He was very aware of the struggles of life.

Philippians 2:26-29; 2 Corinthians 1:8-11

True joy is deeper than a smile. It is more than an emotion. It is an inner state that affects our emotions and leads to an expression of gladness.

C – Get critical of unhappy people

What would you say to a person who is struggling with life? Here, Paul shows them the joy he has experienced and encourages them to take hold of it, but he does not look down on them for going through difficulty.

Read Philippians 2:17-18

Paul reminds them that whatever they willingly suffer for Jesus is temporary and encourages them to find a joy that goes beyond their circumstances.

What is true joy?

Read Philippians 4:4-5

Joy is found as we spend time in the presence of Jesus and let His love fill our life. This transforms our outlook, our emotions and our actions. Then despite what is happening around us, we can know the deep well of joy that touches everything around us.

Questions for Connect Groups:

Sermon Reflection:

What stood out to you from this week's message?

Look at the verses on joy in Philippians. What do they tell us about joy, and where it comes from?

How are happiness and joy different?

What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord?

Life Application:

What makes you happy? When did you feel happiest?

Why do the things that bring us pleasure not bring us lasting joy?

Is joy something you can choose? Why or why not?

Are you more disposed to optimism or pessimism? How does this affect your ability to find joy?

How do you have joy even when the circumstances show no sign of getting better?

How can you bring joy to others who are struggling?

What things can you focus on this week to bring greater joy into your life?

Monday Devotion: Joy of Your Faith

Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith.

Philippians 1:25

As Paul reflected on the things that give the greatest joy one of the first he mentioned was the joy of having wholehearted trust in Jesus. As we seek to serve God with our lives one of the things we will find is that living for Him is, unexpectedly, the only pathway to lasting joy.

When Jesus is Lord of your life there are many sacrifices you have to make. The life of a Christian is a life of daily surrender. The desires and attitudes that are not of Him we need to confront and lay down not to take them up again.

For many this life of submission is too difficult, they give up on following Him and instead give themselves over to those desires. In my experience, the result is always unhappiness and lostness.

However, when we choose to surrender and give it all to Him, we find that we are much happier living life His way than our way. Trusting Him fills us with a deep focus and contentment that circumstances cannot shake.

Pray: Ask God what He is asking you to surrender. Ask Him to help you to experience the joy of your faith.

Tuesday Devotion: Joy the Gospel Advances

But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice.

Philippians 1:18

Have you ever embarked on a big project? Maybe you were building a sleepout, creating your own clothing, or making a grand three-course meal.

It is hard work and it never goes just the way you planned. But there are moments of great achievement along the way that remind you why you are doing what you are doing. You see the shape of the house once the frame is up, you attach two pieces of fabric just right, or you taste the perfect flavour mix in the soup. These things let you know you are on the right track and fill you with joy at the work you are doing.

Paul (as well as us) are completing the greatest project ever taken on: the advancement of the gospel. As Paul looked around, he gained great joy from the way the story of Jesus was being shared with the world – even if the motives of those sharing were not pure.

We too can know that joy. As we share about Jesus and how He is the rightful King of the Universe, we experience great joy in making His name known.

Pray: Ask God to give you the joy of seeing the gospel advance.

Wednesday Devotion: The Joy of Others

Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Philippians 2:2

Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work.

Philippians 4:1

Paul loved the people he ministered to. You can see in his letters that he is affectionate toward them like a father with his child. He longed to see them be all they were called to be.

He also loved them so much that he didn't want to see them stuck in ways that were not of God. So he encouraged them to find attitudes and behaviours that reflected the attitude and behaviour of Jesus.

Who in your life do you care that much about? You care about them so much that seeing them thrive in life and faith brings you joy and seeing them take their next steps with God brings gladness to your heart.

Today, why not reach out to them and encourage them in all of the good things you see in them and spur them on to new levels of obedience to Christ.

Pray: Ask God to bless the people you care about in the faith.

Thursday Devotion: Rejoice in the Lord

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith.

Philippians 3:1

What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? Well to rejoice in anything is to feel joy or great delight in that thing. So, it begins with coming to Jesus with a sense of gladness.

There are many reasons (some say 10,000 reasons) we have to come to God with joy. The way He created us, sought to know us, died for us and called us to live for Him are just a few. As we bring to mind all that Christ has done and all that Christ will do we can come to Him with a heart filled with joy.

Rejoicing is about more than a happy feeling about what Jesus has done it is also seen in an exuberant expression. That is when we sing and dance and celebrate and shout hallelujah (maybe even 1,000 hallelujahs) to Him. Whether we are alone or gather as a church there are many opportunities to let Him know that He means so much to us.

This all leads to an inner state of joy in God that safeguards our faith. To which we can all say “amen.” On that note, if someone could write a song called “100 Amens” then we could have a pretty amazing set of worship!

Pray: Today, take some time to rejoice in the Lord. Thank Him for salvation and His presence with you. Be joyful!

Friday Devotion: The Joy of Letting Others In

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

Philippians 4:10

Paul was in prison when Philippians was written. It is believed this was during the time when he was under house arrest in Caesarea. This arrangement meant he was unable to earn money for himself and had to rely on others to supply his needs.

One of the reasons Paul wrote this letter was to thank the Philippians for generously sending a gift with Epaphroditus. You can sense Paul's gratitude here is not just about the gift but what it meant about his connection with the Philippians.

He's almost like a child saying, "yay, you still care about me."

In our lives, it is important that we have two-way relationships. That is where we care for others but also humbly allow others to do things for us. Sometimes our pride gets in the way and we don't ask for help when we need it or turn people down when they offer. We need to ensure we are letting others in, which will bring us all joy.

Pray: For humility and an awareness of ways you can let others serve you.