

# The Joy of Living For Others

April 21, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled "The Joy of Living for Others." Thank you to Dave, Barb, Ed, and Don for being part of the video. The scripture reading is 1 Peter 1, 10-12. Happy birthday to Daniel, Kathy, and Rafael.

## Welcome, Announcements, Scripture Reading

Good morning everybody. Happy to see you here this morning. We've got a few announcements before we begin our service proper. We're going to wish some happy birthdays this week to Mike, Christella, and Helen, and Don. So we wish all of you a very happy birthday this coming week. We have a new update from the missionaries we support in Japan that's on the bulletin board at the back there.

A couple of upcoming events on Wednesday evenings. We are continuing. Thank you to those who came on Wednesday, and everyone is welcome on Wednesday evenings for our class on anxiety. And that's a really good starting week at that. So we're looking forward to that continuing. The Great Lakes Bible College graduation is coming up also in a few weeks. They're doing a hybrid event where it is happening on Zoom, but there are sort of live watch parties where you can go to one of these three congregations and you can meet some of the folks who are involved in the Bible College there, some of the board members, and see that graduation ceremony, and that is on the 27th. Also on the 27th here is our games night. We're going to have a time in the evening of getting together to play some games. So speak to Helen or Marcy or Barbara about that if you would like more details. And then the following day in the afternoon, following service, we're going to get together for a potluck lunch. So you can speak to Janet for more details on that. And group two is in charge of that.

We have a couple of prayer requests. So Care is back in Canada now. But unfortunately chemotherapy for cancer did not go as well as they had hoped. So they are trying some other things. We pray for them. This is a very difficult time for them. And also in sort of sad, sort of mixed news, Naida and Marfe are moving out west to be close to members of their family. So they sent me a nice note for saying goodbye, basically. So we won't really see them here again, which is too bad and is our loss. We do pray for them that they will be set in a community of love with their family at west. So we pray for them as they move.

I'd also like to, as we begin our service this morning, I'd like to read Psalm 103 as our prayer, as a praise to the Lord. "Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagles. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the

earth, so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." Amen.

## Communion

I'm struggling with what to say. I think I have rewritten this 12 times and been working on it for weeks. Apparently there's to be a fairly rare celestial event of some importance tomorrow. Anyone not heard of that? No. It's a series of examples of enthusiastic spectators, some of whom have traveled great distances. We who are in or very near this path of totality, it will be possible, it possibly will alter our normal routine for a few moments. The eclipse itself is unlikely to have a really profound and lasting effect on our lives. However, it is a once in a lifetime impressive natural event, a more memorable and quietly dramatic event. It is. We're wowed. We're in awe, witnessing such a spectacle. What impact will it have on your life? It can be a truly spiritual experience. For these few minutes we might focus on something larger than our own problems. But when it's over, life returns fairly quickly to normal, whatever that is.

Now in the last few weeks we have on Sundays been provided with insights into the last days of Jesus. The triumphal entry, teachings, the Last Supper, the trial, the physical beatings, the pain, the ridicule, death on the cross, a resurrection, and appearances after that. Dynamic events with all the brutality, betrayal, and injustices. How do these events affect our lives? What's the impact? What is the impact especially that we know on the people who actually saw this? The witnesses. Because the story of Jesus is so impressive. God is among us. The Son of God is displaying through actions, healing, teaching, helping those in need, in words, in deeds, and through sacrifice of His own life, all so we can understand more about God, His Father.

There's a danger here though that we can be impressed, wowed by all of it, but that's it. As spectacular as the dimensions of the whole story of Jesus, whether it hits us slowly or hits us suddenly, when they dawn upon us, we could become enthusiastic spectators and just leave it at that. Done. Oh well, it's over. We could become admirers. We could ooh and aah, perhaps in our better moments, even be inspired to imitate Him in some small way.

So we look at the Gospels that tell us all about the life story of Christ and what He did. It's interesting. Luke, one of those Gospel writers, was not Jewish. He continues the story. The others, it ends with the resurrection. Luke also writes this other book called Acts. And this gives us some clues into the impact of Christ's life. The rest of the story, as the apostles and disciples live into the next generation, the story of Jesus does not end with Jesus. His example, sacrifice, continue to dramatically change the lives of those who believe in Him. The work of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, does not end with Jesus. Luke makes it clear that these Christians of whom he wrote were not just spectators, witnesses. They were actively pursuing God's will for their lives. It had a great impact on the way they lived and how they dealt with people.

God and His Spirit acted through them, lives in them, which also means He lives in us, in all of us. We serve a risen Savior. He is in our life. And one way we were reminded of that, we take this little emblems, the bread, the body, the fruit of the vine, the blood, and we ingest it. We take it into us. He is alive in us. So we are not just spectators. We are participants. Life changes because Christ lives in us. So the question is, what do we do now?

Holy Father, may we be strengthened by the bonds of God's love in Christ Jesus. May we be affected to respond in the same way, displaying His love in our behavior to those around us. Bless these emblems in Christ's name. Amen.

## Reading

### 1 Peter 1:10-12

The reading this morning is taken from 1 Peter 1, verses 10 to 12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you searched intently and with the greatest care. Trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

## Sermon

### The Joy of Living For Others

Good morning, everyone. I just want to share with you today a very brief message. Always be aware of a minister who says he's going to be brief. But I promise I will. Some of the scriptures seem to go hand in hand. Some of the books in the Bible seem to go hand in hand. I never really thought about it but the book of Hebrews and the book of 1 Peter seem to work together as brothers and sisters. In the book of 1 Peter, and I really hadn't noticed this before, has the theme of suffering.

And the word suffering in 1 Peter is used 18 times. One eight. Eighteen times in this brief book of Peter. And yet, even though suffering is continually talked about, it is a very optimistic book. That in the dreariness and the sorrow and the excruciating pain upon Christians in the first century, there were people who would rise above it. Saying no matter what's going to happen, we belong to God. And I think that's true for us today. So I just want to take a couple of scriptures today, not very many of them, and just kind of with that theme, just notice these things. In 1 Peter he says this, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Exclamation point. In his great mercy, he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. And then listen to this. And it is kept in heaven for us. They're waiting for us when it's our time.

Suffering is used a lot in this book, also in Hebrews, and it talks about how precious things are, even going through very difficult times. For example, still in 1 Peter, beginning in verse 13, he says, "Therefore prepare your minds for action. Be self-controlled. Set your hope fully on the grace to be given to you when Jesus Christ has come, has been revealed. As obedient children, don't conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, then we need to be holy. Let holiness be written in our hearts." And yet, very positive. But we're going to notice through here how often the word suffering is being used. I want to skip all the way over in 1 Peter, beginning in verse 9, where he says this about us.

"For you are a chosen people. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. And if Peter says we are, then we are. A people belonging to God, that you might declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into a wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you do receive mercy. So dear friends, I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. Live such good lives among all those who are pagans that they may accuse you of doing wrongs but they'll see your good works and glorify God on the day he visits us." One of the best ways of teaching Christianity is by living it. Just by living it. Just sharing.

And so it talks about all the way through Peter's talking about Jesus. Not just talking about Jesus, but what that means to us today. Even though written some 2000 years ago, it's so relevant for us. Talks about having insults. Maybe all of us have had some insults over the years. When they hurled their insults at him, did not retaliate, he himself bore our sins. By his wounds, we are, anyone know what's going to happen next? Healed.

By his wounds, we are healed. This precious salvation is a great gift that we have to honor constantly and be so thankful to God for what he has done for us. Then in chapter four in the book of First Peter, he says, "Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin." So as I mentioned, this word suffering is used over and over and over again. And then at the end in chapter four, verse seven, he says, "At the end of all things, it's near. Therefore, be clear-minded, be self-controlled so that you can pray above all, above all, above everything else. Love each other deeply. Offer hospitality to one another. Each one, should use whatever gift we have received to serve others." Beautiful description through all of this. And yet in the first century, there was a lot of conflict. There was a lot of suffering just by being in, as a Christian at that time. And there are places in this world even today where Christians are being maligned and suffering.

And so Peter deals with this. In verse 12 of chapter four, he says, "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the painful trial. You are suffering." Again, this is one of Peter's words over and over again. "As though something were strange that were happening to you, but rejoice that you actually participate in these sufferings of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed." I've always thought about that. I always thought, "When Jesus comes, as He says, He will come. What will it be like?"

It's just interesting to see this. Sometimes just maybe just a little bit of an understanding of this. When a loved one has been away for a long, long, long time, you just can't wait to see that loved one walk through that door or picked up at the airport or getting off the bus. Just can't wait for that. And yet there is a time, a promise, that the voice of God will be heard by all. The Holy Spirit will be seen. Jesus is there. It's part of our story. And what a great story it is.

So we can't diminish suffering, but it's the understanding that even if we have to, we will suffer as a Christian for the benefit of those who accuse Christianity. Let us show a better way in being a Christian over and over and over again. He talks about this. And it's revealed through many scriptures in the Bible. For example, in the book of Romans, these words. And we know that in all things, God works for the good for those who love him and have been called according to his purpose. And then in verse 31, if God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own son but gave up his son for us all. What shall separate us from the love of God? Nothing. No,

in all creation, nothing. In all things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. I am convinced that death nor life, neither angels or demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord. How about that? I can't think of anything better.

So Peter demonstrates all of this. And again, when we go to the book of Hebrews, it's interesting that nobody really knows who wrote it and what is being said about it in a way that we can really grasp it in powerful ways. So in chapter 11 of Hebrews, it just talks about this tremendous faith that we ought to have because God has faith in us. This book was written not just for them, but for us even today. Who knew when this book was being written that 2,000 years in the future, we would be gathered here today hearing the same message that they heard. It's just as relevant today as it was back then. So by faith, now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith, we understand that the universe was formed at God's command so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. Talks about faith by Abel, Cain and Abel. Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain. And by faith, he still speaks to us though he is dead. And then he lists all kinds of people who are great examples for Christians in that first century.

Have you ever thought about the people who have passed, people who have been part of us for many, many years and it was their time to pass? You think of great preachers in the past. Lynn Anderson was a great, great preacher, wonderful man. Humble is all get out, wonderful preacher. C.G. McPhee, some of you would remember C.G. McPhee. All these people may go on and list names after names after names. And they wouldn't be interested in hearing their names put out in public. But they were just really precious, pious people who love God and serve God with all their hearts. And we are part of that story. And by faith, it says, Abel still speaks though he is dead. And then he says, all these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised. They only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And then there was persecution.

I suppose it still happens in some places in the world. But I'm not sure it would be so much like this. I always feel difficult reading these things because it's just difficult. But this is what they had to put up with. They were put to death by the sword simply because they said, Jesus is Lord. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, persecuted and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. They lived in holes in the ground. They were all commended for their faith. But listen to this. That none of them received what had been promised because God planned something better for us. They went through the pain for us. God planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Generation after generation after generation, sharing the gospel story of Jesus Christ. There were people who lived long before us who did not know us, yet they lived for us with faith. May we do the same.

In 1910, there was a church photo on the wall of a room of one of the NHL teams. And it's printed out loud, long. When you walk in, you can hear them quote it on occasion. Astronomy beliefs, sorry if you're not a fan, but says this, "To you, from failing hands we throw the torch. Be yours to hold it high." See that's for us. From generation to generation to generation, hold the banner of faith

high. But Don, you don't know what I'm going through. I suppose we could say that to everyone. But we know who's with us. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. I am always with you. The torch has been passed on.

Generation to generation, showing us that we have faith in a powerful, powerful way. So in the book of Hebrews and in the book of Peter and many other places, it talks about these wonderful people of faith. As you come to Him, the living stone rejected by people, but chosen by God, precious to Him, you also are living stones, building a spiritual house. The church building is a church building, but the church is the people. People coming together as one. So concerning all of this, again in Peter's book, he uses the word suffering, excuse me, 18 different times. But it's not a negative thing. It's a powerfully positive thing.

He says, now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers and sisters, love one another deeply from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable seed through the living and enduring word of God. This is given to us. And then, even though written long ago, listen to this. As you come to Him, Jesus Christ, the living stone who was rejected by men, but chosen by God and precious to Him, you also like living stones, listen, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. And you, that all of us are priests. That's what we're called. Priests, priests of the living God, Jesus Christ, a spiritual priesthood.

So then he says these words to us. But you are a chosen people. You are a royal priesthood. Do you believe it? God says these words. And if God says it through Peter, I think we need to believe it. We are a chosen people. We are a royal priesthood. We are a holy nation. We are people belonging to God so that we might declare the praises of Him in His wonderful light. Once we were away from Him, but not anymore, that we are with Him now. And when they hurled insults against Him, Jesus did not retaliate because He Himself bore our sins. Meanwhile they made threats against Him, even though they put Him on a cross. Jesus said, "I forgive you and I love you." That doesn't mean that suffering doesn't hurt and that suffering doesn't occur. It certainly does. Therefore since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude of Him, because He who has suffered in His body is done with sin. As a result, He does not live the rest of His earthly life for human desires, but rather for the will of God.

Peter, impetuous Peter. He finishes it up by saying these words. You know if you were going to write a brief book on faith, what would you say? Here's how he sums it up. Cast all your anxiety on God. Cast all your anxiety on God. And the God of grace who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, even after you've suffered a little while, He Himself really will store you and make you strong, firm, and steadfast. To Him be the power forever and forever. And then these last words. And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him. And trust me, He loves us.

Who's been called according to His purpose. We've all been called. If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not separate or spare His Son, but gave Him up for us all. He did it for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Who? Who? Who will ever separate us from the love of Christ? No, no, no. We are more than conquerors through Him because He loves us. And I'm convinced, I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present or the future, nor anything else in all creation, anything, will ever be able to separate us from the love of our Lord. There are precious ones waiting for us. And one day we will see them

again, face to face. They've passed on the torch for us, for a new generation of Christians. And may we follow that example by passing the torch of faith, holding it high. Amen.

## Song Leader Comment

One of the benefits of traveling allows you to see other cultures and other people and how they do things. A couple of observations from our recent trip to Portugal. When we saw children in schoolyards, they were jubilant. They were joyful. They were happy. They were moving. There was energy there and vitality.

Another thing that when we were in Porto, we took a train ride up the Giro Valley into the heart of Portugal. And all along that valley there are terraces and seems like mountains. Well, they're not mountains, but they're very steep. It's a very steep valley. And when I think of the song that we're going to sing now, it has deeper meaning to me because I experience these valleys and these mountains.

## Closing Prayer

So I would like to invite you to stand as we sing our closing song. Our closing prayer this morning is taken from Philippians chapter 2.

Lord, please bring us encouragement from being united with Christ. Please comfort us in His love. Please grant us the fellowship of the Spirit and give us tenderness and compassion. Lord, let us make a complete joy by being like Jesus in our minds, having His love being one in your spirit and in your purpose. Guide us so that we may do nothing out of anything selfish, anything focused on us, or anything vain, anything conceited. Give us humility, God, and help us to think of others ahead of ourselves and look to their interests, not just our own. Give us the same attitude as Jesus this week. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

Have a good week, everybody. See ya.

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