

Advent: Joy

December 29, 2024

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is the third in our Advent series and focuses on joy. Thank you to Dave, Glynnis, Don, and everybody else involved in the service. The scripture reading is John 16, 19 to 22. Happy anniversary this week to Rhonda and Ed.

Scripture Reading

John 16:19-22

Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'?" Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A 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. So 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.

Sermon

Advent: Joy

Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for being with us today. Today we're in our, pardon me, our third Christmas Advent, joy. And then next Sunday we will finish up with peace. I had a lot of fun this past week going through the scriptures on joy. I'd forgotten how many there are, and beautiful, beautiful words in scripture can just come to us. In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus talks about receiving the good news of Jesus himself with great joy. And I was thinking that one day, and it'll happen for all of us, that one day we will see Jesus face to face.

Now talk about joy. Christmas and the joy on faces of children are all alike. Even if a person is alone on Christmas, that person isn't truly alone. Because Jesus said, "I am always with you." "I will never leave you." "I will never forsake you." And the teachings of Jesus, often in the parables, reflect joy. The seed falling on ground refers to people who hear the word of the Lord, and at once receive that word of Jesus with great joy. So let's just spend a little bit of time talking about this. In Luke one, Mary was blessed to bring Jesus into the world, and in Luke he records these words. "As the sound of your greeting reached my ears, 'the baby in my womb leaped for joy.'" For those of you who've had children, as Barb and I have, when we see our baby for the first time, you've been waiting nine months, and you see your baby for the first time, there are no adequate words to describe it. The joy that we have. And as the years go on, the first steps, the first songs that they sing, the first, the first, the first, all the way through is great, great joy.

When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son, and interesting, her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they came, and they shared her joy. Sometimes that happens to us. We go and visit someone, and all of a sudden, they're telling us about this joy that we have, and we receive that joy. And even though it's not ours,

we feel like it's ours. Joy all around us. When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son, her neighbors and relatives heard the Lord had shown her great mercy, and shared her joy, holding that baby for the first time, as we've said, is glorious and profound. There are no words. And then in Luke chapter two, angels are everywhere. But the angel said, don't be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for somebody help me. All the people, that's us. For all of us, who knew that we were in the Christmas story? We certainly were, and are in the Christmas story. Great joy for all of us.

So at Christmas, there can be a lot of laughter, and a lot of joy, but it's also reverent. It's this idea of Jesus himself coming into our life, remembering that he promised us, I'll never leave you, I'll never forsake you, I'm always with you. You wake up in the middle of the night, maybe having a sweat dream, a nightmare, it's okay, it's okay, I'm with you. Don't fear. My joy is with you, my presence is with you, and it happens 24 hours a day. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and when he comes, he's full of joy.

In John 15, Jesus said, "I tell you these things "so that my joy may be in us, in you." So all the way through, John is known as the loving disciple, apostle. He shares many words, he writes the book of John, first, second, and third John, he writes Revelation, and so forth, and all the way through, there's this concept of wolves and weaves all the way through, all this subliminal joy, without even the word necessarily being said, but when he writes these words, they write these words, this joy is so overwhelming. And if Christianity has become such a drag and a bore, I suggest open up your Bible, underline the word joy, and notice how often it is expressed, especially when people are going through difficult times.

Joy stands at the door waiting, happy to express the beautiful expression of Jesus himself, who is the ultimate person of joy. And sometimes joy even comes with the grief, now is your time of grief, but I will see you again, and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. All of us have probably experienced this. A loved one of ours has passed, husband, wife, grandparent, a good friend, one of the promises that we have is, we'll see them again, and such great joy. For some of us, our parents have gone long time ago, but won't it be great when you see their face for the first time in a long time? It's a promise of God.

And so this joy, this great joy, we need to remember these beautiful words that are expressed in scripture constantly, particularly by John, who reminds us of where we're at today even, that the joy of God is surrounding us. He said, "Very truly I tell you, "there will come a time when you will weep, "and you will mourn, and you will grieve, "but your grief will turn to joy." John 16, "Now is your time of grief, "but I'll see you again, and we will rejoice." Joy is being poured out from Jesus into our hearts. In verse 24, he says, "Until now, "you have not asked for anything in my name." Ask, Jesus wants us to ask. Ask, and you will receive from us. You will receive your joy, and that joy will be complete. Has God ever backed away on a promise? No. And joy is part of it all. And I know it's Christmas time or Christmas season, and it is just wonderful. The kids are happy, can't wait, and yet at the same time, it reminds us of, yeah, I can't wait to see him face to face. Can't wait to see Mom. Can't wait to see Dad. Can't wait to see our person that we love again. So everywhere in scripture, I'll just read it.

In the book of Psalms particularly, it says, "You will find my heart with joy." Remember the first time you fell in love. I mean deeply in love. And your wedding is here. Joy. Not too many sad faces at a

wedding. You'll fill my heart with joy. You will be glad and sing forever with joy. You will fill me with joy, says the Lord. You are right in giving joy to the Lord. We shout for joy over the Lord's protection. How great is our joy in victory. These are just some of the scriptures from all the New Testament like. And then I like this one. My heart leaps with joy. And for those who are musically inclined, play the harp skillfully and sing with joy. These are scriptures. Delight in my vindication and shout out for joy because the Lord responds to joy. My God and my joy delight in God's presence. God anoints us with the oil of joy. He is anointing us right at this moment with the joy that comes from him. Sometimes we just forget. Sometimes we just push it away. But God leads us with joy. Shout for joy and sing praises to the Lord. Tell us of the Lord's work with songs of joy. Your faithful people return with songs of joy over and over and over again. A person who loves wisdom brings joy.

Remember the story of Christmas Carol? Scrooge. There's only one thing that brought him joy. And that was wealth. And he protected it. He guarded it. He built a prison around it, if you will. Until finally, after visiting by ghosts, angels I suppose. And we believe in angels. Scripture makes it clear. Are not angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who are inheriting salvation? Oh yes, there are angels all around us constantly. And he was wondering about these angels who changed his life. He had laughed for years. A cranky, a grudging, a grasping man. And finally, with the angels coming to see him. He finally realized, finally realized there is joy in this world. His love was money. There wasn't any more. Gave it away. He shared it with others. Joy. And then in Jeremiah, he says, "I will shout for joy." There's expressions all the way throughout. There's expressions all the way throughout that just at the season seem to come to the front. And oh how I wish we could be preaching these sermons in the summertime. Because here we are, this wonderful experience of shouting for joy. Summer, fall, spring, wherever, all the way through. So let me just again share a couple more scriptures.

In Mark, the word was received with great joy. Jesus will be a joy and delight to each one of us. John 20, your grief will return to joy. You will fill me with joy. And then Romans chapter 15, and I like this. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter "of eating and drinking, "but of righteousness, peace, "and joy in the Holy Spirit."

You see we talk about God the Father and God the Son. We seldom talk about God's Holy Spirit. He's with us, all around us. When you drive home today or walk home today, you're just not walking by yourself or driving by yourself. No, I'll never leave you and I'll never forsake you. Well who? God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the angels all around us. There's so many people in each individual life. And they've helped us share with one another. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter "of eating and drinking, but that of joy." And then it says in 2 Corinthians, we will work for you for your joy because you stand firm in the faith. That's what preachers want to do. We wanna share these words. We wanna bring joy to people's lives. The first New Testament book that was written was not the book of Matthew. The first New Testament book that was actually written was the book of Galatians. And in Galatians, he talks about joy and joyful joy. It's true that we must protect our joy. We can't allow to wallow in sadness.

So several weeks ago, we had this lovely, lovely dog with us for quite a while. She was on death row before someone adopted her, and we did. And for a lot of years, she brought us a lot of love and a lot of joy, just a little scratch behind her ear. And she was in heaven. She's the dog that we loved. And finally, it was coming to the end. She laid down on the ground. She tried to get that tail to wag

but just couldn't quite do it. But she turned her head and looked at us. And she passed away. All dogs go to heaven. Where there's love, where there's joy, there are memories for all of us. My father's passed a long time ago. Still see him in my own mind. Same with my mom. And it's not just me. I think all of us have had these experiences. But there's joy in the memories of all of these people whom we love, and there's joy that will be coming when we see Jesus face to face, and see Paul and all the way through, all the various people.

So encouragement must be part of joy. Listen to what he says. If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if you have any comfort in his love, if any fellowship with the Holy Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete. By being like-minded, having, listen, the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vanity, vain conceit. But in humility, consider others more than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Christmas is more than gifts, more than candy, more than feasting. It's the celebration of Jesus coming into the world, and the celebration of Jesus coming into our heart. He is the reason for the season, but all seasons, he's there for us. He promises over and over and over again. And I don't recall a time when he promised us something and it hasn't happened. It may be different than we think, but usually it works out for the better.

The command, as we've said, that has been constantly repeated is rejoice, have joy. Not just for God's sake, but for our own sake. Joy has its root in God's own nature. Think of that. The root, the root of love is in God, and God's love is in us. We are connected. Joy is God's attitude. The more we see God at work, the more joy we experience, the more likely we are to believe it, to grab it, and to express it. Joy is also linked to praise. Adam leads us with wonderful songs, praise and joy and singing. John Wesley, some of you recognize that name, wrote, "Christian joy is a joy of obedience, "joy in loving God, "and rejoicing in the joy of Jesus himself." I can't wait to hear Jesus laughing.

A very cultured, but unhappy woman said, "If I have what you have, I wouldn't be in the mess I am." And then she surrendered her mess to Jesus, and she said, "Every day I have strength and fun to spare. "The Lord has provided me with the joys of life." Many of us recall the wonderful Mother Teresa who wrote these words, "Joy is prayer." Joy is strength. Joy is love. Joy is love. A joyful heart is the result of a heart burning with love. And the great Charles Swindoll wrote, "God prizes generosity, especially joyful, "joyful generosity." As God gives us his love joyfully, may our generosity be joyful.

John Kendrick Bang said, "Today, whatever may annoy, "the word for me is joy, just simple joy." Okay, so I've been talking for a while, I'll conclude. The joy of life, the joy of children, of husband or wife, the joy of bright blue skies, the joy of rain and glad surprise. The lustrous light of day and spiritual gifts divine upon our way, whether it be sorrow, it will put off until tomorrow, as my mother used to say, "Have a good night's sleep. "You'll feel better in the morning."

In conclusion, John Burroughs wrote this, "Oh, to share the great sunny, "joyous life of the earth. "To be as happy as the birds, "the leaves of the trees that dance "and rustle in the wind as the waters murmur "and sparkle to the seeds."

I want to read the lyrics of the wonderful hymn. Joyful, joyful, we adore thee. God of glory, Lord of love, hearts unfold like flowers before thee, hail thee as the sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, dry the dark of doubt away, giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day. All thy works with joy surround thee, earth and heaven reflect thy rays, center of unbroken praise, field and forest, vale and mountain, call us to rejoice in thee. Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blessed. Wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest. Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all who live and love are thine, lift us to the joy divine. Mortals join the mighty chorus, with the morning stars began. Father, love is reigning o'er us, brother love binds man to man, ever singing march we onward, victors in the might of truth, and triumph over song of life.

May I just encourage each one of us this year to allow the joy of God in your heart. His love, his joy is in us. May we receive it and share it with others. Amen.

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