

What Brings You Joy?

Scripture Text: Luke 10:1-20

Introduction

What brings you joy? Is it your family? Is it your work? Is it music or your ability to play it? Is it when your favorite sports team wins a game? There are many things that make us happy, at least for a time. When that experience fades, though, so does the joy it produced. What should bring you joy? Should it not be something more permanent, something more worthy of praise? In this passage, Jesus had just explained the cost of following Him. If you are going to follow Jesus, then you will have to give up many things. Jesus wants your whole life, not just part of you and not just you on Sunday morning. If you are going to follow Christ and be His disciple, you need to be “all in” for Him. Are you all in for Christ? After Jesus explained to His disciples the cost of following Him, He then sent out seventy-two of His disciples into the surrounding country to minister to the people and to announce the kingdom of God. This passage reveals some things about being a disciple of Christ and what should bring us joy.

Rejoice in All Things

Disciples of Jesus Christ should really be the happiest people in the world. No one ought to have more joy than those who follow Jesus. And yet, many believers go around looking like the most unhappy people in the world. God tells us to rejoice several times throughout scripture and for a number of reasons. Look at the following passages.

Psalm 118:24 *This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

We should rejoice for the time we have. We should be glad for this and every day God gives us. If you are married, you should also rejoice that God has given you a spouse.

Proverbs 5:18 *Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.*

We should also rejoice with others who rejoice, but also weep when they weep.

Romans 12:15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*

It would seem that God is telling us something. But, to cover all the bases, Paul wrote the following comment about rejoicing and how often we should do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 ¹⁶ *Rejoice always,* ¹⁷ *pray without ceasing,* ¹⁸ *give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

“Always” seems like a very long time. Therefore, God tells us and expects us to rejoice for a number of things and for a very long time. Now, let us look at what Jesus said.

Rejoice in Service

What is the purpose of the church? It is to glorify Jesus Christ in all that we do. How do we do that? We worship Him by studying the Bible. We worship Him by praying for and with one another. We worship Him by singing songs of praise. We also worship Him by *making disciples* of other people. God does not save us so we can just meet once or twice a week, sit on a comfortable pew, and wait for Him to return. Jesus did not call His disciples to Him just to spend time with Him. That is primary, but there is more. God calls us to be the *hands and feet of Jesus*. He calls us to serve. In Luke chapter 10, Jesus sent His disciples out “two by two” in order to minister to other people. Sending them out two by two may have been for several reasons. Two are better than one for they can support and encourage each other. They can also protect each other as not all people are friendly. Sending them out two by two may have also fulfilled the Old Testament requirement to have two witnesses so that something could be verified (Deuteronomy 19:15). Jesus did not just send those disciples. He sends us out as well.

Luke 10:2 *And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”*

The truth is there are a lot of lost people in the world. There are a lot of people who do not know Jesus as Lord and Savior. There are a lot of people who are on their way to Hell. Jesus reminded us that the harvest is plentiful, but there is a problem. There are not enough workers to do the work. There are a lot of people who do not know Christ and there are not enough people who are telling them about Him. Jesus seems to have said that the seventy-two disciples whom He sent out to preach were not enough for the abundant spiritual harvest. There was need for many more to take the message, and thus they needed to pray for this need to be met. That is where the whole church comes in. The church has a universal mission to make disciples of all nations. So, what does this have to do with joy? When God calls you to Himself, He calls you to serve Him. This would be like a king calling you to serve Him and to be His personal representative. Would that not be an honor? It is a privilege to serve God. God does not need us to do anything for Him, but He desires it. He desires us to serve Him, therefore, we should rejoice in it. We should rejoice that God wants us to serve Him.

Rejoice in Rejection

If we follow Jesus, then why do we sometimes go around sad and discouraged? Why do we allow things to steal our joy? While we live in this world, we know there will be trouble. Some people will hurt you. Some will reject you. You might be the happiest person in the world, but not everyone will share that joy. Not everyone will be happy to hear what you have to say. There is much wickedness in the world and our enemy seeks to destroy us. Jesus warned His disciples of this. Look at the next verse.

Luke 10:3 *Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.*

To call His disciples “lambs” might mean that they should be gentle in their ministry to others. The spread of the gospel is to come through preaching the “good news” of Jesus Christ and inviting people to respond willingly. It is not hitting people over the head with a Bible expecting the Word to change them by force. This principle of genuine commitment that cannot be compelled by force sets us apart from other religions that try to convert people by force. Another aspect of the lamb analogy is the danger associated with our service to God. While it is privilege to serve Jesus, He warned His disciples that they were like lambs in the midst of wolves. What do wolves do to lambs? They devour them. Following Jesus comes with a cost. It might cost you your life, or it might simply cost you rejection. None of us really want rejection. We all want to be accepted. Fear of rejection often paralyzes us from following Jesus as we should. Fear of rejection makes us the center of the universe when it is Jesus who is center of everything. Therefore, Jesus reminded us who people really reject when they reject the message of Christ or the ministry you provide in Christ. Look at the following verse.

Luke 10:16 *The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.*

This verse tells us at least two things. For one, it emphasizes the unity we have with our Savior. To be His disciple and to serve Him means to represent Jesus to the world. We are His ambassadors. This verse is also an encouragement to us for when people reject us. It is a reason to rejoice. It is easy to become discouraged when you believe you are faithfully following Jesus but others reject you. It can be easy to become discouraged when your desire is to be faithful to Christ, but others do not. Therefore, do not be discouraged when people reject you because of your faith. Do not be discouraged when people reject the message of Christ that you tell them. Do not be discouraged when people refuse to follow God’s Word when you try to share it with them. They are not rejecting you, they are rejecting Jesus. Rejoice in serving the Lord, knowing that He has called you into fellowship with Him and He has called you into service for Him.

Rejoice With Perspective

Imagine that you know someone who is sick. Now, imagine if God healed that person’s sickness through you. Imagine God bringing someone back to life through you. That would be incredible. Imagine if God used your voice to cast away demons who were tormenting someone. These are all amazing and miraculous things God has done through His people. Those would be exciting things to experience. There is one we may often overlook, though. Imagine if God used you to proclaim the message of hope to other people and they responded to it by accepting Christ as Savior. Would you rejoice in that? Would you be filled with joy to experience that? Jesus’ disciples did. Having completed their mission, the seventy-two disciples returned to Jesus and rejoiced at all that God had done through them. And yet, to this great report, Jesus gave His disciples a warning. Look at the next couple of verses.

Luke 10:19–20 ¹⁹ *Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.* ²⁰

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

The seventy-two returned and they were excited. They rejoiced that their work for Jesus had gone so well. The disciples were able to work miracles in the authority and power of Jesus. Jesus had given them authority and power to heal sick people and to cast demons out of them. Can you imagine something more exhilarating than being used by God to miraculously help other people in need? I think we would all be very excited. And yet, Jesus warned them to *not* rejoice in these things. Why? Surely, if we can rejoice for other reasons, we can rejoice in being used mightily by God. We already know from other scripture that God expects us to rejoice over a number of things. What is different about this? It is about *perspective*. Jesus was not rebuking all joy in ministry, for we should be happy when God works through us. Jesus was rebuking the kind of joy in ministry that overshadows, or worse takes the place of, our joy in Christ. Beware of loving God more for what He does through you than for what He does for you. In fact, beware of loving anything about God or what He does more than just loving Him. Did the disciples have the same joy here that they had before when they were forgiven?

The issue Jesus was addressing was what gives us the most joy. Basically, what captivates your heart more: *what God does through you, or what he has done for you?* We should rejoice in the blessings we receive from God, but we should not *excessively* rejoice in them. Our greatest joy must be in our salvation through Christ. Later in Luke chapter 15, Jesus told three stories of losing something and then finding it later. He told a parable of a shepherd losing one sheep and finding it later. He then told a parable of a woman who lost a valuable coin and later found it. And then Jesus told the story of a prodigal son, a son who left his father and then later returned. In each of those stories, something or someone was lost and then later found. When what was once lost was later found, there was much rejoicing. There was a celebration. Likewise, there is a party in heaven every time one sinner repents and turns to Christ. Do we rejoice in those things? Do we rejoice that we are the lost sheep and the lost coin that was found? Do we rejoice that we are that prodigal son who turned his back on the Father, but who was later found and welcomed back into his Father's house? That is real joy!

We can often find our work for God more exciting than God's work for us. It is more appealing to rejoice in the temporary blessings of this life than to rejoice in the eternal blessing of salvation. It is more appealing to rejoice when our favorite sports team wins a game, or when a large crowd joins us for worship, or there is a big turn out (or any turn out!) at an event we do. Jesus' warning to us is that there is a greater pleasure and a deeper joy than the temporary joys of this life and even the highs of ministry. What is the greater miracle, that the Spirit removed a demon from another person's body or that He removed you out of hell? We will not find our deepest joy in our work for Christ or in the temporary blessing that God bestows upon us. No, our deepest, most satisfying joy is found in Jesus Himself. Have you forgotten how to rejoice in your salvation? Have you forgotten how lost you were before Christ that you have lost the joy of salvation? No matter what the circumstance is, how well things are going or how bad they may be, we should always rejoice in the fact that we are forgiven and adopted into God's family.

Do You Have Real Joy?

If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ you have the greatest reason to rejoice. You are forgiven. You are adopted into God's family. You have eternal life and the promise that no matter what happens in this world, good or bad, it will not compare to what God has prepared for you. If you are an unbeliever, however, you have no reason to rejoice. You may have temporary joy, but it will not last. Your good job will perish. Your wealth and riches will also perish. If you have a believing spouse, but you are not a believer, you will be separated one day, and you will perish. If you both do not believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you both will perish in Hell. What will it matter to gain the world and lose your soul (Matthew 16:26). We are all under the wrath of God and separated from Him. Except for repenting of our sinfulness and turning to Christ for salvation, we will all perish. But thanks be to God, through His infinite love for the world, anyone who believes in Christ will not perish but have everlasting life. Do you have that life today? Can you rejoice that your name is written in heaven?

When Jesus referred to the cities that His disciples would minister, there were only two possible responses to their preaching. People would either listen and receive the message, or they would not listen and not receive the message. They would either be saved or remain lost. When the RMS Titanic struck an iceberg and then sank into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean on April 15, 1912, there were about 2,224 people on board. In the aftermath of that tragedy, there were two categories of people listed — those who were lost and those who were saved. Which one are you? Have you gotten into the lifeboat of Christ? Are you saved from the sinking ship of this mortal life? It is a serious thing to reject Christ. Hearing the good news, if not followed by faith, has terrible implications. We live in a society that hears so much about Jesus, with a church building on every corner in some places, but with people who are not following Christ. Are you following Him today?

Conclusion

In closing, do you have the joy of having your name written in heaven? The joy of knowing God and being known by Him is far better than any blessing or pleasure of this world. If you are a believer desiring to serve Him well, the best way to prepare for fruitful ministry is not by being impressed with your giftings and God's work in you, but by being in awe of God's grace for you. The Apostle Paul took great joy in his ministry, but he also said, "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8). Can we say that? Would we be as satisfied in Jesus if our ministry crumbled before us, if our gifts suddenly vanished, if our friendship and relationships never led to any tangible fruit, if our influence and fruitfulness all washed away tomorrow? Can you rejoice solely in that your name is written in heaven? May it be so! Thanks be to God. Amen!