



27 September 2024

Joy

Joy is a prized treasure.

True joy, or true happiness, is God's gift to His children of a state of gladness that goes beyond a response to our situation or of being accepted and approved, that does not go up and down with the breezes and storms of life.

Scripture speaks of it frequently. Think of just a handful of the Bible's truths about joy.

- Jesus has given us the truth so that we will have His joy, a complete joy which no one, nothing can take away from us (John 15:11; 16:22).
- So Paul prayed for his readers to experience it, to be filled with God's joy (Romans 15:13).
- The Holy Spirit is working to produce, to grow it in us (Galatians 5:22).
- Paul commanded us to be joyful, always be joyful (Romans 12:12; Philippians 4:4).
- James instructs us to be joyful even in trials (James 1:2).



Yes, Scripture speaks of joy frequently. But do we experience it frequently, continually? If not, how can we?

There are some important lessons for us in a passage that is not often highlighted when we think of being joyful. After Jesus was raised from the dead He was with His disciples for forty days until He ascended back to heaven. The passage is Luke 24:50-53, which closes the gospel.

“And [Jesus] led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they, after worshipping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.”

There are some lessons from the disciples which we need to learn in order to experience the fullness of the joy that Christ gives us.

- The disciples spent time with Jesus and worshiped Him. While we do not have in depth details of the forty days Jesus spent with them after His resurrection up to His return to heaven, it is clear that they were not just *hanging out*. They continued to learn from Him and were worshiping Him. We need to have *quality time* with Jesus, to worship Him to build our relationship and receive the fulness of His joy.
- The disciples had at least some understanding that Jesus' return to heaven was part of God's perfect plan, and that it was better for them that He left, in part because then the Holy Spirit would come to be with them always. Our plans are important, but God's plans are immeasurably more important. It is inconceivable to me that I, or you, can be joyful if I am not focused on, driven by God's will and plan. To pray and live "Thy will be done" in my life is indispensable to experiencing the fullness of God's joy.
- I believe the disciples truly missed Jesus after He returned to heaven, especially when they looked at life and ministry going forward. Yet, they were continually praising God. You see, praising God is not just for the good times, it is acknowledging and declaring the greatness, goodness, love, power and work of God in all times. We should follow king David's example, "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1).
- The disciples knew and counted on Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit would give them power to live and witness for Him (Acts 1:8). The Bible tells us that God is working in us "with all power", working to strengthen us so we "can do all things through Him" (Colossians 1:11; Philippians 4:13). That includes having the fullness of God's joy in each day and every circumstance.

Joy is God's gracious gift to you. Live in and by it because, as Nehemiah tells us, "the joy of the LORD is your strength!"

Pastor Lyle