

Advent Week 3 - Joy - Sermon Manuscript

What causes you joy?

Two things that cause me joy:

- **Brickhouse Cookies**
- **My Drums (1996)**

[Blank] The only problem is that the joy I find in these things is only temporary. As much as I love cookies, I almost always regret eating them - they taste great! But I don't *feel* great after eating two! My joy in them is short lived.

And with my drums... as much joy as they brought me, over the years that joy started to fade as they showed their age. So I ended up selling them earlier this year - granted, I bought a new set that now brings me joy - but as nice as they are, I know that joy is only temporary.

So this week I searched the scriptures to see what the Bible has to say about joy. I found that it actually says a whole lot...!

For example:

James 1:2 - "Consider it **pure joy**, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds..."

James 1:3 - "...because you know the testing of your faith produces perseverance."

The author of Hebrews reflects on this as they were writing to believers that were being persecuted because of their faith in Jesus...

Hebrews 10:34 - "You suffered along with those in prison and **joyfully** accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions."

Imagine the local authorities breaking into your home and taking all your stuff - not because you forgot to pay your mortgage for the past several months, but because you believe Jesus is Lord!

How would you react in that moment? I'm thinking my first response might not be filled with pure joy... especially if they're taking my new drums!

And yet, remember when we talked about peace a couple weeks ago? Do you remember what Paul said in Philippians 4? He commands believers to rejoice in the Lord always. Not just when it's convenient, but in every situation.

But that doesn't mean we fake it till we make it. We talked about when the Lord's peace comes over us, it guards our hearts and our minds.

Think about that...

The Lord's peace guards us (soldier, heart and minds), **and the hope we have in the Lord is what grounds us.** (foundation of a house)

Last week Mike talked about how this hope we have in the Lord isn't wishful thinking. Biblical hope is an expectation that something is going to happen. It's an assurance that we have in the Lord - He WILL do what He says He will do.

And so for believers: Peace guards us; Hope grounds us; and because of that, the joy of the Lord sustains us even in the most difficult times - even in times of persecution.

[Blank] We might think: Yeah but how's that possible?

I think of someone I graduated high school with. He was always super athletic - one of the most in shape guys we had in our graduating class.

Now he's married and has kids, but unfortunately he has ALS (aka Lou Gehrig's Disease). Google says that ALS "is a progressive nervous system disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, causing loss of muscle control."

I often see posts on facebook of how my friend is struggling with this disease. His muscles are failing him... he's tired... he's always in pain. Some days are worse than others. But ultimately there's no cure for ALS.

So, where's the peace, hope and joy in that?

Earlier this week I was talking about joy in the office and Sonia reminded me of a book called The Hiding Place. It's written by a woman named Corrie ten Boom. She was a dutch watchmaker, and later became a Christian writer.

Her story is about when she was in a Nazi prison camp. She lived through some unimaginable things while she was there, but at one point she was put into a solitary cell.

She said that "Solitary was teaching [her] that it was not possible to be rich alone." In other words, she craved company.

She would often pray, because as a believer, she knew the Lord was with her. And even in her confinement, she found joy in a certain visitor that would come every day ... a little ant!

That might seem kind of silly, but when all your freedoms are taken away and you don't know if you'll live to see tomorrow, you're thankful for any blessing from the Lord, no matter how small.

In fact there's something about the joy that the Lord gives that's different from any other worldly joy. It's a bit hard to explain, but Peter gives it a shot. He says...

1 Peter 1:8-9 - "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are ***filled*** [Gk = extreme happiness] with an ***inexpressible and glorious joy***, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

There's a few things to notice here...

Look at the word “*filled*.” The only bible translation I could find that actually says filled is the NIV. The Greek word behind it actually means extreme happiness - so why does the NIV say we are filled?

Long story short, the idea behind these words is that we are so filled up with extreme joy that it’s indescribable. That’s why the NIV uses the word filled. But there are plenty of other verses in the Bible that say the Lord fills us with joy...

In Acts 2:28, Peter uses an example from the Psalms where David says to God, “You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.”

So we know that the Lord *fills* us with joy. But how often do we give God thanks to God when He fills us with His joy?

Take my drumset as an example - As a 12 year old, I wasn’t thinking about the fact that the Lord blessed my family in such a way that they were able to bless me.

The Lord had blessed me with the gift of music, and that brought me joy. But I don’t remember giving God the credit back then. That probably didn’t cross my mind.

But looking back on it, the Lord filled me with joy; And that joy I find in music has only grown throughout my life. But even *that* joy pales in comparison to the joy that Peter was talking about...

Peter was talking about the joy that comes from receiving the gift of salvation. When we put our faith in Jesus, we receive salvation. It’s the gift of eternal life; It’s the promise that our sins are forgiven and we’re adopted into God’s forever family.

Peter’s saying that the gift of salvation brings us an inexpressible and glorious joy...

It’s *inexpressible* because it’s something that can’t fully be put into words; it’s indescribable.

And it's *glorious* - which means that it's magnificent... It's impressive... there's nothing else like it!

The joy of the Lord is so far beyond any other joy, that it's hard to describe. It's just something you feel.

[Blank] This reminds me of Uncle Mike - Amanda and Stacie's uncle. As you know, Amanda and Stacie's grandpa, Uncle Mike's dad, recently passed away. And during the service, Uncle Mike went up to the pulpit and shared from his heart.

He was clearly upset, and yet he was still able to laugh and remember the good times he and the family had with his dad.

Uncle Mike trusts in the Lord, and I believe that's why he was able to share the way he did. In his moment of grief, Jesus filled him with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

It wasn't a happy-yay kind of joy. It was a deep kind of joy that was rooted in confidence. It was the kind of joy that lifted him when he was down. It's a joy that sustains him...

I don't know if Mike was thinking about this at all while he was speaking, but for me listening, I could see that deep kind of joy holding him together because uncle Mike knew that his dad was now with Jesus!

And that's the thing about the joy of the Lord...

It's a response to the hope and assurance we have in the promise of eternal life with Jesus.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4 that when it comes to believers who have died, we don't have to grieve like people without hope. We *know* that they are with Jesus!

How do we know for sure? Because it's a promise from God, and He's always faithful with His promises!

In fact, the peace of God, the hope we have in Him, and the joy He fills us with are all wrapped up in the eternal promises of God.

So, while James says to consider it pure joy when we face trials of all kinds, he can say that because he's viewing life's trials through an eternal perspective.

King David in the Old Testament had this same kind of perspective. He said in...

Psalms 144:3-4 - "LORD, what are human beings that you care for them, mere mortals that you think of them? They are like a breath; their days are like a fleeting shadow."

James says something similar in his book. He says that we are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

In other words, in the grand scheme of eternity, we're just a blip on the timeline of history.

However, this life is not the end. We're promised eternal life - sometimes I call it life after life (N.T. Wright). As believers, we live our life now, in the moment, following Jesus, doing the things He's prepared for us to do... but when this life is over, that's not the end... we're just getting started!

One of these days, after Jesus comes back, and after the day of judgment, the LORD is going to sort of hit the reset button on His creation. John describes it like this...

Revelation 21:1-2 - Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband...

Revelation 1:3 - And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God...

Revelation 1:4 - ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

[Blank] That’s what we as believers have to look forward to! That’s our hope! And that’s where our joy is rooted - it’s rooted in His eternal promises.

And, by the way, all of this will happen because of the good news that the angel brought to a group of shepherds in a field about 2000 years ago. Here’s what the angel said to them...

Luke 2:10b-11 - “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news ***that will cause great joy*** for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

Pray - (No matter what we’re going through, fill us with Your indescribable joy)