

Restoring Joy

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[0 : 00] I'm trying to get healthy because I want to see my kids graduate.! These numbers act like indicators, right?

They're indicators of actual health. So no matter how you feel, you could feel like you're doing fine, but the numbers tell you the truth. The numbers tell you how you're really doing. And so as I've been going through all these scans and looking at my health by the numbers, it got me thinking, what about spiritual health?

What indicators are there for spiritual health that, regardless of how you think you might be doing, will tell you this is how you're actually doing? And Psalm 51, which is the text we're going to focus on this morning, would actually suggest that one of the strongest, clearest, most reliable indicators of spiritual health and growth and flourishing is the presence of joy.

It's the presence of joy. So let me ask you this. How joyful are you feeling these days? How much joy do you experience in your daily life?

For those of us who may not be feeling joyful right now, why don't we feel more joy? For Christians, if we believe everything that we're hearing and confessing and praying and singing about this morning, why don't we feel more joy?

[1 : 46] If you're here and you're not a Christian, is there any difference between the experiences of joy that you feel like you've had in your life and that that a Christian might feel? Do I really need to be a follower of Jesus in order to experience joy?

I don't think so. How can we, for those of us who feel like we've lost our sense of joy, how can we recover it? Psalm 51 speaks into these questions, and it's going to show us the source of joy, kind of where it comes from, the loss of joy, why we can have it and then lose it, where does it go, and then finally the recovery of joy, how to get it back.

So let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for this season of Lent, and we thank you for this song. Lord, thousands of years when David wrote it, he never could have imagined that we would be sitting here this morning contemplating words that flowed out of one of the most personal and painful experiences of his life.

And yet, Lord, through the power of your Holy Spirit and through your eternal wisdom, you have appointed these words for us this morning. So I pray that you would open our hearts to receive what you have to say through these words to us.

In Jesus' name, amen. So first of all, the source of joy, I want to clarify a little bit what we mean when we talk about the word joy in this context.

[3 : 06] I don't just mean happiness. I don't just mean optimistic. You know, some people just are naturally wired. Some of you, I love seeing you on Sunday because it doesn't matter if it's raining and cold and nasty outside.

When I see you, I know you're going to be smiling and you're going to say, How you doing? Good morning. Hopefully, if you're that kind of person, you're on the welcome team because those are the kind of people that we want on the welcome team. And you're a naturally optimistic person.

But that's not what I mean by joy. In the Bible, joy is more like a deep, settled assurance that all is well, no matter what the circumstances might be.

It could be sunny. It could be raining. It's a deep, settled assurance that all is well, no matter what the circumstances might be. So no matter what we read in the news, when we're doom scrolling, no matter what current crisis du jour is unfolding in our world, no matter what we might be facing in our own lives, true joy is marked by the fact that it remains solid and unshakable because it's not affected by outward circumstances.

That's really the difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on what we feel like at the moment. Joy depends on what is unshakably true, regardless of how we feel.

[4 : 32] Let me say that again. Happiness depends on what we feel like in the moment. Joy depends on what is unshakably true, regardless of how we feel in the moment.

It's a very different thing. So think of your emotions. Our emotions, the world of feeling is like shifting sand. And the shifting sands of emotions are always blowing this way and that.

So one day we might be feeling happy and optimistic and hopeful about our lives, but maybe a couple of days later, the direction of wind has changed and the sand's blowing in a different direction and we're feeling sad and hopeless.

We're feeling despair. We're feeling pessimistic and morose. But below those shifting sands of emotions, joy is like that bedrock.

It sits under the surface. It's the bedrock of joy that is deep and rooted and secure.

[5 : 29] Think of an ocean where there's a storm raging and there's waves and there's wind, but if you go down deep, go down a mile below the surface, you'd never know there was a storm up there. It's calm.

It's quiet. It's peaceful. It's still. That's joy. And here's the thing about true joy. Here's the, at times, frustrating thing about this kind of joy is you can't get this kind of joy by aiming at it.

You can't wake up and say, I want to have this kind of joy and aim at it. You'll never reach it. You'll always fall short of it. You know, some churches try to stir joy up and, you know, you create an emotional high for people and the music is raging and everybody's kind of whipped into a frenzy and jumping in the air, and that is super fun and awesome.

Right? I love going to experiences like that, but you can't replace joy with something like that because you can't manufacture joy. You can't. It's not an experience that you can engineer. Joy is the byproduct of something else.

It's downstream of something else, and if we don't have that something else, we'll never have this kind of joy. David, the king over Israel, who wrote many of the Psalms, including this one, he had experienced this joy firsthand, and he knew that there's only one place it can be found, and so there's a number of places in the Psalms which are like his prayer book where he writes about this joy.

[6 : 52] Psalm 16 is very clear. Verse 11, he writes of the Lord, In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

David's saying the times when I feel most full of joy the times when I have that assurance, when I have that bedrock, those are the times, Lord, when I'm in your presence.

These are the only times when I feel that, the fullness of joy. So true joy can only be found in God's presence, and by in God's presence, I don't just mean being physically with God because that's not how it works.

Being in God's presence means that our hearts are fully aligned with his heart. It means that we are spiritually connected to God, that his will is our will, that his heart is our heart, that we're moving in step with his Holy Spirit, that we're living out his desire for us as his creatures.

And so that's where true joy can be found. So biblically speaking, joy might be defined this way. It is the deep, settled assurance that God is in control of every aspect of my life, and that therefore all is ultimately well even when all is not immediately well.

[8 : 11] The deep, settled assurance that God is in control of every aspect of my life, and that therefore the ultimate assurance that all is ultimately well even if it's not immediately well.

That's what we find in God's presence. So when we lose that sense of joy, it means that something is not right in our relationship with God. Because if that's downstream from being in God's presence in the way we described, if we're not feeling it, experiencing it, then it means that something is wrong in that relationship.

And that's what Psalm 51 is really about. David's relationship with God has been fractured. It's been damaged. And all of the joy has drained out of his life.

And that's why he prays in verse 11 of this Psalm, cast me not away from your presence. That's David's worst fear, to be cut off from God, to be cast out the way Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden.

Because he knows that life and joy and peace are only to be found in God's presence. And once you taste that, as David had, you never want to do without it. You can't imagine living a day without

it. So David is seeking to repair that relationship.

[9 : 22] And in the heart of the Psalm, he prays, and this is really the heartbeat of Psalm 51, restore to me the joy of your salvation. I want to know what it's like to live in your presence again.

So that's the source of joy. It's living life in God's presence. So why do we lose that? How do we experience the loss of joy? And what does that say?

And how do we understand that? Well, in David's case, it's pretty clear when we look back and we read the text in 2 Samuel, David, frankly, had done some terrible things.

David had abused his power. David had slept with his best friend's wife. When she got pregnant, came and told him that she got pregnant, David initiated a big mass cover-up operation, including arranging to have his best friend killed by sending him to the front lines of a suicide mission.

And then David tries to go on pretending that everything's okay, which is what most of us do. Tries to go on pretending like everything's fine, nothing to see here. Of course, we know all the servants knew everything that was going on.

[10 : 37] David's the only one that actually thought it was a secret. Of course, God knows everything that's going on. So David tries to pretend that everything's okay, but his heart is not okay. And his heart is very far from God.

And it's not a sustainable place to be. And so in 2 Samuel 12, his friend Nathan the prophet confronts him. And only after Nathan confronts him does David finally have the courage to stop pretending that everything is okay.

I wonder if you've ever had that experience where you just sort of reach a point where you say, I can't pretend that things are okay any longer. I can't keep wearing the mask. So David takes the mask off.

Everything comes pouring out. And to our great benefit, it comes out in the form of Psalm 51. And there are some extraordinary insights here into the things that drive us away from God that would apply to all of us.

First, we see as we look at this Psalm, what we see is that our relationship with God can be damaged, both by things that we have done and things that we have left undone.

[11 : 46] That's what we confess sometimes in our liturgy. We confess things that we've done and things that we've left undone. So David uses several different words to describe this problem that has gotten in the way of his relationship with God.

One of the words that he uses is the word peshah, which we translate as transgressions.

Transgressions are, this means active rebellion. This is insurrection against God.

So part of what David has done to damage his relationship with God is he's rebelled against God. In other words, he's knowingly disobeyed and gone against God's will. You know, over the years, I've had conversations with people who've come to me and they've wanted to talk.

I want to have a theological conversation with you and ask you about this with that aspect of the faith because frankly, I'm having a lot of doubts. I'm not sure if I believe any of this anymore and I'm thinking about leaving the faith or they're massively questioning their faith.

And sometimes those conversations end up being theological, but a lot of times I'll start out by just asking, what's going on in your life? And it's surprising how often that conversation ends up taking a very different turn because sometimes, a surprisingly high amount of times, you find out that other shifts in life have coincided with that shift in faith.

[13 : 04] You know, they moved in with their boyfriend or they moved in with their girlfriend or it turns out they're nursing a deep resentment against somebody and they're refusing to forgive that person, right? So you begin to realize, oh, the problem isn't theological.

You can't be actively living against God's will and still feel connected to him at the same time, right?

So there's a way that some of that doubt is your brain trying to make sense of the fact that now all of a sudden because you're rebelling against God, there's no connection or even sense of God's presence in your life any longer, right?

But then later, he uses the word hatat, which we translate sin. And this is a very different nuance. It means missing the mark. So imagine archery and you aim and you miss the bullseye, you miss the target.

Or it means falling short or failing to live according to God's standard, way we might say it is living as though God doesn't exist. So maybe this is somebody who's not in active rebellion against God.

[14:11] Maybe this is somebody who doesn't even acknowledge that there is a God. Or maybe they believe there's a God but they think that God is for religious people or church-going people but God doesn't really have anything to do with me. Or maybe they think that God created everything and just kind of wants us to be happy but doesn't really get involved in the everyday affairs of our life.

He just kind of lets us do our thing, right? These are popular ideas that people in our country have about God. So, you know, maybe in the way we, maybe we think, you know, when I go to church and I pray, that's God stuff.

But the way I spend my money and manage my budget, that's kind of my business. or what I do with my body, that's my business. But it can be in how we deal with things like anxiety in our life. Right? Anxiety, it turns out, is actually deeply rooted in our desire to have control. So, ultimately, anxiety is the result of us trying to control things we can't control.

We try to control future outcomes. We try to control other people's choices. Man, you have teenagers and you just give anything to just be able to just control what they do, right?

[15:15] Don't do this, do this, right? You know, anxiety is sometimes just trying to control what other people think about us. Trying to manage what other people think about us.

The point is, these are things that we can't control. Only God can control these things. So, in reality, when we try to control things that only God can control, we're living in a functionally atheistic way. We're living as though there is no God. We're living as though maybe we are God, right? So that would be a way that we live in God's world as though He doesn't exist. So, that damages our relationship with God.

When we live in a way where we're failing we're willing to let God be God and we're trying to be Him instead. So, the first thing that we see here is that our relationship with God can be broken both by things that we're actively doing in rebellion against God but also simply by living as though God doesn't exist.

Or not doing things that God has called us to do. The second thing we learn is that the problem that we're talking about here runs a lot, a lot deeper than our actions.

[16:19] In verse 5, David says, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Now, that word iniquity is a third word and that refers to a kind of inner bentness or crookedness.

And it's something that we inherit from birth. There's a kind of inner, you know, St. Augustine articulated it as with the Latin phrase in *curvata sensu*.

There's a curving inward on oneself that we are born with. A kind of spiritual condition that means what comes most naturally to us, right? So, we live in a society where for the last hundred years there's been a lot of emphasis on letting people do what comes most naturally to them and not getting in the way of what comes naturally to people and letting people live out of their natural inclinations.

And what this is saying is that what comes most naturally to me is to turn away from God and to curve in on myself. And I was born that way and there's nothing that I can do to change that in my own strength.

So, what this means is that because this is rooted in my nature as a human being, because I was born this way, this is not something that we can fix on our own.

[17:38] You can't read a book to fix this and think your way out of it. You can't go to a therapist and get this treated with CBT or DBT, right, or any of the other interventions.

We can't fix this therapeutically. We can't fix it with the right life plan. You can't fix it through diet and cold plunges. You can't engineer your way out of this.

So, that's the second thing we learn. This problem goes a lot deeper than our behavior. And then the third thing that we learn is that this disconnection that many of us feel from God is because part of our heart is actually closed off from God.

Verse 6 talks about our need for God's truth in the inward being and the secret heart. And that word for secret heart is *satum*. And it shows up a number of times in the Old Testament.

And that describes situations where people plug up a well or plug up a spring or plug up a water source to prevent other people from having access to it.

[18:43] And David very poetically uses that word here to describe a part of our heart that we wall off from other people and from God. It's part of your heart that you say no access beyond this point.

No trespassing. Right? So, we might say to other people, you can know this part of me, you can know this thing about me, I will let you in on these aspects of my life, but I won't ever let you know about this.

Right? I read this study that said that on average people carry around 13 secrets, five of which they've never told another living soul. And then apparently somebody did some related research on insurance and that they correlated, and I don't know how much there is to this, they correlated the amount of secrets, the number of secrets that people said that they were holding and weren't sharing with the people around them and their perception of their endurance over time.

In other words, people seemed to feel physically burdened and have less endurance in a way that was proportionately related to the amount of secrets they were carrying. Now, I don't know if that's true, but I do know that there's been a massive rise in online anonymous confessions.

Maybe you've read about this too because people are hungry and desperate to unburden themselves. But there's a part of our heart that we sort of wall off, and so, you know, we've experienced this.

[20 : 07] This is what David was doing, right? He's pretending everything's okay, and it's easy to think that the best way to deal with our sin is simply to hide it and to wall it off and to hide our true self, and we're incentivized because it's scary to be vulnerable.

We're afraid that if people really know who we are or really know what we've done or really know what we think or the things that we struggle with that they're going to immediately reject us. And so, we will wall off parts of ourself.

We'll hide our true self. The problem is, it's impossible to have a real three-dimensional relationship with other human beings if nobody really fully knows us.

And it's no different with God. The only difference is that you can't hide from God, and yet if we're actively walling off parts of ourself from God, we can never really have a life-giving relationship with God because we're trying to convince God that we're somebody that we're not.

And God knows. He knows that that's a lie, right? So God desires wisdom in the secret heart. God desires access to all of us.

[21 : 18] So all of these are aspects of the issue that comes between us and God, the reason why we can live so much of our lives with a kind of fractured relationship with God. So the question then arises, how can we reconnect with God and recover the joy that comes with that, which is the whole point of this psalm.

And the key to repairing our relationship with God, the key to restoring joy that comes with that repairing of the breach is what the Bible calls repentance.

Now, when you say repentance, the challenge is that for some people who've grown up in the church, this feels like Christianity 101. I've heard this a thousand times. For other people, it sounds like this kind of archaic word that only kind of traditionalist Christians even talk about anymore.

You go to a lot of churches and you don't even hear this word. The problem is that regardless of what category or camp you're in, a lot of us tend to misunderstand repentance. Psalm 51 is one of the clearest places to see what actual repentance, what actual relationship-restoring joy-restoring repentance looks like.

And the path of repentance involves a few things that basically determine whether or not it's actual true repentance or not. The first thing that we see in this psalm is this, is that repentance involves appealing to God's mercy alone.

[22 : 47] Appealing to God's mercy alone. So I don't know when the last time you said you were sorry to somebody or to God was, but we tend to say things like, I'm so sorry, I'll try to do better next time.

Or, I didn't mean to do that. Or, it was a huge misunderstanding. Or, I made a mistake but that's not who I really am. And in all of those cases what we're really essentially doing is that we're actually appealing to our own character.

We're saying, forgive me because of who I am, forgive me because of who I really am, and you just misunderstood it or forgive me because of what I promised to do differently. It's all based on me and my character.

But David doesn't do that. David appeals solidly and squarely to God's character. He says, have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy.

We'll come back to this, but God doesn't owe you anything. He doesn't owe me anything. Have mercy on me, O God, according to the fact that it is your character and nature to have mercy.

[24 : 03] Number two, so appealing to God's mercy, honestly admitting our sin. Friends, I think this may be, in everything we talk about this morning, the hardest thing for us to do.

If you've ever, and I assume most of you have, really had to admit that you were wrong, it is never not excruciatingly painful. If you're really doing it, if you're really naming it, there's always something in you that goes, when you do it, it hurts.

But this is saying that true repentance means unblocking the parts of our hearts that we have walled off and letting everything flow out. Pulling out that stopper and just letting it all come out. But that is really hard to do. You know, a few years back, a couple of social psychologists wrote a book, and it was a book primarily on marriage, and it was called Mistakes Were Made But Not By Me.

So I like the title, Mistakes Were Made But Not By Me. And based on their research, they say the majority of married couples who drift apart over time do so slowly.

[25 : 10] So they drift apart slowly over time in what they describe as a snowballing pattern of blame and self-justification. So each partner focuses on what the other one is doing wrong while justifying his or her own preferences, attitudes, and ways of doing things.

So the big conclusion of the book is this. You know, this is a CliffsNotes version. I'll spoil the ending for you. The thing that chokes the love out of these relationships is not conflicts, it's not misunderstandings, it's not personality differences, it's not the fact that you have different hobbies and interests, or that one of you goes to bed early and one of you goes to bed late, or that one of you likes a clean house and one of you doesn't mind a mess, or that one of you likes to plan ahead and the other one likes to live spontaneously.

It's none of those things. The thing that chokes the love out is self-justification. Self-justification. Question is, if we're tempted to do that in our marriages with the people that we supposedly love the most of anybody in the world, how much more are we tempted to do this in our relationship with God?

Or another way of putting it, what makes us think we would do any better with God? You know, I don't know if you're like me, but sometimes it feels like we're all born with this little team of defense attorneys in our brain.

[26 : 36] You know, you're born of these little defense attorneys and they're yours and they work for you. They work pro bono just for you. And so when somebody comes along and they say, when you said or did that, you hurt my feelings or you did this, the defense attorneys are like, we're here to go.

You know, and they all stop to attention and they start taking notes, right? And they use on some of who are defense attorneys, right? And you know all the tactics, right? We're going to discredit the witness. We're going to, did you really say this? And you really, and I, you know, and then they start to just poke a thousand holes in that person's claim that you've done something wrong against them, right?

And their sole job in your life is to get you off the hook. Those defense attorneys, they exist for one purpose alone. It's to convince you and everybody around you that you're actually innocent, maybe even the victim, and that that other person is the one who's in the wrong, right?

And you know, I would say to a certain extent, I think we live in a culture that has kind of inflamed and empowered our defense attorneys. We live in a culture of victimization where there's a, there's a readiness to jump into the role of victim.

People sort of want to claim that they've been victimized. You see that all the time. You see it in the church as well as anywhere else. People who are, you know, somebody raises concerns and they respond by saying, you're victimizing me.

[27 : 51] And then the entire conflict becomes who's the bigger victim? Who's been more wronged, right? All the while, what's not happening? Nobody's taking responsibility. Nobody's owning their stuff.

So what we see here, what we see in David's words, is that true repentance requires that we fire our defense attorneys. Right? We fire them.

We stop trying to justify ourselves. And we start to do the hard work of owning our sin. And it's not easy. And I can imagine for David it would have been hard to write these words.

For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. He's like, it's all right here. I'm not going to hide anymore. No defense attorneys. Here's my sin. Against you and you only have I

sinned and done what is evil in your sight so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Here's how to own your sin. What's he doing? Number one, he's saying, I admit my sin. I'm not going to try to hide it. I was wrong. And then he says, and all of my sin is ultimately committed against God.

[28 : 57] And you say, well, he kind of mistreated Bathsheba and her late husband. And you're like, absolutely. Yes, he sinned against Bathsheba and her dead husband. He sinned against the whole nation of Israel. But guess what?

Before he ever committed adultery with Bathsheba, he committed adultery against God. All sin we commit horizontally flows out of sin and rebellion that we've committed first and foremost against God.

But then David goes on to say a final thing that we would often overlook. He says that God is fully justified in condemning him. And this is very important. We come back to what we said a little while ago. We have to realize God doesn't owe us anything.

And God would be fully justified in condemning us. God's judgments are just. And we have to recognize if we get what we deserve from God, there would be no hope for any of us.

And David names all of that. I've sinned. All of my sin was ultimately against, in first and foremost, against you, God, and you would be justified and right in condemning me. And then finally, repentance involves asking not only for forgiveness, but for a new heart.

[30 : 12] Create in me, he says, a clean heart, O God, a pure heart, and renew a right spirit within me. So repentance is more than just behavior modification.

It's a cry from new creation. It's a cry for recreation. God who said, let there be light. God who created the heavens and the earth. I need you to recreate me.

God has the power to transform us from the inside out through the power of the Holy Spirit. And this is where we see the good news of the gospel. That when we come to God in the way that we have just laid out, when we come to God appealing to God's mercy, honestly admitting our sin, and asking for a new heart, guess what?

God's answer is always yes. It is always yes. Because God has already accomplished everything necessary to set us free from sin. David was praying this before the cross.

He was praying with a kind of uncertainty. I don't know. Maybe God will forgive him. Maybe he won't. But we're praying yes, friends, on the other side of the cross. So we're not looking ahead into the unknown.

[31 : 22] We're looking back on what is known and certain. Because of the cross, unlike David, we know that when we pray this way, God's answer is always yes. We just have to come and ask him.

The people who aren't reconciled to God, the people who are disconnected from God, the people who don't know the Lord, the people who've never experienced this life in joy, the reason that is the case is because they have never come to God and asked.

There is no one who has ever come to God where God has said no. So when we know that we've been forgiven and restored to God, that's when the joy begins to return.

And that is that kind of unique, powerful joy that comes from being fully known and fully loved because we've unstopped the secret places.

And that makes us fully secure. And that's, I think, friends, what many of us are really after, what we really need, is I need to know that somewhere out there, the one whose opinion matters most, more than anyone else in my life, fully knows me, fully loves me, and in him I am absolutely secure.

[32 : 35] I mean, just when I say those words, don't you feel, do you feel something in you just kind of go, fully known, fully loved, absolutely secure.

Right? So let's step back and look at all this together, just kind of pull it together. God desires for you and for me to live lives marked by joy.

Christianity is not about a grim compliance or grudging obedience. Some people treat Christianity as though we're children learning to like broccoli. God's invited us into a life of joy and peace.

Don't you understand? God wants to teach us to dance. God wants to invite us to fly. Right? God wants to lift us right out of the mire, set us on solid ground.

That's the life that we're invited into. So if we lack joy in our lives, if we don't have that bedrock assurance that all is well and that God is in control, that means that something has come in the way of our relationship with God.

[33 : 43] It means that something has gotten in the way and as we said, it could be things that we're actively doing in rebellion. Maybe you already know exactly what that is. It could simply be the fact that we're living by our own standards instead of His or it could be that we're living like He doesn't exist in certain areas of our lives.

But in every case, the answer is always the same. There's only one path back in and that is the path of repentance. And friends, this is the first Sunday as we've said of the season of Lent which is entirely focused on repentance.

And hopefully by now it is abundantly clear that that doesn't mean Lent is a time to be morose and self-critical. Lent is about restoring joy. I think Lent is often misunderstood.

Lent is about the restoration and the recovery of joy that is found in God's presence. The last thing I'll say is this. Depending on how you're wired, this might look different depending on how you operate.

So just a couple of final case applications here because I want to press this home a little bit for you. Some of us really struggle with all due respect to admit that we need grace.

[34 : 56] We tend to be very defensive. We tend to have a very hard time seeing or admitting our own sin. And so, again, with all due respect, for you, if that's you, Lent is a time to stop pretending that everything is okay.

Because like David, chances are everybody around you knows it's not. It's the emperor has no clothes. You're only fooling yourself. It's time to start being honest about who you really are.

And before you can experience grace, you may need God to show you that you need grace. You may need to pray for God's truth and wisdom to illuminate your own inward being to help you see your need for him.

And just to push this a little further, when David prays, let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Okay, that's a sobering reminder.

What's he saying? Sometimes God uses or even introduces hard and painful experiences to humble us enough so that we will see our need for him.

[36 : 07] It's like the smelling salts meant to wake us up. So some of us, that's what Lent may need to be for you. I suspect there are many of us who have the opposite challenge, that we are all too aware of our sin.

We're never not aware of it. Most of the time we feel like failures. I'm failing at being a faithful Christian. I'm failing at my friendships. I'm failing at parenting.

You know, kids, maybe you don't know that most of the time your parents feel like they're doing a horrible job. And we're plagued by all the things that we know that we should be doing, but we're not doing.

So in order for us to experience joy, we not only need to repent, but we need to repent and then believe the gospel.

We need to actually believe what's on the other side of repentance. We need to understand, as it says in this psalm, that God does not see us the way we see ourselves. That God has cleansed you.

[37 : 14] God delights in you. Right? And when we go on acting as though we are miserable sinners, when God has declared us clean, when God has, as David prays, blotted out our transgressions, it's a denial of the gospel.

There's nothing that you can do, friends, that would make God love you any more than he loves you right now. And there is nothing that you could ever do that would make God love you any less than he does right now.

If the gospel is true, and you have come to him in repentance, then you are clean. Period. So Lent is about no longer denying that fact and living out of the freedom that it imparts.

So no matter where you are this morning, the invitation is the same. Repent and believe the gospel, because repentance is the key to enjoy the love.

of sin. Lord, we thank you for your word. Oh, that it would become fresh in us.

[38 : 24] Please, Lord, dwell in us, move in us, that we fall on knees and cry out, mercy on the way God, what you said to us. And if Lord, lift us up, teach us to dance in the joy and freedom.

Teach us to dance in the developed joy. Teach us to dance knowing that we are filling them in full.

Teach us to dance in the absolute spirit of living life before we are alive of this.

We pray this which on the way. Amen.