

Relentlessly Joyful: Joy

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Date: 19 March 2023

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[0 : 0 0] and more a part of our lives. It's interesting to see how closely patterned the computers are to us. Because of course, as you know, and the computer scientists among us, can confirm that computers were really made to help us, to help us solve problems and to help us in our tasks. And to do that they have made the computers to resemble us in many ways. And there's a concept called computational thinking, and that shows us how the computers are patterned all of us.

And in computational thinking, there are three parts to it. First, there's a... Right. There's a... It's really hard to get good workers nowadays.

This is not my slide. Richard, come on. Right. Good. Right. So the first one is decomposition. And that's breaking a problem or a task down into simpler bits. That's what we do.

We do this even subconsciously. And that's how the computer behaves. Because remember, it's patterned all of us and it's trying to help us. The second one is abstraction. Now, this is basically peeling away the things that we do not need to know and just focus on the things that we need to know. For example, if I'm going to drive, I simply go in the car, turn the ignition on, or press a button, and I drive. I'm not concerned with what's happening inside the engine. You know, the piston and the combustion chamber and spark plugs. I mean, there are specialists to do that.

I'm just focusing on driving. That's called abstraction. And that's exactly how the computer works in helping us. So, for example, if I'm going to use a satellite navigation system, I just... I'm pressing my direction where I want to go, and it will tell me how to get there. I'm not concerned about the algorithms that are running behind the scenes linking satellites with navigation together. It keeps that away from me. I only need to focus on following the instruction. The last one, which is really the one I want to get at, is pattern recognition. Now, I make decisions on patterns, information at my disposal. So, for example, if I can, I stay away from the South Circle between five and six on weekdays. Why would I do that? Heavy traffic. So, I make my decisions on the patterns. And the computer does that to help us. And for people who are interested in buying things online, you'll find that when you buy something, it suggests other things that you might want to buy.

[2 : 3 1] It's there to help us. But I've said all of this to say this, that when I was informed that I should speak on joy, I did a search in the Bible, wrote four different books just to get some perspective, and found that joy appeared over 200 times. But every time that joy appeared, it was in relation to our relationship with God. And so, that's the pattern. So, if I want to experience joy in my life, and I mean, who doesn't? And I know the pattern is to have God in control. That's the pattern.

And that's what we want to do this morning. We want to spend a short time together, seeing how we can enjoy this relentless joy that has been given us to us by God. We want to do this, see how we can do this as individuals and collectively as a church. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord, for this day that you have given us. We thank you for your many blessings that you have bestowed upon us. We thank you for the fellowship we have had so far. Father, we want to pray a special prayer for our mothers. We want to thank you for giving them to us, Lord, in our lives.

We want to thank you for the impact that they have made on us. And we pray in a special way, Lord, that they'll know your presence, your peace, your wisdom, and your counsel at this time. Before what you have prepared for us, we pray that, Lord, as we hear from you, that we will understand your words, and we will keep your words in our hearts. Pray, Lord, that we will not just be doers, or sorry, hearers of your words, but doers also, I say. Amen. So when I did a search for joy, I also encoded some other things. They are not terribly relevant to what we are saying this morning, but I'm going to put it up anyway. And you can look through. And it's interesting, some of these findings.

Faith appearing 10 times in the Old Testament and 248 times in the New. You can just look through that. Now, I put that there, and I sort of throw it out, so that sometime in the future, the more learned amongst us might be able to explain to us the purpose of those statistics.

Really, what we want to focus on this morning is joy. And the joy is not the joy that the world gives. Because as we know, the joy that the world gives, it's fleeting. It's temporal. It's very fragile.

[4 : 47] It can easily be taken away by sorrow. I know we should be very morbid here, but Janine and myself were in Jamaica having a wonderful time, a joyous time, you know, meeting families, friends, members of church fellowship. It's a beautiful time we had when she discovered a lump in her breast. And yes, the big sea. It was interesting how that joy was just sucked away by the sorrow.

The worry, to be honest with you, she was calm. I was the one that was freaking out. You know, but it was just interesting to see how that joy was just sucked away by the sorrow.

But the joy that God gives cannot be taken away. This joy can be experienced even in the midst of sorrows. And Jesus was a perfect example of this, because Jesus was a sorrowful person. In fact, he was defined as a man of sorrow, and with grief as his acquaintance. And yet he was filled with joy.

The Bible tells us that for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross. But that's what God gives. No, nothing in this world can take away. The joy that he gives us, and even our salvation, think of our salvation, that can't be touched. And Jesus was quite emphatic when he made this known.

Do you remember the verse he said, My sheep hear my voice? You know that verse? Repeat with me. And I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. That's how emphatic he was about this. And as we said before, what God gives, nothing in the world can take away. The peace that he gives us, beyond human comprehension, the joy he gives us, nothing can take away. Now, speaking of this joy, this joy is a gift from God. It's a part of the fruit of the Spirit. And speaking of gifts, there must be a giver, but there must also be a receiver. It doesn't matter how much the gift is given. If it's not received, it can't be appreciated. But for the gift to be received, then the recipient, the receiver, must know of this gift. I can't receive a gift if I don't know if it is given. So the knowledge is important here. And speaking of knowledge, one person once said that knowledge is life. And it's interesting about this concept. And there's a lot of truth in that. And I'm going to tell you a story.

[7 : 04] Now, that should look like desert, because it's meant to be. I'll tell you this story. And it's truth. This man got lost in the desert, and he, you know, was trying to find his way to safety. But as he walked, he would occasionally see what looked to him to be an oasis. But as he got closer, then he found it was just a mirage, just a reflection. And he kept on going in a way, until he reached this side of the sand dune. And he just lost hope, because he was tired.

And it didn't seem as if he was going to make it. And he didn't make it. He died. I'll just put that there. So it doesn't seem too morbid. Right? But he died. Now, the sad thing about this was that on the other side of that dune was an oasis. It was feet away from him. And so the question is, if you knew that that was oasis, was just a few feet away, I mean, would he have died? Or would he have mustered enough strength, even though he was weak and weary, to get across there? You know, I don't know what he thinks. But I honestly believe that if he knew life was just a few feet away, he would have found that energy, that strength to go there. What I'm making is that knowledge is important. And knowledge is important to us. Now, it is said that at Christmas time, you have the highest rate of suicide. People are dying because, are taking their lives because they feel that no one cares, they feel alone. And one man, he, a suicide note read that he just couldn't take it anymore.

He didn't feel loved. He thought no one loved him. No one cared about him. There were no provisions for him. He lacked the knowledge that indeed he was loved, loved more than he could ever imagine. There were provisions made for him. Because he didn't know this, he took his life. But if we think about us here, even in our communities, in our church, in our neighborhood, there are people who are dying and are going to a lost eternity. Because they do not know of this provision of life that has been made available to them, this abundant life. They do not know of this abundant life that was provided for them at considerable cost to God. They do not know that there has been provided for them a new way.

The songwriter is quite clever in penning these words. I don't know if you know this song. It says, if you only knew the blessings, you know that song, that salvation brings, you would never stay away.

If you only saw the table spread with lovely things, you'd come to the feast today. For the door is open wide, the Savior bids you come. Nothing you have to pay. But be wise and step inside and do not be like some who have thrown their lives away. And this is an invitation to everyone. So if you're even here today, and you did not know of that provision made for you, then our prayer is that you will now know and will accept this gift of salvation and enjoy this relentless joy that has been graciously given to you.

[10 : 08] But this joy is, as we said, given by God. But for us even here now, as believers, for us to experience this joy, then we must know. There are a few things that we must know. We must know what has been done to us.

We must know what has been done to us. And we must know what has been promised. There's joy in knowing this. But what has been done to us? Now, let's go back a bit. As we are all aware, and the Bible makes it clear to us that we were once enemies of God. We were lost in sin. We had no way to an eternity without God or without hope. And God did not just leave us there to wander this earth until the day of judgment.

But he was interested in restoring us. And so, Father, Son, and all the Jews, for equal, for eternal, had something to do about this. And they were involved in our restoration. Each person of the Godhead being given a specific task. Father chose us because election is the work of the Father. The Son justifies us because justification is the work of the Son. And the Spirit sanctifies us. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for equal, for eternal, actively involved in our restoration. And there is joy in knowing that we are so loved. But what has been done to us? Well, we have been quickened. We have been made alive. And guys, I hope I'm not asking too much, but could you read this passage from me? It's good when you read and internalize. Go ahead, read that from me, please. Read.

For dead in trespasses and sins. And verse 5 says, even when we were dead in sins, as quickened us, we cried. And as raised us up together.

For dead in sins. And made us safe together. And every day. That's it. It's joy. Good. And there's joy in knowing, relentless joy in knowing that we have been made alive. There's also joy in knowing that we were justified. We were made righteous. If you don't mind reading again, please. When you get tired, you can let me know. But read, please.

[12:13] You are justified. And how God did this, he in his infinite wisdom took our sins and charged them to Christ's account. Christ had to pay for them as if he committed them. And simultaneously, he took Christ's righteousness and credited that to our account. So we now stand before him, justified. Amazing. There's joy in knowing that we stand before God, righteous. Next, we were sanctified. We were made holy. Read for me, please.

To church of the Lord and the Lord. To those sanctified in Christ Jesus. And Lord, to give his holy people. And so, did Jesus also suffer our sight to sit here, to make the people holy through his own heart. And it's just joy in knowing this. But we have been made heirs and joined heirs with him.

And he has promised one day to share his very inheritance with us. Read from the page. And since we are his children, bring our own heads, and heirs of God, and the heirs of the cross.

There's joy in knowing that we are co-heirs with Christ. And we are ambassadors and priests. Read please. And you are the church of the generation, of all of his spirit, of all the nations, his own special people, and even where we pray for the praises of him. And the Lord we are to talk to us.

And there's joy in knowing that we represent Christ here on earth. And we often say that we are here to make the invisible Christ visible to the world. What Christ, what God is going to do to this world, he's going to do it through us. So in a sense, we are his instrument of peace. We are a challenge of the challenge of his blessing. He communicates to this world through us. Now, not only is there joy in knowing what has been done to us, but joy in knowing what is being done to us. And that is, we have been given the Holy Spirit of God to endure. In the past, as we know, the Holy Spirit of God would come amongst men to do particular tasks and then would leave. But here we have the Holy Spirit of God residing in us perfectly. And it's amazing to think that this spirit is the same power that created this entire universe and sustains it. This is the same power that we have residing in us. There's immense joy in knowing that. And the power that he gives us to live a life that is holy and perfect, to live a life that is pleasing to God. There's joy in knowing that the Holy Spirit of God indwells us.

[15:08] We were declared holy, but we are now being made holy, separated unto God for his holy purpose. There's joy in knowing this. What is being done, we have been given gifts by the Holy Spirit of God, and gifts that will enable us to serve him, to serve each other, to edify the church. And so, read for me, please.

Please. When we are in the spiritual place, our Lord of God in the Second Spirit, and Jesus through this covenant to each other, to God, that is the covenant. Okay, you don't have to read the blue part. That was just additional notes. Now, so we, there's joy in knowing what has been done to us, what is being done to us. There's joy in knowing what has been promised. And as I thought about this, you know, I just said, where do we start?

And all that is promised to us, you know, where do we start? And the Bible, and the different books have made attempts to explain to us, you know, the things that have been promised. But to be honest, you know, it can't really be explained clearly, because what has been promised to us can only be experienced. Words are not enough to explain what God has in store for us.

So, suffice it to say, and I want us to read this together. I mean, there's joy in knowing that even in our wireless imagination, we can't begin to think what God has in store for us. I like this part in Revelation, and we'll go. Then...

Amen. Amen. ...

[16 : 55] In Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, for God, prepared as a bride for all of us. And I heard a loud voice from the friends saying, Seek them, the long walk of his time.

He will dwell with them as their God. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, as we know, for him will cry and help us be in the world.

For those things are possible. And I'm sure you must feel the joy now, the relentless joy in knowing that this has been promised to us.

But there's joy not only in knowing, but there's also joy in doing. Now, what should we do? Well, as we know, we must abide in his presence. We must spend quiet moments with him.

But only that, we must gather as much as we can together. As the church of the Bible said that we are two or three, help me, are gathered together in his name. There he is in the midst to bless.

[18 : 03] And so, if you could read that for me, please. May the Lord be in the heart of God, in your presence, in the fullness of joy, at the right hand of the Lord.

So we must seek to spend time in his presence, speak to him by praying, and listen to him by reading his words.

We must trust God. We must demonstrate our faith in him. The Bible said without faith it's impossible to please God, because they that cometh to him must believe that he is, and that he's a rewarder of them that seek him.

You read, please. So there's joy in faith, in having faith in God.

We must also read, obey, and delight in his words. David said, We must be preached and witnessed.

[19 : 02] And it was interesting with what Lynn was saying there. This is so true. So, we must witness with our lives and with words. And if you could go ahead and read that now.

I'm so glad to do, and I'm so glad to be here, for I be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in the name of God, God, and the Holy Spirit, that is your life trying before others, so that they be seen with the good works, and give glory to the power of Jesus.

So, we have been called to be weaknesses, and weakness here is used in the same context as a court of law. We are not asked to judge anyone, or try to convince anyone.

We are just here to tell the truth, to tell what we know. That's what we have been asked to do. Now, there's joy in putting, well, real joy comes from putting others first, and that's our weakness.

And in Sunday school, we used to sing this song, and I just want you to read it for us. Go ahead. And Jesus was a perfect example of this.

[20 : 30] He put God the Father first. He put us second, and He put Himself last. So much so, that He sacrificed Himself, so that He could restore the relationship between the Father and us.

Amazing. And there's joy in putting others first. So, relentless joy. Joy has been given to us. As we said, it's not just that it's given, it has got to be received.

And we can experience this joy through knowing what has been done for us, what He's doing in us, and what is promised. And there's joy in serving. And as we experience this joy, we cannot but join with David in Psalm 100.

And let's repeat that finally together. That's the last reading for today. All right, let's go. Make a joy from the north unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before His presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord, He is God. It is He who hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His passes.

[21 : 37] Enter into His gate with thanksgiving, and into His course with praise. Be thankful unto the Lord, and bless His name. For the Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures for all of His grace.

For His name's sake. Amen. Amen.