

Joy and peace from the God of hope

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Date: 01 June 2014

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[0 : 00] It's been a delight for me to be here again from Lewis and to see so many dear friends and listen to the preaching this morning and be given the privilege of speaking to you this evening.

My wife and I look forward. We had such a pleasant journey all the way up from Arboristad, stopping in Edinburgh and then stopping in Strathpepper and then getting the ferry across and reversing that now tomorrow on our journey home to Wales full of thanksgiving to God for his goodness to us and to see the work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope in the lives of so many believers in this place.

May the Lord bless Lewis and revive his work here. I want to draw your attention to Romans chapter 15 and verse 13.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. Romans chapter 15 and the 13th verse.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. It's one of the big texts of the Bible and it's such a simple text, isn't it?

[1 : 30] Words almost entirely of one syllable. God, hope, fill, joy, peace, trust and so on. I don't want to make the simple complex.

Although they're very profound words, they're not confusing words. And so let me tell you of the premise that lies behind this verse.

And it is that without the God of hope filling us with joy and peace, there is no joy and peace. There is no peace for the wicked.

The world is traveling on empty. You know what it's been like. You've been across to Wales and have traveled in the north and through the mountains there.

And you see that you're suspiciously near empty. And you wonder, in the next village, will there be a garage? Will I be able to fill the tank up?

[2 : 34] And you talk animatedly and try to draw the attention of your wife and children away from the needle as it's there so low. And you switch the radio on and then they all get tense and it's getting dark.

And what will you do if you run out of petrol on a mountain road? What will you do? How will you spend the night? And you are so concerned. In one village, the garage is closed.

Oh, how thankful you are to see a sign and to see that the lights are on. And you could tell in the old, you could say, fill it up.

And the symptoms of our society today indicate that our island, our nation, Scotland, Wales, England, Northern Ireland, they're running on empty.

And I suggest there's evidence for this, the non-stop entertainment. Music on, constantly. Television on as soon as a person comes home.

[3 : 43] Escapism. The drink culture. The attempt to fill an emptiness within. Some of you were like that.

You remember that. And you tried various things and it was no good. And then one day in work, there was a girl there and you always liked her and you spoke to her.

And you said, did you have a good weekend? And she said, oh, we had a lovely weekend. Our pastor spoke a word last night.

He was preached a word. It was so helpful to me. And immediately there was a longing in your heart. You'd always liked her. And now you saw that she had a knowledge of God.

She had something that you so lacked in your life. And so often you went and talked to her and she was prepared to share things. And then one day she said to you, we've got so special service on.

[4 : 47] And tonight would you like to come along with me? And you went along. And it was like coming home. And the vacuum within was filled with the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ who became your Lord and Savior.

And joy and peace came from knowing the God of hope. And that experience which was some of yours is the experience of many, many more all over the land.

Now, we tell people, of course, that men and women without God are under the judgment of God.

We tell people that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. We tell them that he's a consuming fire. We tell them that it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

We tell people the great, solemn sanctions of judgment. It's appointed unto men once to die. And after death, the judgment.

[6 : 08] We tell them that. But the unique and distinctive message of the Christian gospel is that it's a message of hope. That the Lord Jesus Christ didn't say that you are the traffic warden of the world or you are the headmaster of the world.

He told them that they were the light of the world. And that light is the light of who God is. A God who is love and joy and peace and long-suffering and gentleness and goodness and faithfulness and meekness and temperance.

And that that God can fill despairing, empty people with all joy and peace. It is possible for your burden to be lifted. It is possible for your heaviness to evaporate.

And your discouragement to be turned to an acceptance of the good and perfect will of the God of hope. It is possible for you to be filled to the brim with all joy and peace.

And that's what our text is saying. It's almost unbelievable. Ah, the devil says that's just too good to be true. But this is what the Bible is saying.

[7 : 28] So shouldn't you then prick up your ears and listen through an unfamiliar accent to the same gospel that you're hearing week by week from this pulpit?

Paul is writing to the entire congregation in Rome, to the weak believers as well as the strong, to the new converts. It had come for the first time when an elder got up and said, we've had a letter from the Apostle Paul.

And he began to read it. And you could hear a pin drop. And people charged their memories as for the next few weeks it was read again and again. And people retained so much of it.

They were the slaves. They were gladiators that had left that trade. They were soldiers that worked for Nero. They were members of the imperial household.

They were the illiterates and the beggars and the dying. And he longs this for every single one of them. That the God of hope should fill them all with joy and peace.

[8 : 30] As they trust in him that they might overflow with hope. So the great question then for the me generation in Lewis tonight is, oh, what's in it for me?

What do you have to offer? What is this being filled with joy and peace? Well, this is pretty marvelous. Because I reckon you'd better believe it.

You're never going to get another offer like this. How this joy and peace can be yours. It comes from focusing on God. That the great creator of the heavens and the earth.

The God of providence who watches over us and keeps us. And in whom we live and move and have our being. This God who's brought me here to bring this message to you tonight.

And brought you here to listen and think about these wonderful words. That he's a God of hope. He's not twisting his hands in horror. Looking at the situation of two, three hundred lost girls in Nigeria.

[9 : 37] And looking down at Syria and the civil war there. And the horrors of North Korea. He's a God of hope. A God who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Who makes a promise and keeps his word. Who fulfills everything that he says. Who invites the worst kind of people. Drips and anoraks and twerps and hypocrites.

And coldly indifferent and superior and proud men and women. To come. To come from all that. To come to him.

And he will give them rest. That's what he says. That he will freely pardon the worst things that they have ever done. He'll clothe them with the righteousness of his son.

He'll adopt them into his family. He'll make them his sons and his heirs. He'll become their teacher. And they will grow in understanding of what sort of husbands they should be.

[10 : 42] What sort of fathers. What sort of mothers and wives. And church members and preachers and neighbors. That they should be. He will continually live and whisper our worthless names in the ears of his heavenly father.

And you pray for us. That we'll be kept. That we'll be kept trusting. And kept obeying. And kept doing his good and acceptable and perfect will.

He will give us a new heart that loves him. He will work everything that we meet for our good. He'll never leave us.

When we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. As all of us face that in the future. It won't be alone. He'll be with us. Establishing and comfort us here.

Take us to heaven. And we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Isn't that a marvelous message? Isn't it? Which of the political candidates recently could say.

[11 : 48] That's our agenda now that we're offering to you. Could Karl Marx say that? Could Charles Darwin say that? Could Sigmund Freud offer that to men and women?

Only God can say those things. He is the God of hope. And God has given us certainty that this is so. And you say, well, you know, I've often been to church.

I've gone. I've blown hot and cold in my life. And when I go there, I always find Christians talking about hope. And joy. And love.

And peace. Words. Their only words, they say. God has given us assurance that the things we speak about are true because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Peter was an eyewitness of the Lord Jesus in his majesty, in his humiliation, in his resurrection. He'd seen him.

[12 : 57] He was an ordinary man, a fisherman. And he said, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last day.

That's what he said to them. He had been a know-all. He could tell Jesus, don't think about dying. He dismissed the great promises about resurrection.

And on the third day, that great phrase that you find on the lips of Jesus in the Gospels. He could tell him, don't think like that. He rebuked him. And then Christ was arrested.

And he made no attempt to defend himself and to smite those that laid their hands and their whips on his back and drove nails through his hands and feet.

[13 : 57] And he was officially dead. And Peter was in despair. He'd given up three years of his life to follow this Jesus, this teacher from Galilee.

And he had dreamed the impossible dream with Jesus. And he was dead. And Peter was shattered. And on the third day, then, he heard what the women said and ran.

He was heavy with guilt. And John outran him and looked in. And then Peter brushed past him. And there was the tomb empty. Grave clothes there, neatly folded.

But Christ was not there. And then he met him. And met him and met him. In a private recommissioning.

In the upper room with the eleven. Early in the morning, as the breeze blew off, the Sea of Galilee, a figure there, cooking fish, eating with him, talking with him.

[15 : 02] On the hill of ascension. With five hundred as Jesus walked around and spoke to a cleansed leper and a centurion who'd loved him. And two sisters and a brother that waited patiently to talk to him again.

And Peter there. His whole life was reborn. He was a new creature because of a fact in history.

A living hope. And he spent the rest of his life telling people of the way to be filled with all joy and peace. As you trust in this name. As you look to this Lord and this Savior.

And the glory of the resurrection is that it didn't occur in the realm of hypotheses and ideas. And on the pages of the systematic theology book.

It belongs to the realm of facts. An empty tomb. A great word of a messenger from God. Behold the place where they laid him.

[16 : 05] He is not here. He is risen. And the empty tomb and the triumph of wisdom incarnate. And the covenant of grace incarnate.

And love incarnate. Raised and triumphing over death. And over the forces of evil. God raised him.

God gave him the victory. God vindicated all that incarnate love had done. Loving simple men and women like you and me. It's a model of our resurrection.

Because he lives we shall live also. The eruption into this world of the goodness and power of God. Showing where ultimate reality is.

Not that corpse. Not that grave. But the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount. More powerful than death. And this God of hope fills us then.

[17 : 04] And tells us how this joy and peace can be ours. And he tells us in this verse that it's as we believe. It's as we trust in him.

Some of you are not sure whether you have this saving faith. Faith is such a strong and hard monosyllabic word.

Isn't it? A Latin based word. Faith. Well think of the word trust. The NIV translates it trust here. The trust.

You know whether you trust something or not. I wake in the night and glance across at my digital alarm that I take with me everywhere. I say, ah, 3.15.

Right. Back to sleep. 3.15. I trust it. It's just tremendously accurate. Only if there's a power cut do I have to fiddle with it. It's there.

[18 : 00] 3.15. I trust it. You trust your mother's love for you. Don't you? And you look back now and think of her. I think of mom and I think, oh dear.

Sometimes I fear I want to see her in heaven more than I want to see my savior. And then I say, no, no you don't. But I trust her. I trust her love for me.

That she'd never harm me. Have harmed me. And spoke to me for my good always. You can trust God. Just like that.

You can trust him implicitly. He cannot lie, not the Lord of heaven, and play games with specks of dust. When the Lord Jesus said that he came to lay down his life, a ransom for many.

You can trust that's why he came into the world. This is the nature of God. This is the God who is our creator and sustainer.

[19 : 10] He is a God that without the shedding of blood there's no remission. There's no forgiveness. A ransom needs to be paid. A redemption price must be made as infinite and immeasurably vast and powerful.

And that's why the Lord Jesus died on the cross. He said at the end, it is finished. And you can trust what Christ said and did.

If you go to him just as you are, going to him is a movement of your heart as the Holy Spirit takes the words of the gospel and applies them and jogs you on and wakes you up and enlightens you and convicts you.

So that you want to move closer to him and you entrust yourself to the Lord Jesus. Then he will give you rest.

He says, I'll give them rest. He's meek and lowly of heart. And he gives rest to people who are meek and lowly of heart, whose burden is light.

[20 : 20] There was once a little girl and her name was Aspen. She was six years of age. And her father had the responsibility on the school run to go and pick her up that evening, that afternoon.

So he got to the school and it was bucketing down with rain. And she got into the car with him. And he was concentrating on the other parents all going out into the road. And he had double speed on the windscreen wipers.

And he was watching. And there was silence in the car as he was pulling out and going on in the traffic. And suddenly she spoke up. Daddy, she said, I'm thinking of something.

Here's what you're thinking of. The rain is like sin. And the windscreen wipers are like God, wiping our sin away. Well, he was touched very deeply.

He had a big lump in his throat. She was a funny little girl. She never said anything as profound as that. And he wanted to run with it for a while. And so when he swallowed a couple of times, he said to her, And do you notice how the rain keeps on coming?

[21 : 31] What does that tell you? She didn't hesitate for a moment. She said, We keep on sinning. And God keeps on forgiving. And that is the marvel of grace.

That God keeps on forgiving. And forgiving. And forgiving us. And you say to me, Well, then it's easy for you, isn't it? I was raised in a Catholic home.

And I have to say penance. And I have to repeat prayers. And you just say, I'm sorry. And then that's all there is.

And it just leads to you continuing in sin. That grace may abound. And I say to you, Calvary won't let me.

The cross of Christ won't let me add to it. His pain and his sorrow and his suffering. An ounce more of all that he endured to save me from my sin.

[22 : 38] And Golgotha is too holy a place for me to take it in my stride. As I fulfill the lust of the mind and the lust of the flesh.

You trust him. You can trust Jesus. You can trust everything about him. You can trust his words and trust his promise. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will be with you always, even to the end of the world.

I sometimes say, if I die and go to hell, I'll go to hell trusting in Jesus. Always trust in him.

Whatever he determines, I say, well, of course, no one ever trusted in Jesus and went to hell. Though your trust is as thin as a spider's thread, if it is in Jesus, it will take you across all the mountains of doubt.

It will take you across the lake of fire. It will take you across the bottomless pit and present you faultless before him in that great day.

[23 : 50] And the result of trusting in him is that we are filled with all joy and peace. The joy of discovering the truth.

The joy of knowing why we are in the world. To glorify God and enjoy him forever. To know our origins, where we came from. It is he who made us and not we ourselves.

The joy of knowing all our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea and he remembers them no more. The joy of walking through life, having someone you can depend on, absolutely, an utterly reliable companion.

The joy of the Lord's day, the joy of the Lord's people, the joy of the means of grace, the joy of giving a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus to someone, the joy of stammering and stuttering a word of testimony concerning your faith, the joy of hearing the word of God come, not in word only, but power and with the Holy Spirit.

The joy of knowing we are going to see our loved ones again, mom and dad and our dear husband and our brothers and sisters. We are going to meet again in a happier place.

[25 : 04] What joy this is. I was preaching in Grand Rapids a couple of years ago in Providence Reformed Church and for lunch we went to a carpenter's house and they had ten children and he and his wife, we were fourteen, around the table we had chicken soup and rolls.

Children were all chatty and at the end of the meal then he got his Bible out and he opened it and the children were all quiet and he said, you preached this morning on contentment, Pastor.

Yes. Do you know about our family? And I did know about them. People had told me a little bit about them but I wanted to hear it from the horse's mouth. He said, I was married to my first wife and we had three children.

She was expecting a fourth. It was just about Christmas time and the lights turned green and she went out and a man trying to beat the red light smashed into the car and killed her and the unborn child.

And my present wife, well, her husband, he, he had a butcher shop, a butcher's business in Grand Rapids and Joe Beeky told me about him later on and Joe Beeky said, oh, he was a great, godly, kind man.

[26 : 52] I think he would have become a preacher. And he helped out street people. He gave them jobs. And one man he gave a job to and he was utterly unreliable and a petty thief and in the end he had to dismiss him.

The man came back the next day with a revolver and shot him dead. And the next Sunday they they came to church as always.

Her mother and father had come down to stay with her through this awful crisis. And five children were in the car. Eight of them were going along to church and suddenly there was a little voice from the back of the car.

We are not singing. We always sing when we go to church. And one of the children pitched John Newton's great Sabbath hymn safely through another week.

The father had been shot dead but he was safe in the arms of Jesus. And there they were.

[28 : 16] going to that church where I was he said to me with my three and we got together and we got married and now God has given us two children.

The children were like statues you know locked in different positions as the story of their lives and this fearful providences came to them and they were just listening as quiet as mice.

and the oldest girl we drove her into town afterwards she's now become a missionary with her husband. It was a home of joy and peace filled with all joy and peace he says all kinds all sufficient joy and peace for the various circumstances when the phone rings and we have to sit down and it takes our breath away the providences a joy that seeks us in our pain a joy that sustains us the God of hope filling us with all joy and peace not just not just joy now joy and peace peace that passes all understanding the place is empty the bed's too big frying pan too wide just me but I never enter an empty home he's always with me the saviour's always there all joy and peace as I trust in him

I was reading a lot about John Newton a year or two ago because it was the centenary and so he has this every story that one day all the angels of God come and they gather before him and they are receiving their instructions for the day so God speaks to the first angel he says go and be the emperor of the greatest empire in the world off goes the angel and rules and the next angel he says go and clean the toilets the public toilets in the slum in that big city off the angel goes it's immaterial to an angel what he has to do his life is hearing and doing the will of God one angel he says saddle the horses and bring

Elijah here and another angel then he says bring up the body of that beggar that lay in the gutter outside the rich man's home and bring him home the love the satisfaction and the joy and the peace that an angel has is in hearing his master's request and doing it there's no point in us praying and I will be done on earth as it is in heaven and not wanting or becoming plaintive or self-pitying when God says well my child this is my will for you joy and peace comes in saying not my will but thine be done there's no other way there's no shortcut there's nothing that can deliver us from bitterness and frustration and doubt except our submission to his good will

[32 : 29] I had a young couple in our congregation and they were engaged but in her last term she dumped him and he was very very upset she said to me he's boring or he's not boring at all but anyway she dumped him and he told me later on I'm called to live a celibate life so I said well we'll see won't we and the years went by and he became a pastor and when he was about 40 he became attracted to a girl in the congregation and he waited until she had her 18th birthday and that week he went to see her parents her father was an elder in the church and he asked her parents permission if he could take her out for a meal and they talked together and they said no I'm sorry we don't want you to approach her in any way she's too young to think of decisions like this and the age gap between you is too great so he accepted he said

I would I always determined I would do what her parents said and then about three weeks later a fellow a young fellow from the congregation started to sit next to her and they started to share a hymn book and another week or so he came to my friend and he said to him pastor you see I'm getting friendly with so and so in the congregation can you give me some advice now about courtship and about I want to do this right I want to honor God in this he said to me I'd make her a far better husband than he ever would but there he was he was having to counsel this man about going out with a girl he couldn't go out with I was so sorry for him no romance in the months I can't think of an unhappier situation for a preacher to be in there we are so I look for verses from scripture you know you know the verses that we give to people that are precious to us promises of help and God working things for our good it's alright

Jeff he said to me it's alright we believe that when we ask God for something he either gives us what we ask for or he gives us something better and that is the foundation of Christian peace and Christian joy and Christian trust that the God we serve cares he loves us very dearly and he will give us what we ask or he will give us something even better than what we are asking for and so a couple of years later he told me he was engaged and could I marry them and I married them and preached at their wedding and they have many children now and he's very happily married and the conclusion you see of being filled with all joy and peace in believing is that we abound we overflow with hope by the power of the Holy

Spirit that's the conclusion what a life what a future lies before us it's a future of abundance it's a future of going on then going on and abounding overflowing we preachers always talk about the two seas in Israel don't we there's in the north the Jordan runs into the Tiberias the sea the sea of Galilee and it's full of fish they call them Peter's fish don't they when you go there and then it runs out the other side down the Jordan and then it drops and it increases in intensity and it runs down and down to the deepest place on the surface of the planet the Dead Sea and there it starts to evaporate and to become sterile and chemical and there's no life there's no fish there because it just evaporates it flows in to the Sea of Galilee and out of the Sea of Galilee and it's teeming with fish but it just takes in and takes in and takes in and the secret of joy and peace then is a life of service it can't be any other way can it let this mind be in you which is also in

Christ Jesus our Lord and all he was and all he did and the humbling of himself and if you want joy and peace then it's through you get up in the morning and you say sit in the edge of the bed use my hands Lord and my heart and use my mind and I give it to you today oh use me Lord use even me just as thou wilt and when and where until thy blessed face I see thy joy thy crown thy glory share we give ourselves to the Lord and we look for what openings what opportunities do we have to serve love our neighbours as ourselves to love our enemies to love one another with pure hearts fervently to serve and that's the Christian life it's an overflowing life it's a life that abounds with hope

[39 : 34] I'm so weak and I'm so helpless and I account too much for the Lord I'm only a young Christian he says by the power of the Holy Spirit he says not by your wits and your IQ and your physical energy but the Holy Spirit helps you young and old helps you this week now the opportunities there will be to abound by the power of the Holy Spirit in hope in this despairing island no hope without him and many without him who need this message of hope tomorrow in the office in the hospital in the school in the college at work waiting for the children to come out of school talking with your neighbor without hope they are but we have a message don't we what a wonderful text this is talking to us about the

Christian life may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit well may it be so for us all amen let us pray together