

Joy and Holiness in Christian Service

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 July 2013

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] I'd like us this evening just to turn briefly to John 17 and looking at verses 13 to 19 especially.

It's obviously very hard to extract verses from this chapter realizing that they are so inextricably bound up with the other verses in it. But if we begin reading at verse 13, Now I am coming to you and these things I speak in the world that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

And for their sake I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth. There are so many wonderful things about this chapter, this prayer of Jesus recorded in the chapter.

[1 : 12] But one of the great things that you notice going through it is the number of connections that you have in it between various topics, various themes, various important foundational truths.

Connections between him and the father. The connection between the father's work and his work. The connection between the father and the son and their people. The Lord's people.

The connection between the union they have with Christ and the relationship they have with the father. Connection between Christ being in the father and in his people.

And the connection at the end there where the love of the father and the love of Christ as they mutually indwell each other is also a love that abides in his people.

As his people abide in him. So many connections and interconnections. And in the verses we are looking at tonight there is a connection between two other things that are important for us.

[2 : 17] And for a minister preparing a sermon it is always encouraging to find the things that are prominent in the study brought up in prayer. As Mordo mentioned both of these in his prayer tonight.

That is joy and holiness. And the theme of these verses for our study tonight anyway is joy and holiness in Christian service.

That is what he is saying then to begin with. Let's look at the joy that he mentions. And then how that leads on to holiness or being sanctified in the truth or by the truth or for the sake of the truth.

All of these are ways in which we take the connections. But now I am coming to you he is saying. And these things I speak in the word that they. His people, his disciples.

May have my joy fulfilled in themselves. Now what is that joy? He is calling it my joy. The joy that he makes in reference to himself.

[3 : 24] The joy of Jesus. But it is a joy that is fulfilled in the disciples. How do we understand that in terms of my joy as Jesus puts it.

Being fulfilled in us as his believing people. Well there are different ways in which people take that in commentating on these verses. Some people think that the way he means my joy.

Can be taken in the sense in which he is the author or the source or the originator. Of the joy that we come. And the spiritual joy which is obviously what he means. The joy that we have in ourselves.

A spiritual joy. The joy that is part and bound up with God's salvation. And living in a right relationship with God. And having the hope of glory. All of these things are connected with this spiritual joy.

And that is one way of taking it. That Jesus is the author of that joy. Therefore saying it is my joy. In the sense that I have created it. He is saying it is my joy.

[4 : 25] In the sense that I am the one who begins it and gives it to my people. But I don't think that is the best way of taking it. It is like many other things in John.

There is such a profoundness in it. That you just feel however much you go into it. There is still so much there below you. That you haven't reached. Like an ocean itself.

That parts of it haven't yet been explored. That is one of the things I think you have to say about this. My joy could easily be taken I think as the joy that Jesus himself has.

The joy that he has in his people. Is something that he himself finds fulfillment in. For example if you go back to chapter 3 of John.

You will find John the Baptist using very similar language in respect to Jesus. And John saying that he has his joy fulfilled in Christ.

[5 : 27] They are asking him about whether he in fact is the Messiah. John answers them there in verses 28 of chapter 3. You yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ.

But I have been sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom who stands and hears him. Rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice.

Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. In other words John is saying. This is what I came into the world for. To actually be ahead of the Messiah.

To prepare the way for him. Now that he has come. Now that his voice has been heard. Now that his own voice has gone out. He is the bridegroom. I am just the bridegroom's friend.

I am the best man. I am the one who prepared this for him. Now I can go into the background.

Because he is now taking over from me. Therefore he is saying.

[6 : 29] My joy is fulfilled. Made complete in this. And if you take that with you. And also refer to chapter 15. And verse 11.

You can see there that Jesus. In teaching the disciples. And this is in relation to the wonderful connection between them. Like the vine and the branches.

He is saying. These things I have spoken to you. That my joy may be in you. And that your joy may be full. Now he is distinguishing there.

Between his joy. And the joy of the disciples themselves. That my joy may be in you. And that your joy may be full.

And when you take all of that with you into chapter 17. That he is saying. That they may have my joy. Fulfilled in themselves. There is a great connection.

[7 : 25] And a wonderful symmetry. Between the joy that Jesus himself has. In our redemption. In our salvation. In seeing us rejoice in him.

In seeing us coming to have. The joy of the saved. He has this joy. Fulfilled in that. When you are waiting for something.

That you know is about to be fulfilled. And that gives you great rejoicing. When it comes to be fulfilled. When it comes to be complete. You can then say. Just like John the Baptist said.

My joy is now fulfilled in that. That has been completed. That is what I was waiting for. And in a wonderful way. Jesus himself is saying. My joy is fulfilled.

In you my disciples. And I am saying this to you. I am speaking this in the world. So that you will come to this point. To have my joy fulfilled. In yourselves.

[8 : 26] And what a wonderful truth that is. That we. More accurately. His own work for us. And in us. Should be the source.

Of the joy of the Lord. The joy that he himself has as our saviour. In our salvation. That when he comes to have his salvation.

Set in us. Created in us. Enjoyed by us. He rejoices. In that himself. And what he is saying here.

That my joy might be fulfilled. In themselves. In his disciples. Obviously that means. A personal satisfaction. For us too.

It means. A personal experience. But the whole context. In which these verses are set. Is that this joy. Just like the sanctification. He is going on to speak about in a minute.

[9 : 25] Is for Christian selves. He is saying. I am not praying. That you should take them. Out of the world. They are not. Like the world. They are separate from the world.

They are different in essence. To the world. The world being. That which is opposed to God. And opposite to God. They he says. Do not belong to the world. They are not of the world.

But I am not praying. That you take them. Out of the world. But that you keep them. From the evil one. So you see. It is all built around. Our service for Christ. And that is how you have to see.

Your joy. As much as any other aspect. Of your believing experience. Because when you come to joy. In Christ. You don't have that joy.

Just for your personal satisfaction. It has to extend itself into. The way you serve him in the world. Your whole service for Christ. Is a service for which he has given you.

[10:23] The joy. That you yourself experience. His joy fulfilled in you. In your joy. And the joy that he gives you. To enjoy. To appreciate. To appreciate. To experience.

Is a joy. That is for your service. For him. Let's ask. The question. Which makes us the most useful. Sorrow. Or joy. Now there is a question. Which makes us the most. Which of these two. Makes us the most useful.

The most active Christians. In terms of our Christian service. For God. Is it our sorrows. Or is it our joys. Well you might answer.

Well we need both. Yes we do. And God gives us both. In relation to each other. But. It is the joy. More than the sorrow.

[11:18] That makes us. Active. In his service. Think of. Nehemiah chapter 8. Verse 10. When there was so much mourning. At that great. Juncture.

In the experience. Of the people. Having seen the. Foundation of the temple. Newly. Established. And how small it was. Compared to the old one. You know the story yourselves. And when it came to.

That point. Of that mourning. Nehemiah stopped. He said. Stop the mourning. This is not a day. For mourning. This is a day. For rejoicing. For celebration. For the joy.

Of the Lord. Is your strength. Not the sorrow. Of the Lord. The joy. Of the Lord. Is your strength.

Thomas Manton.

One of the great Puritan. Commentators. Put it this way. Sorrow. Makes us. Serious. That is to say. Serious minded. Makes us.

[12:16] Apply ourselves. But joy. Says. Makes us. Active. Sorrow. Makes us. Serious. Joy. Makes us. Active.

He goes on to. Illustrate it. By. The machinery. Of his time. And the need for. Oiling the wheels. Of the machinery. You still of course. Get something of that.

Well he says. Joy. Oils. The wheels. Of our service. It is joy. That makes us. Active. While he says. Our sorrows. Are necessary.

In order to make us. Serious. There is another side to it as well. What is it most. That dampens. Your sinful pleasures. When you think of the pleasures of sin.

Which I know. In one sense. We have left behind. Since we were born again. But you still know. In your own experience. As I do. Of a measure of sinful pleasure.

[13:15] Coming to. Ooze its way back into your life. And there is at the end of every day. An acknowledgement. That we have. Had more. Of worldly pleasure.

In our experience. That we ought to have had. But. What is it. That makes. That dampens. That. Sinful.

Or worldly. Or. Fleshly. Joy. It is the joy. The joy of the world. When. When we want to. Really dampen down. Our sinful pleasures.

Or the pleasures of the flesh. Or the pleasures of sin. The thing that will do it most for us. Is the joy of the Lord. Is rejoicing in the Lord. Because that really.

When it fills your heart. It pushes out. All the worldly pleasures. Or taking pleasure in the things. Of the world. Here is.

[14:09] Thomas Manton's. Full quote. He went on to say. How necessary it was to. For us as Christians. To be joyful. And to express. The joy that God.

Has given us. In his salvation. He says. Some people think. There is more of merit. And satisfaction. In what is. Afflictive. It is a kind of revenge.

They take upon themselves. But he says. God. Has required. Sorrow. To mortify. Sin. But not. To satisfy.

Justice. He would have us. To triumph. In Christ. Even while we groan. Under the body of death.

Oh. Consider. Sourness.

Is a dishonor. To God. A discredit. To your profession. A disadvantage. To yourselves. A grief. To the spirit. Because you resist. His work. As a comforter.

[15:05] Besides. There is much. Of ingratitude. In it. Complaints. And murmurings. Deface. The beauty. Of his mercies. And he goes on. To use an illustration.

As a snail. Leaves. A frothy. Slaver. Upon the fairest. Flowers. So do. Unthankful. Christians. Leave their own.

Slaver. Upon the rich. Mercies. Of God. Vouch safe. To them. In Christ. When they are always. Complaining. And never. Rejoicing.

In God. They leave. The slaver. The slaver. Of their murmurings. Upon him. Upon them. As if all. Were nothing. In other words.

Next time we see. A slug. Coming across. One of our flowers. As often you do. In the garden. And you get really annoyed. Because it's spoiled. It's left its slaver on. Sometimes it's chewed it up.

[16:01] Think of the way. That's the illustration. Manton uses. If we ourselves. Are more complaining. Than we should be. Of the things of God.

Of the things of his providence. It's like that slaver. Manton says. On a beautiful flower. So we deface. The mercies. Of God.

By unthankfulness. So the joy. That he mentions. As the joy. That is fulfilled. In us. Yes. There's Christ's own joy. In it. And there's our joy.

In him. And they meet together. And that joy. As Manton says. Is a joy. To be expressed. But it's also. A joy. Expressed. In our Christian services.

For. Our service. To make us active. To oil the wheels. Of our serving Christ. Now he goes on to speak. Secondly. About holiness.

[16:55] And the two things. Are in fact. Again. Connected together. There's a very important. Connection. Between joy. And holiness. Holiness. Because some people. Again. Mistake holiness.

For. Something dure. And something mourning. And something mournful. And melancholy. And some people. Because of that. Think that. There isn't much of a relationship. Between joy.

And holiness. But that you kind of. Keep them separate. As if. Joy. Had little to do. With holiness. Or holiness. With joy. But it's not like that.

They're not bitter enemies. They're the closest friends. Look at where Jesus. Goes on to speak. To pray. I have given them.

Your word. And the world. Has hated them. Because they are not of the world. Just as I am not of the world. I do not ask. That you take them out of the world. But that you keep them. From the evil one.

[17:51] They are not of the world. Just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them. In the truth. That could be. By the truth. For the sake of the truth.

Your word. Is truth. As you sent me into the world. So I have sent them into the world. There's the mission. There's the. The sending. The commissioning. By Christ. For his service.

Of his people. And for their sake. I consecrate myself. That they also may be sanctified. In the truth. In other words. Sanctify. And sanctified.

Is repeated there. Although the word. Consecrate is used. It's actually the same word. That's used in Greek. All the way through. Which is usually translated. Sanctify. As we'll see. It has two sides to it.

But you notice. He begins by. Thinking of the separation. Between his people. And the world. The world. Is basically. What is opposed to God. It's not so much.

[18:48] How many people. That are in the world. When you think of it. It's really in terms. Of. Quality. Of what something is like. And all the way through. John's gospel.

The world. Stands for. That which is opposed. To God. Whatever form it takes. Whether it's people. Or. Evil powers. Whatever it is.

The world. As it's expressed. Especially through. Human life. The world. Is. Anti-God. And his disciples. Are not.

Of the world. Yet. They have been sent. Into the world. And there's an important. Connection. We are not. Of the world. We are different. In substance.

Spiritually. Now that we're born again. Now that he's given us. His word. Now that his word. Has become effective in us. It has taken us. Out of the world. In the spiritual sense.

[19:43] We have been. Separated. From the world. But Christ is saying. As the father. Sent me. Into the world. Even so. I'm sending. Them. I have sent them.

Into the world. So. That's something. You've got to keep in balance. The fact that we are not. Of the world. Does not mean. We separate. Completely. From the world.

In every sense. Yes. In terms of its lifestyle. And its values. Absolutely. But yet. There's the sense. In which. He has sent us.

Into the world. Not to be like. The world. But to witness. For him. In the world. And to show. His glory. And to show.

Our joy. In him. To the world. And he goes on. Even to say. That the world. May know. That you have sent me. And love them.

[20 : 39] Even as you loved me. And. His concern. There is that. The world. Will become convicted. Of. Himself.

And of his ministry. And indeed. See that. Through the unity. Of his people. That's another. Whole set of connections. But you see. He's saying here. I do not ask. That you take them.

Out of the world. But that you keep them. From the evil one. Now that really. Only makes sense. If you think. Of Christian service. If you think. Of service. As being entirely.

Detached from the world. Then really. There's not much meaning. To this prayer. That Christ. Asks the father. To keep them. From the evil one.

What he's really saying is. I'm sending them. Into the world. As my disciples. It's there. In that service. In that context. Of being in the world. For me. That they need. Your protection.

[21 : 32] That they need. Your keeping. And that isn't. Merely physical. Keeping. That's not protection. So that no harm. Comes to them.

So that they don't. Really have times. Of great suffering. It's obviously. Not that. Because there are times. When Christians. Are put to death. And it happens. In our world today.

Every day. So Christ. Doesn't mean here. That. We be kept. In the world. And kept. From the evil one. And kept. So that. We don't reach.

The point. Where people. Put us to death. Where physically. We are taken out. Of the world. What he means. Is. Being kept. From. Moral.

Spiritual. Corruption. While we serve him. In the world. I don't pray. That you take them. Out of the world. But that you keep them.

[22 : 27] From the evil one. Because. Spiritual decay. Moral decay. It's not just something.

That affects us. In our personal lives. It affects our service. And our witness too. It's something. As. As Manton puts it. That. Affects our service.

For God. In terms of. Our grieving. Of his spirit. For one thing. And. As we come to think of. Spiritual. Decline. Decay.

Backsliding. Moral corruption. To whatever extent. Even if it's never seen openly. Nevertheless. It affects.

Our spiritual life. And vitality. And the effectiveness. Of our service. And. What Christ. Has in mind. Is that. These disciples.

[23 : 25] Be kept. Kept. From. That moral. Infiltration. Of the world's. Effects. And the world's. Lifestyle. And what the world.

Calls its values. As they serve. Him. As they serve Christ. In the world. Which is why. The next thing. He goes on to speak of. Is. Sanctifying them.

Sanctify them. In the truth. Your word. Is. Truth. For their sake. I consecrate. Myself. That they also. May be sanctified. In truth. Now. Two things there. Or. A number of things. Really. But the two things. In terms of. The sense of. The word. Sanctify. Is always. Twofold.

As far as. We're concerned. Because. To be sanctified. Is. On the one hand. To be set apart. To be. Consecrated. For.

[24 : 21] God's. Self. The other side. Of it. Is to be. Made holy. To be delivered. Increasingly. From. Sin. Not only.

Sin's effect. In us. But sin. Done. By us. And sanctification. Is. That side. Of things. As well. Where God. By his power.

Increasingly. Works. In our lives. So that we. As the catechism. Puts it. That we. Die. Unto sin. More. More. And more. And live.

Unto righteousness. There'll be ups and downs. In that. But that's the course. That's the path. That we're on. That's the dynamic of it.

That's what. God is set. On doing. And is doing. In our lives. And. That sanctifying. Is a sanctifying. For the truth.

[25 : 15] And it's a sanctifying. By the truth. If you think of being. Consecrated. Being taken. And being set aside. For a specific use. That's what God does.

When he takes us. And makes us his people. He sets us apart. He consecrates us. He sanctifies. In that sense. Of setting us apart. For what? To be his servants.

To be his. Ministers. In the sense of. Servants. Diakonoi. People who are. In the world. Not of the world. But in it for him.

Sent by him. To be his servants. And. Making them. Holy. At the same time. Well. It's also in a sense.

That's for the truth. But. When you look at. On that side of it. For personal holiness. We come to be. Personally. Holy. Holy. By the truth.

[26 : 12] By our use. Of the truth. By the way. That God. And the spirit. Of God. Especially. Takes the truth. Of the word. And makes that effective.

In our lives. And that's why. It's so incredibly. Important. That the word. Of God. Is central. To our lives. That's what he means here. By the truth.

Your word. Is. Truth. Now that was. In Christ's time. The old testament. The word.

That God. Had caused. To be written. The word. That Jesus. Himself. Used. And lived by. In his ministry. In the world. We know.

From. Various texts. In the new testament. Letters. That. That has been added to. By the likes of Paul. And Peter. And John. So that we have. The whole. Corpus.

[27 : 07] The whole. Body. Of scripture. Including old. And new. Testaments. And in the words. Of second. Timothy. Paul writing there. To Timothy. To have the word.

Of God. Written. As so. Foundational. To his ministry. For he says. The word. Of. The word. Of God. All scripture. Is God.

Breathed. And it's effective. Then he goes on. To give the list. For correction. For reproof. For instruction. And righteousness. So that.

The man of God. By that he means. The woman of God. Do. That they may be. Made perfect. In all good works. In other words. Fitted out.

For his service. Sanctified. Consecrated. For the truth. Sanctified. Made holy. At the same time. By the truth. And that's how it goes on.

[28 : 04] That's what our life. In this world. Is about. And you notice. He finishes. This section. By saying. For their sake. I consecrate myself.

That they also. May be sanctified. In the truth. Now obviously. As far as Christ. Christ himself. Is concerned.

Sanctification. Did not mean. An improvement. In his moral condition. The way it does in ours. For us. Sanctification. Includes. Not just.

Consecration. But being made. Increasingly holy. Dying more and more. To sin. Having more and more. Of sin. Eradicated. From our life. From our practice. And more and more.

Of holy living. In his place. That was not so. For the Lord. He didn't need that. He was always. Perfectly holy. As a. Perfectly holy.

[28 : 59] Spiritually. Morally. A human being. A human life. A life. In him. Perfectly holy.

Consecrated to God. Too. And. What he's. Saying here is. That's probably why. The translation here. Is used. Consecrate. In verse 19. Rather. Sanctify.

Just to make the distinction. That Christ. Did not need. Sanctification. In the moral improvement. Sense. And yet. What he was doing. Himself.

Was. Consecrating. Himself. For his people. Setting himself apart. Following a certain path. In his service. For God. For the benefit. Of his people.

Why is that important? Why is it important? In relation to. Our sanctification. Notice what he's saying. For their sake. I. Consecrate. Myself. So. That.

[29 : 54] They also. May be sanctified. In the truth. That's a connection. That's very important. As well. Our being. Sanctified. In the truth. Or by the truth.

Is connected. In terms of. Its. Root. Being in. Christ. Consecration. Of himself. Why did Jesus. Consecrate himself? Well. There are many answers. To that. But the answer. From this particular. Verse. You can confine it. To this. He consecrated himself. In order.

To. To provide. His people's. Holiness. Of life. So that. They would come. To be holy. Through him. And for him.

For their sake. I consecrate myself. That they also may be sanctified. In truth. And that. Is important. Practically. And in terms of.

[30 : 49] Your thinking. As well. Because. The one thing. I have to admit. And you have to admit. As well. Is that we are far. From perfectly holy. And when we.

Think of our failures. And the. The dips. And the declines. In our lives. From day to day. And the frequency. With which.

We find ourselves. Back. Really. In the same. Hodgepodge. Of. Sin. Sin. And yet. Of a desire. To be holy. And back again. Sometimes. At things. Which we may have thought. We had left behind. Thoughts. Or actions. Maybe for a while. We lived. Pretty much.

Without them. As far as. We could. Make out. And yet. Sometimes. They come back. Like weeds in the ground. With added power. And you begin to despair. And you think. Am I ever going to get out of this?

[31 : 47] I thought I'd beaten this particular thing. Or this particular aspect of sin. But there it is. And I'm back there again. But then you come and think.

Well. Where do I go to then? Do I go to my own efforts? Do I go back to. How much I am able myself to strive for holiness?

No. You don't take your comfort. Although. We have to. Be engaged. In mortifying the deeds of the body. And. Nobody becomes.

Holy without effort. On our part. But at the same time. You don't take comfort. From your effort. You take comfort.

From Christ. Sanctifying of himself. That's where your security is. That's what guarantees. That you will be holy. Even if you complain tonight. That you're not anything like.

[32 : 47] As holy as you should be. Or could be. Or want to be. That's true of all of us. You are going to be holy. Because God is committed to it.

And that's why Christ died. That's why he consecrated himself. That's why. The whole purpose. Of his.

Sanctifying himself. Which included the cross. Was to make his people like himself. And if you go to Ephesians. And. That great passage.

To do with. The marriage of Christ. And his people. Similar to what we saw. On the Lord's day. And how that is the pattern. For human marriage as well. So often. Used. At marriage services particularly.

But this is what he says. Christ loved the church. And gave himself for her. That he might present her to himself. A glorious church.

[33 : 48] Without any spot or wrinkle. But that she might be holy. And blameless before him. But there's a bit of missed out. That he might sanctify her.

By the washing. Of water. By. The word. That he might make her holy. By the word. He died. To make his people holy. And he makes them holy. By the word. And he prayed for that. When he said sanctify them. Through the truth. Your word.

Is the truth. Tonight you have joy. You have joy. In your heart. That God has saved you. You have joy. In your heart. That you belong to God's saved people.

That you're in a living relationship. With other Christians. Whose company you enjoy. And you're here tonight. Because you want to enjoy that company too. As well as God's. Because it's meaningful to you.

[34 : 48] Because it's where you deep down in your heart. Really want to be. And the joy. That you have. Is united to your sanctification. You don't want to rejoice.

Without. Desiring to be holy. You don't want the species of holiness. That people think of. That is. Very lacking in joy. You want both.

Because Christ died. To give you both. And the fact that he's died. To give you both. Means. You can pursue both. Connected together.

With all your heart. So rejoice in him. And be holy in him. And as you rejoice. And as you are made holy. And as you depend on his consecration.

For both. Let's together come. More and more. To truly enjoy. What it is. To be his.

[35 : 47] In the world. Let's pray. Our gracious God. Our heavenly father. As we address you.

This evening. As our father. We are very conscious. Of that prayer. Of the son. Into which we have looked. All too briefly. And all too shallowly.

This evening. Lord our God. We thank you. For its depth. We bless you. For the way. That it is so. Unreachable. For us. And thereby.

That it. Has a claim. Upon our hearts. That it is your word. That it is indeed. Your prayer. That it belongs. To your ministry. Help us to appreciate.

Too. That. The essence. Of this great prayer. That is recorded. In your word. Has not been left. A way back. In the. Mists of history. Or even confined.

[36 : 43] To the written word. On this page. We thank you. For your ongoing. Intercession. Where you pray. And continue. To plead. For the joy. And the holiness. Of your people.

We thank you. That we. Are the. Recipients. Of that prayer. As we enjoy. Life with you. Here as we pray. Now. For Jesus sake. Amen.