

Philippians 1

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: 15 November 2020

Preacher: Randy Matthews

[0:00] It's so good to be back. Such a joy to be back here with the church family. And as a matter of fact, today, let's see if I can get this to work.

Yeah, today we want to even look at joy. And so let's begin with almost like a modernization of an old tradition.

When the church would come together, they would greet and bless one another. And so in keeping with the theme that God is giving us today on joy, I just have a greeting and a blessing for you.

And that is, may the joy of the Lord be with you today. May the joy of the Lord be with you today.

Now your response is, and with you also.

So let's see if we can do this. May the joy of the Lord be yours today. You got one blessing and I got a hundred.

[1:10] What a good day. You know, it's really good for us to just greet and bless one another in the Lord. And so if you would, just turn to the person next to you.

It's probably a family member. But only give them an elbow bump and say that to them. May the joy of the Lord be yours today. And the other one respond, and with you also.

Please do that right now. Today, the Lord wants to bring us His kind of joy.

And man, is it needed in a COVID world. We're needing a new injection of joy. As we begin, let's pray.

Lord, thank you for the joy that you give us. Something that the world can't give us. Another person can't give us.

[2:19] It is far greater than the best of circumstances on earth. And holds us close in the most difficult times in our lives.

Your joy. Your kind of joy. May it rain in us today. And thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to be here.

And to be with brothers and sisters. Who have set their hearts upon you. So, Lord, I thank you for the leadership.

Thank you for Dave. Thank you for Jordan, Matt, Mike, and all the others who lead and direct. I submit unto them for the good of this church.

May your joy now be multiplied. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You know, as Mike said, even though we, in many ways, may be in lockdown, we can only be here if few in number.

[3:27] Many more can watch live stream. But as we're here, the gospel is going forward. Even in times of lockdown, God is doing great things.

And one way I ask that his gospel go forward in us is in the production of joy. Many of us, when we face COVID-19, find ourselves at home and perhaps all alone or just with immediate family.

And some people, the more they spend alone like that, they can develop a morbid introspection. A time of looking inside and dwelling in darkness.

And in the midst of COVID-19 and lockdown and isolation and the lack of fellowship and the development of relationships, God bursts on the scene and he wants to give us joy.

Real joy. And it's a joy that remains even when the journey gets tough. You know, I've chosen a picture to kind of picture in my mind what tough would really look like.

[4:52] This is at a camp of internationally displaced peoples, IDP, in Nigeria. Right now in Nigeria, genocide is taking place and people are going to camps.

And this is the best they get. And as I've been in those camps and as I've worked with those people, I say, how can joy exist in that tin building?

When everything around you is dirt and mud and that's the best you have. No carpet. No comforts. Can joy abide there? Now that's something that I've seen and that I've experienced. But what about you? What about in the lockdown that you face?

Let's consider the darkest moments. Some of you perhaps have even faced a loved one who has passed away and they had to do that all alone.

[5:59] You couldn't even be with them. And it becomes one of the darkest moments of your life. Can joy abide in that tough time?

I believe that God is taking us on a journey. And that journey has ups and downs. That journey has beautiful vistas where we're just in awe as I was in China.

Climbing a mountain. And finally seeing this beautiful river unfold as I made it to the peak. So whether there or in the utter places of poverty where I've stayed and places that are dirty and desolate.

Can joy abide in both of those? Can the joy of the Lord stay with us in the highs and in the lows? You know if we're going to experience a joy that is good. Whether things are going well for us or they're at their worst. We have to understand a truth about joy.

[7:16] And I love how C.S. Lewis said this in his wonderful work, Surprised by Joy. C.S. Lewis wrote, Joy is a byproduct.

Think about that for a moment. No one gets joy by seeking it. It's a byproduct of something else. Joy is much like sleep.

If you have ever suffered with insomnia, join my club. I'm in that club. As a matter of fact, I'm a charter member.

I know what insomnia at night can be. And the more you focus on, I need to go to sleep, I need to go to sleep, I want to go to sleep, I hope I go to sleep, the more awake you become.

It's almost like sleep is a byproduct. And that's why people count sheep. I can't think about sleep. I need to think about something else and maybe I will fade off and be refreshed and renewed.

[8:23] Well, joy is much like that. It is a byproduct, C.S. Lewis said. It's very existence presupposes that you desire not it, but something other and outer.

Something other than it and something outside of you. It's not naturally in you. I don't know. With all of the great propositions of a New Age movement that everything is within me, this isn't true when it comes to joy.

Joy comes outside of me and moves into me. And it is something different than just seeking it.

Joy is a byproduct. Joy is a byproduct. Here's what Jesus would say about that byproduct of joy. In John 15, 11, he would say, These things I have spoken to you.

Now think about it a moment. This is the last night of his life. These are his final and parting words. This is the upper room discourse where Jesus is saying, I want to leave you with some key realities that will hold you in the darkest of moments that are going to happen very quickly.

[9:51] He was going to face the cross. But he said, I have spoken a lot to you. These things I have said to you that my joy may be in you.

There's the outer. There's the other. I want my joy to be in you and that your joy then would be complete or full. I want us to make a very wonderful realization today that God and Jesus, His Son, are no joy killers.

God is about joy. As a matter of fact, one thing C.S. Lewis would say is that joy is the serious business of heaven. God isn't a killjoy.

He is one who multiplies joy. And Jesus has said, I want to give you a gift. I want my kind of joy to be in you.

My kind of joy. You know, I'm reminded where it says in Hebrews that Jesus actually when He thought about the cross on which He would die for our sins, that He despised its shame.

[11:14] He would become sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God. And no one wants to become sin. He despised its shame.

But for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross so that that rugged, old, wooden, bare cross where Jesus died for us to give us salvation becomes a colorful emblem of life for you and me.

When we see in the cross of Christ and in Christ Himself our joy, the darkest moments can become beautiful in their own way.

You know, people in the first century actually got this. They actually understood what Jesus was giving and here's what Peter would say to a group of people who were suffering persecution.

He would say that you're facing all kinds of hardship. People hate you. They're going to put you to death. But notice this, that He said was a reality in them.

[12:29] Though you have not seen Him. You haven't seen Jesus. Peter could say I did, but you haven't seen Him. And you love Him.

Though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and here's the byproduct. Here's the thing that comes from that.

You rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. You see, God, through Jesus, gave that early church an inexpressible joy.

It's not this fleeting happiness that comes when circumstances go our way. It's not when we simply make a wonderful new purchase and we go, I feel good about that.

Or I get that job promotion. Or I am loved and applauded by people. It's not that. Peter is speaking to people who are facing the greatest harm.

[13:35] He's speaking to the Nigeria of our day. And he says, there's a reality that I know about you and that is you have an inexpressible joy.

I believe God wants to do something in us today. And He wants to produce a joy that sounds like that. But how do you get that?

How do you get that kind of inexpressible joy? Well, He said so in this passage. You haven't seen Him. You love Him.

You don't see Him now. But you believe in Him. This is what we focus on in order to get the byproduct of joy.

Here's my best shot at a definition of joy. There are many things we can say about joy and it's such a broad and big topic. It's hard to put it in one simple sentence.

[14:38] But I'm trying to do that based on what I hear Peter saying. Joy. You'll find this in any dictionary. Joy is pleasure, delight, or satisfaction.

You'll find that if you open a dictionary. What you don't find in the dictionary is what follows. Joy is pleasure, delight, or satisfaction from loving and trusting Jesus.

It's that byproduct, that gift of God that comes to us because our focus is in the right place. It's not on my circumstances.

It's not in my lockdown. It's in Him. Joy comes from Jesus. Joy is in Jesus.

And it is a joy that holds us regardless of what happens. Now I'd like you to see again that this is pleasure, delight, or satisfaction.

[15:42] Some people think joy is when we just jump up and down and I've had this immediate adrenaline rush and something wonderful has happened and I feel those endorphins bursting over my brain and I'm going, yeah!

And I feel really good. And some people say, that's joy. And I want to tell you, it is joy. But that's not all that joy is. Joy can be when your hands are down at your side.

Nothing is going your way. But there's a deep satisfaction in the heart. Are you jumping up and down? No. Are the endorphins bursting in your brain?

No. You see, the joy that Jesus gives has a wide range of human emotion. It can be the exhilaration of a sudden happiness.

Something that happens spontaneous. That happened when Jesus was conceived in Mary. She goes to visit Elizabeth.

[16:53] Elizabeth said, the moment I heard your voice, the baby leapt for joy inside of me. That's a spontaneous exhilaration. But if we look at the Scriptures, more about joy comes from contemplation and reflection.

It comes from a look in a certain direction of Jesus regardless of what's going on. Joy.

Do you have this kind of joy today? You know, sometimes I preached on joy in a couple of other churches and my wife who often can bring great conviction to me says, well, now you've preached about joy.

Do you have joy? And you know what I said? No. No. And I want to tell you why I had to say no. Because even though I had preached on joy, I got my eyes off of Jesus and I started looking at my performance.

And because I didn't feel like I performed well or I hadn't preached to the best and I hadn't been upholding this in my own life because I thought I have to be something brilliant.

[18:14] I've got to be something for the people. And when it didn't happen, I lost my joy. And so as my wife, Marsha, was asking me, do you have joy? You preached on joy.

Do you have it? And I had to say no because I lost my focus. Christians can lose their focus. It's very easy like Peter walking on the ocean and seeing the wind and waves that we all know so well. When we lose our focus, we sacrifice our joy. And Jesus, in those moments of messing up, comes to us.

Thank you. Kyle and Megan for leading today and having that wonderful song that even when I sin, Jesus comes to me.

This is the joy. He begins to stand in front of this wayward person and says, look, look, look unto me.

[19:18] And when my focus gets off of me and my circumstances and everything I don't like that's happening, my joy can be renewed in a moment with a deep satisfaction.

salvation. You see, if we want to be full of joy, we must find it in the presence of God. We don't find it in the things that are so readily available before our eyes.

It is in the presence of God. David got this and that's why he wrote in Psalm 1611, You make known to me the path of life.

In your presence is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. That's why I have a quiet time. That's why I start every day in the Word and in prayer.

Why? Because in the right hand of the Father, there is fullness of joy. And in His presence, there is something that I'm really looking for even when I'm sidetracked by cheap substitutes.

[20:38] Listen, it is only in His presence and in His Word. Like Jeremiah said, when I found your Word, I ate it and it was such a delight to me, it became my very joy.

Let me just say to you that I've got a picture before you of two men in Zambia. These are swamp people. And you may look at their clothes and say, they don't look like swamp people.

They're wearing their very best. That's like you and I putting our best dress on or perhaps a tuxedo. They had come to a certain place in Zambia.

But the joy of all of this, and this comes from the support and gifts right here of Shoreline, we were able to print Bibles in their language.

Your Word came to me and it was a delight. These men are holding up Bibles because they don't have the privilege you and I do to have a Bible in our hand and to hold it in our hearts.

[21:48] This is new for them. And so they're holding up their Bibles and like Jeremiah said, when the Word of God came, it became my joy. Listen, many of us are slacking in the day of COVID.

And where we slack is, is that we give up being in the presence of God regularly and feeding our soul on the Word of God. And then we wonder, why is darkness and depression over me?

Well, one reason is I've gotten distracted. And Jesus is simply saying today, I'm here, my Word is available, and I want to change your darkness into light without changing one circumstance.

I want to change you. Are you in the Word? it is only when we're in the Word that we can look out at a vista and say there are high points and valleys.

Just as this beautiful scene I found in China. There's high points and there's valleys, but it's the Word of God that shines in the midst of all of it that keeps me and helps me walk in joy.

[23:09] joy. It can reveal to me new vistas even when everything is all closed down. I want to ask you, are you ready today to go on a journey of joy?

I'd like you to think of joy as a process. It's something that we grow in. It's a journey and it's that journey that is taking the gospel to hard places in the midst of our lockdown.

The very thing Mike mentioned. Joy. Joy is a journey. And like any journey, if we're going to go out and hike on a journey, we need to mark some key milestones.

Milestones not only mark how far you've gone, but they also mark special vistas that are beautiful and producing all in the moment.

So think of yourself on a hike. You and I, we've got our hiking shoes on, we're ready to go, and this hike is a journey of joy.

[24:25] And in order to mark the milestones, we have to know the vistas that God is putting before us so that we can say, milestone, wow, I need to remember that.

When I go as far as I'm going, I'm going to turn around and come back, I want to see that milestone and I want to remember that one. Because it was not only a distance from my dark circumstances to the place of joy, but it was also a moment of change in my life.

Now, if we were looking at Philippians chapter 1 in its entirety, there'd be five milestones at least, I'm not going through all five.

I'm simply going to mention three and I'm going to give them to you up front so that we can have them in our minds and then we're going to quickly walk through the milestones and stop and gaze for a moment and see what God wants to say to us.

Milestone number one, even in lockdown, is people. people matter and it is people that are near us.

[25:43] Keep in mind that when you feel like you can't see anyone else, think of some people and perhaps Zoom or a phone call or an email or a Facebook message.

Something is going to be a vista that's going to change you because somebody other than you matter. Jesus, excuse me, Paul would say in Philippians 2, don't forget about your interests, just take on others as well.

Of course you've got desires, interest, and struggles. Just be interested in others too. The second milestone is prayer.

Often, as I said, when we get lazy in lockdown, prayer becomes rote, it becomes minimal, and we want to look at what Paul prayed for and how he prayed and who he prayed for.

Prayer. Not your general, oh, just say a quick prayer, but what might prayer become as a milestone in joy?

[27:05] And then, the last one we want to look at today is simply perspective. It's where we're going to stop and we're going to say, you know what, in all the circumstances or even people that are really getting under my skin, I mean, they're really, I'm not liking what some are saying, I'm going to stop in the midst of that, do a perspective shift, and once again, find all in the journey.

Let's begin the journey of joy that is in Jesus. Jesus. When we're on the journey, a lot of things happen in a hike.

You might trip on a tree root, or you might stumble on a stone. The terrain can be rough or smooth. It can be a trail somebody has already forged, or you can be out trailblazing your own journey.

regardless of it, you're going to come to a milestone, and that milestone is people.

Like my dear brother that I'll leave unnamed on the left, dear brother in China, he's a leader, and he is one of the joys of my life.

[28:42] He's going through a tough time. his marriage is suffering. He's not immune to pain. But he matters.

And we're seeing God do a healing work in his marriage as well as in his own heart. He matters. As well as the couple.

This couple, an indigenous couple in China that no one is reaching except one person that I know, and her name is Catherine, but I put them down because they matter.

And when I begin to take on people as people who are valuable and I want to give my life to benefit them, I'm standing at a milestone.

It's a milestone called people. Let's look at how Paul looks at it in Philippians. And again, I will go through this very quickly. Paul begins almost all of his letters relationally.

[29:48] And he begins Philippians relationally. He says, let's just talk about a moment who we are. And he uses terms like servants and saints,

overseers, and deacons.

It's why Mike said today, they're looking for people who will serve as elders and deacons. You see, there's something in the body of Christ and why we're put into this body that leaders model what life is really supposed to be.

And so Paul begins his letter. I just want you to reflect on who we are. And the greatest of leaders are servants. They're not brilliant, the people on top.

If you were to look at the upside down kingdom of Jesus, they would be at the bottom. Jesus came to serve and not to be served.

And the greatest in the kingdom, Paul uses the term, we are servants, we're doulos, we're bond servants of Christ. And you are saints.

[30:59] And here's what I like to picture about who we are. Anyone who wants to be a leader, and that's opened to all of us, if you want to be a leader, I want to challenge you to descend into greatness, and to get under some people, and push heavenward with all your might.

When Paul said, you want to know who I am? I'm a servant. You want to know who you are? You're a saint. You're set apart by God, and my goal in life is to serve you.

That's why Paul was filled with joy. everything's relational. He says, not only I want you to know who we are, but I want you to know what we share.

And he mentions two things. We're partners in the gospel, and we're partakers of grace. In other words, this is not some experience for the apostle Paul, because he's a spiritual giant.

Oh, he gets those things. Of course, God loves him. He has suffered. He has given his life and surrendered to Jesus. Paul says, no, I want you to know something.

[32:11] There's something we have in common, and it's called the gospel, and it's called grace. And that's common for every one of us.

We need to focus on what we have in common, rather than what we have in different. What we have different. Paul wasn't into the comparison game. There we go.

Thank you. Let me quickly just say that when we're thinking about people, think about who they are, their value. Think about what you may share with them, especially if they're a believer.

But even if they're not, what do you share in common humanity? But Paul didn't stop there. He says, I want to tell you what I feel about you. Here's a man's man.

A man's man. Calluses on his hands from tent making. A task oriented man who wouldn't give up when things got hard.

[33:19] A man's man. But he says this, I want to tell you what I feel about you. Tough, and tender.

A man of God. Here's what he says to the Philippians. It sounds kind of funny coming from a John Wayne character. I have you in my heart.

I long for you. I have the affection of Christ for you. Keep that in mind. It's key as we stop at the milestone and renew our joy is we need to tell somebody how we feel about them.

And please, if you do, use positive terms. Listen, Paul would later say in Philippians 4.1, look at this, I've underlined five things in one verse that he says.

He says, therefore, I'm summing up, first of all, he calls them my brothers, we're in a family, whom I love, here's a man's man saying, I love you again, and I long for you.

[34:30] He had already said that in chapter 1. You are my joy. You are my joy. You're my crown.

You're my beloved. In one verse, five times, he begins expressing love. I believe in the midst of COVID-19 and how that's affected the world, Nigeria, Zambia, people that I'm in contact.

I have meetings every Thursday with Burkina Faso. Listen to me. Expressing love to them lifts their joy and it multiplies my own.

Here's the principle. As I stand at milestone number one in the journey of joy, I need to know that joy is experienced when love is expressed.

So today, I'm telling you today, on your hike and journey in joy, tell someone other than your immediate family how much you love them.

[35:42] Do it in ways that don't make them squirm necessarily, but do tell them. because what happens is that the joy that God brings to you, getting your focus off of your own self-pity, is that He not only

multiplies joy in you, but He raises them up to the place of joy too.

You see, when love is expressed, there's a double win. I win, and so do you. this is milestone number one.

Very quickly, milestone number two, prayer. Prayer. My dear sister that I'll leave unnamed again, she's from China, communist country, atheist country, country, and she runs a house of prayer. I've been there. She's made her whole life about prayer. And as we move over to another continent in Africa, we have a mother teaching her adopted daughter how to pray with joy.

Not only how to pray, but lift your hands and pray with joy. joy. I want to learn that kind of prayer. And so while I'm on the journey of life, I want to go to the milestone of prayer.

[37:24] Here's how Paul did it. He prayed for the Philippians with joy. joy. He said in verse 3, I thank my God in all remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy.

Once again, it's about people. It's not just telling someone what I think about them, but now it's praying for them. You see, Paul's joy quotient was great, because he prayed for them.

And as we look at the end or a little further in chapter 1, we find that they're praying for Paul. He's in prison. He's in Rome. It's around 61 A.D.

He had planted the church 10 years before, around 51 A.D. Five years after he planted the church, he had a very brief meeting with them.

If we take that alone in the Word of God, in Paul's letter, it's the only time he was ever with the Philippians. Started a church 10 years ago, visited them five years ago, but I want you to know that even though we're separated by distance and by time.

[38:55] I'm still praying for you. And I pray with joy. You know, this very key principle is what motivated Paul with joy.

He prayed that their love would abound more and more. Oh, you've already got the love of Christ. I just pray it comes even more. I want to suggest to you today, here is a principle I would like you to think about.

I'm going to give you the principle in a minute. I want you to think of someone that you haven't seen in a long time, but they have contributed to your life.

Whether they contributed in Christ, they could be a person that doesn't even know the Lord, but they showed you what true love is. I want you to think of someone that you're separated by time and by distance, and I want you to take a moment this afternoon and pray that their love would increase.

Pray they would know the love of Christ, and that that love would flow through them in greater ways. Why? Why do that? Because you see, I'm standing at a milestone in the journey of joy.

[40:26] And I'd like you to catch this principle. Joy is experienced when prayer for others is our priority. For others.

we're so used to getting up every morning and saying, God, here's what I need. But joy is experienced when prayer for others is our priority.

years ago, when I was in Romania, God called me to preach a message to the Romanians, and it was a message on great faith.

I think I may have even preached it here. There are only two people that Jesus ever said had great faith, and you probably know this. The Roman centurion found in Matthew 8, and the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15.

It's only two people. The only two people that Jesus ever said had great faith. Only two. And there are some common characteristics in those two.

[41:41] Both were outsiders. They weren't a part of Israel. They were Gentiles. Both were humble, in their approach to Jesus. Both were persistent in coming into His presence.

Both believed in the abundance of Christ. Just say the word, just a crumb that falls off your table. They believed in His abundance. But I want to tell you that the one thing that stood out to Jesus, more than any of those, more than being an outsider, humble, persistent, believed in Christ's abundance.

Listen to this. They came to Jesus for someone else. That's what made them stand apart. The Roman centurion came to Jesus because his slave was sick.

And the Canaanite woman came to Jesus because her daughter was demonized. The only two people, people, listen, the woman who had the issue of blood said, if I could just touch the hem of Jesus' garment, then I would be healed.

Jesus did not say, you have great faith. He said, your faith has healed you. The blind people that came before Jesus, Jesus didn't say, your faith is great.

[43:01] He said, your faith has healed you. The lepers, Jesus didn't say, you have great faith. He said, your faith has healed you. You see, there is a faith in Jesus that can meet my need.

But if I want to go into great faith, I pray for others. It's when joy is experienced, when prayer for others.

So today, listen, you're on a journey. Stop. Pray for someone. Again, distant. Someone far away. But they have mattered to you. Milestone number three. To conclude for today is a perspective. And I give you one of my dear brothers, Joshua, in Nigeria.

Look at how energetic he's training. I was supposed to be there in northern Nigeria. These guys went without me because the indigenous leaders are moving forward.

[44:06] That's what Mike said. This is going forward, even though I'm in lockdown. But look at how much joy as they go forward. Their greatest battle is not COVID.

When they went into northern Nigeria from Joss and went further north, they said, pray for our protection from terrorists and bandits. and they went.

And their joy is multiplying into others. Here is a picture of a very poor place in northern Nigeria and these people are all rejoicing.

You came to us and you brought us the Word of God. Let's go to milestone number three about perspective. There are two things that can go bad in your life and they went bad in Paul's life.

One of them, what we call circumstances, and the other one are critics. And we all know about both. When circumstances go bad or people oppose us, Paul knew both.

[45:24] And I'm not reading these scriptures, I'm leaving them for you to read on your own. But Paul said, I want you to know that my imprisonment has only served to advance the gospel.

Paul was in lockdown in a Roman cell, and yet the gospel was going forward in two ways. One, the people who were chained next to him, a guard, and number two, the brothers that he had influenced, welled up with new courage, and they were taking the gospel out even though he couldn't.

Let me tell you about these two. Bad circumstances, but it's still the gospels going forward. Number one, Paul was chained to a praetorian guard.

I want to tell you in the midst of this pandemic, pandemic. You may not be able to leave your house very much.

Focus on the people who are geographically next to you, near you. Focus on your neighbors.

[46:43] If you haven't done so, write a note of encouragement. it. You know, when I first got back from Myanmar in March, I said, God, what am I going to do now?

I can't go to the nations. That's what you've called me to do. What am I going to do? And I was alone with the Lord in a private time. And here's what the Lord shared with me. I was in His Word, and the Spirit gave me application.

Here's what He said. And when I say He said this, He said this inside of me. I didn't hear an audible, voice. It was just an application of truth He was already showing me. Here's what He said.

Write your neighbors a note and go put it in their mailbox. And I began thinking, I don't know what to write them.

Write my name. So I sat down at my computer. And as I sat down, I said to the Lord every step of the way, I do want to do something to encourage my neighbors, but I don't know what to say.

[47:46] And I asked the Lord, would you direct me? And thoughts started coming and I wrote a simple half page, a very simple little letter thanking them for being good neighbors and say, hey, if we can go to the grocery store for you, just let us know.

people. And Marsha and I, we go neighbor by neighbor in our little area and we just put it in their mailbox.

And I want to tell you the result of that. No one asked for groceries. No one asked for a ride. But a spirit of kindness came over our neighborhood.

people. When COVID was still blaring, but people were out walking, we would be on one side of the street to the next and you'd see a smile on someone's face and they would say, thank you for the note.

Thank you. Well, we don't have a need, but thank you. Oh, and by the way, one lady said, she's from India. She said, by the way, when COVID's over, let's have a block party and all get together. [48:57] It's been a long time since we enjoyed our neighbors. When you're in lockdown, Paul was chained to a guard and he didn't look at it and go, woe is me.

I guess nothing good will come out of this. He started talking about Jesus to the people, geographically close to him. I want to ask you, think of your neighbors, co-workers, and find a way to use a scripture or a thought about Jesus.

We included that in our note. We didn't ask them to put their faith in Christ. We didn't dump the whole ball of wax in one little note. We just simply said, God cares for you.

And so do we. You know, when we're at this place of perspective, we begin to look at this.

And here is what's happening. I'm going to quickly do it. Henry in Zambia on the left, two of my brothers, James and Joshua, they're training new leaders.

[50:13] leaders. This is how many came out in the midst of bandits, terrorism, and COVID. The work we've got to do is still great.

I don't have time to even look at this. I'm just telling you, there are many unreached people groups, and if the indigenous leaders aren't encouraged and empowered, we're never going to get there.

So God is doing that in lockdown. But here's the principle. When it comes to perspective, and this is what Paul saw, joy is experienced when our setbacks become springboards for the gospel.

How do I begin to see my suffering in a new light? And how can it become a springboard of joy?

For others. I'll give that to you in a moment again. But I just want to say we're on a journey, friends.

[51:16] We're on a hike. Joy is only found in Jesus. And so if you've never put your faith in Him, begin at the very place, the very source of joy.

Jesus died on the cross and rose again so that He would become a part of our lives, forgiving our sin and living within.

And whether you're watching live stream or by later, another way, or if you're here today, I want to tell you the source of joy is not found in seeking joy, but it's found in trusting Jesus.

And once we get that joy, the very basis of joy, go on the journey with Him, stopping at the milestones, and may the awe and wonder come to you through people, prayer, and perspective. this is just repeating what I've already shared with you. That joy in Jesus is experienced. Joy in Jesus is experienced.

[52:32] When love is expressed, when prayer for others is our priority, when our setbacks become springboards for the gospel, that's when joy begins to multiply.

And with this, I'm going to close in prayer, so that we can celebrate Jesus and joy with communion. Let us pray. Lord, Jesus, I want to thank You. You not only modeled joy by despising the shame of the cross, but for the joy set before You, You endured that cross for us.

You're not only the model that we want to emulate, You're the very one who gives this joy as a gift. And so my prayer today is that your joy would be in us and our joy complete. I thank You, Lord, that joy is a journey, so take us on Your journey and help us to stop along the way and take in the beautiful vistas in a bad time, COVID-19.

[54:07] Lord, we pray for the world, we pray for the indigenous leaders. May their joy be multiplied. Lord, as I meet with Burkina Faso this Thursday, as I meet with Nigeria on Zoom next Monday, I pray for joy to be multiplied, that they would go into hard places where terrorism reigns.

May they go in with the joy of the Lord that only people in those circumstances can know a joy that is real.

Lord, may that kind of joy spread through the 1040 window, and may it spread in our own neighborhoods as well.

May the joy of the Lord be ours, and may our joy be full. In Jesus' name, Amen.