

I Peter 5:1-5 "Rejoicing and Weeping in Community"

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Preacher: Ron

- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- Open your Bibles, if you will, or if you don't have one, in one form or another. Yes, you may pull out your phones and turn them on, if there's a Bible on there.
- Romans chapter 12. You'll see there, if you don't have a Bible, there should be one in the pew pockets in front of you. And you can turn to page 948.
- We're going to be looking at just a couple of verses. I'm going to read from Romans 12, verses 9 through 10, and then verse 15, which will be the primary focus of our time together.
- Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil. Hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection.
- [1 : 09] And then verse 15. Rejoice with those who rejoice. And weep with those who weep. Let's pray together as we enter into the study of God's word.
- Father, would you meet us and speak to us through your word. Speak into our hearts so that we might see the glory of your face.
- And we might be filled with the hope of your coming. Come and meet us in that place where we are today.
- And make yourself known. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. We're in this series through the summer of one another.
- Talking about gospel community. And as Will began last week, the core of all of this is that we love one another.
- [2 : 13] Father, this is the one primary quality that distinguishes us from everybody else in the world. It's not the crosses we wear around our necks.
- It's not the bumper stickers on our car. It's not the causes that we are so passionate about. It is the way we love one another.
- That's how the world will know that Jesus is in our midst. And so we see here, this text, what Paul is doing in Romans, is unpacking that.
- We have to see it in context, though. What Paul has done from chapter 1 all the way through chapter 11 is to lay out for us this glorious picture of what Christ has done.
- All that he has done for us. Who we are in him. And the hope we have in Christ. And then you get to chapter 12 and there's this word, therefore.
- [3 : 19] Which calls our attention back to all that's just been said. And then we are called there to present our bodies as living sacrifices.
- That we, I mean, simply put, we are to, in response to all that Jesus is, lay down our lives.

Not just for God himself, but to lay our lives down for one another. A few verses pass. In verse 5 he says, we are members of one another.

We do not live in just proximity with other individuals. We are not to live in isolation. God has made us into a body, a family that is intricately, deeply united to one another.

That's who we are. And that is why love, as he says here in verses 9 and 10, is key. It is primary.

[4 : 32] We cannot minimize it. We cannot do without it. Love is everything in gospel community. But what does that love look like?

And from verse 9 down through really the end of the chapter, Paul is describing for us. He's unpacking this whole concept of what it means to love one another.

And in the midst of that unpacking, we have this verse. It says, to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

And it's very easy for us as we read through Paul. We could read through that and say, oh, okay, yeah, understand it.

Over and done. We just kind of blow past it. But in this short little verse, Paul is saying a lot. And I want us to unpack that together this morning.

[5 : 38] The first thing he's telling us here in this verse is he's telling us a lot about what life is. And life is a mixed bag.

There is rejoicing. There's weeping. Life has its share, a wonderful share of joys and blessings and pleasures.

Ecclesiastes chapter 9 verse 7 says, Go, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart. For God has already approved what you do.

When we enjoy the pleasures of this life, God approves. In fact, more than that, he's the one that has poured them out for us.

And what Paul's doing, he's combating an error here that was very common then. But I also think it's very present among us that there's something less.

[6 : 51] There's something inferior about what is material, what is physical, what we experience in this life.

There's something that we're not supposed to enjoy it too much. That's just not spiritual. Well, yes, what we experience is broken and corrupt.

It does not have the power to satisfy us. And it can be abused. We should not put our hopes there.

But they are good. All things in God's creation are good because he declared them to be good.

And so we can rejoice in these good things. One of my great pleasures is just sitting out on my patio with my bride of 37 years and enjoying an evening.

[7 : 56] I love the smell of burning fat. I love perfectly steeped tea.

Or fresh bread out of the oven. You kind of get a theme here. A lot of my pleasures are things that I intake. I can listen to harmonies and music that when they're perfectly together, it brings tears to my eyes.

In all of these things, we are to see them as gifts of God. To give thanks for them.

To enjoy them. Don't minimize them. Enjoy them. Because God is showing his goodness to us. That's one side.

There's another side. Life is hard. There is this erroneous, equally erroneous view.

[9 : 12] That these pleasures are the norm. This is the way life should be.

And when it's not, we get frustrated. We can be shaken. We might even get angry. As much pleasure as we can experience in this life, this life, this world, and all that is in it is deeply broken.

The pleasures of God that's not what is normal. We live in a world of cancer. Of divorce. Of little boys dying.

It's a world that leaves us empty. And in many ways, it fights against us. I feel like I'm constantly at war with my body and my yard.

I can make my yard look really good. For a couple minutes. And then it says to me, wait to see what's coming.

[10 : 38] Because of sin, the world is cursed. Every last millimeter of it. Nothing is escaped.

It is not the way it should be. It's not the way it was. It is not the way it will be. But in this between time, what we will experience in this life is pain and hardship and trouble.

Am I just being too negative? Am I just being too negative? I'm actually trying to save you from deep disappointment when it does not turn out the way you think it should.

It's normal. It's normal. It's normal. Again, from Ecclesiastes 1.13. He writes, it is an unhappy business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with.

He's talking about life. This is the norm. So, too many of us just go through life with the idea that things are just supposed to work out.

[11 : 56] Pain and suffering are the exception. And I think where a lot of this idea comes from is that we think we have become so technologically and scientifically advanced that we can actually put an end to the trouble and the hardship and pain.

But all we can do is as we maybe solve one issue, we create five more. We still die.

We all will. We will all hurt. We can't escape it. We live in a world that's full of hardship, disappointment, and tragedy, and no amount of scientific or technological advance can do anything about it.

Not until the day that Jesus comes and makes all things new. That said, Paul now comes and charges the hearers of this letter with, how do you love in a world like this?

How do you love? I mean, in this world where, as one pastor told me, seven out of ten people that you look at will be suffering and the other three will be.

[13 : 27] How do you love others in that kind of world? Well, he said, it's very simple. You rejoice with those who are rejoicing.

And you weep with those who weep. Why do we need to be commanded to rejoice with those who rejoice?

Because it's an act of faith. Let me illustrate why faith is required for us to rejoice with our brothers and sisters when they are experiencing God's gifts.

During the early years of our caregiving with my mother-in-law, we were in Atlanta, and I had a good, one of my best friends was also in a caregiving stage with his father.

His father was a whole lot more difficult. He was, they'd try to put him in a sister living home or a nursing home, and he'd get kicked out because he was so abusive. And my friend was an only child, so the weight of all of that was on him.

[14 : 44] And so we would get together and talk about the gospel to one another in the midst of these struggles.

Well, after a couple of years of this, his father died. And my friend inherited a pretty sweet inheritance from me because he was the only child.

And so with that, he sold his house, a simple house that he'd been living in, bought a lake house and a boat.

And then on Facebook, I kept seeing day after day after day pictures of the boat in the new kitchen in the lake house.

Now, was that easy for me to rejoice with him? You know what I did? I quit following him on Facebook.

[15 : 58] Because I wasn't there. I was still caregiving. I was not going to come into a nice inheritance. There will be, would be no lake house or boat.

And I struggled. When our brothers and sisters enter into those good gifts, those pleasures that God gives, most of us are not going to be in that state.

We're going to be in that state. We're going to be in that state. We're going to be on the other side. We are still in the normal life. We're in that state.

Where it hurts. Where there's toil and hardship and envy can make it extremely difficult for us to rejoice when others are experiencing these blessings.

I mean how can I rejoice in this couple's pregnancy when me and my wife can't get there how can I rejoice in this couple's anniversary when I'm living in this big alone called divorce how can I rejoice when they are laughing and celebrating and I have trouble holding back the tears the love we are required called to by God through Paul here is that we get outside of our self-focused self-centered look at life in our neediness and enter into those that I am a member with to enter into that joy and celebration

[18 : 22] I am to celebrate with them and why is that so important because when we join in the celebration of someone else we intensify it it's not the same when we celebrate alone I'm close very close to meeting my 10th grandchild Nora you've probably heard about her well you will you know it's because when I'm happy about the birth of Nora it's not the same if I'm doing it in isolation why do we have parties at special occasions why do weddings have all these guests to come it is because it's the gathering it's the body and the fellowship that makes the celebration so much richer and fuller and so to help and to love we enter into that celebration with our brothers and sisters our participation enhances those pleasures for them and this is why Paul calls it a living sacrifice in our living we lay aside the attention and the help that we want we lay aside this sense of neediness and we rejoice that these our brothers and sisters at this moment aren't there then in the same way when the normalcy of life continues or crashes in we need to be there ready to not just enter into their celebration but we enter into their pain their weeping their hardship their toil their discouragement and this calls us to identify to identify with our brothers and sisters in their pain we are not called to stop their weeping we are not called to fix their problem we are called to enter into the to their pain to the point that we feel it as acutely as if it were our own there's too many of us

I think are in the habit of when we try to help those who are suffering we do it from a distance we do like I call we lob these comfort grenades from a distance words of wisdom theological philosophical truths we kind of lob them in there that don't do anything to actually help we need to quit telling people when they go through hardship that God is sovereign he is but it doesn't help they don't need these truths they don't need this these ideas they don't need understanding they need somebody they don't need somebody to explain to them that God has a purpose or that this awful thing that has happened to them is somehow good cancer is not good it never has been it never will be death of a child is never good betrayal of a spouse is never good it is far too normal in this world this cursed world that we live in and God does not promise that things are going to turn around and be good good in this life yes he does in some mysterious way when it's all said and done he can take those things and redeem them and do good things for us but those things in themselves are not good when we weep over a cancer diagnosis so does he because it's not the way things are supposed to be it's not the way he meant it don't stay away because you're afraid of saying the wrong things go and say nothing at all let your tears do the speaking your words are not needed your ears and your arms are love calls us to weep and maybe just weep love calls us to enter in and identify so much that we are willing to learn just how deeply others hurt so much so that we feel it as if it's our own and it's actually in the sharing of the pain when you come alongside someone you share it that's where comfort really comes from because somebody knows somebody's willing to be there somebody's willing just to wrap their arms around you they're willing to believe the promises of

God that you are struggling to believe but they're going to do it for you and they're going to hold you up that's what it means to be a living sacrifice when we are suffering we just need somebody to hold us up to the one who can make all things new so how are we supposed to love like this well humanly it is impossible but Paul gives us this wonderful little phrase way back up in Romans 12 verse 1 and it's key to all the rest he says therefore by the mercies of

God by the mercies of God that is how we love that is where the ability to step outside of ourselves comes from God because we have experienced mercy from the one who made all things who entered into our own lives our world and made our lives as if it was his God himself and this is what we see Paul talking about all back through Romans God himself came he entered into our cursed life in his baptism it was pictured of how he took that all on himself he suffered our pain he took upon himself our disease all our brokenness and when we hurt he wept but he did more than that he identified with us so clearly and deeply that our sin our death that we should have died he made his own he died for us look at these words from

Romans chapter 12 chapter 6 excuse me do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the father we too might walk in newness of life for if we have been united with him in a death like his we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his he came died but there's a flip side he was raised into newness of life and because we are so deeply identified with him we will know that life as well that is free from the brokenness from the curse from the disease the hardship and the toil it is free made new in

[29 : 07] Christ that's what the mercies of God gives us we remember back to what he's done that because he was raised we can now look forward to what is coming he is making all things new and so in our rejoicing and in our weeping our calling is to enter into the lives of our brothers and sisters that we never let them forget the mercies of God we have already seen and the ones that are still to come so that as we deal with the normal life we can do so with hope let's pray father help us to remember we do struggle we hurt we don't like to think about it father help us to remember

Jesus help us to remember his mercy what he's already accomplished and help us to remember what he's going to do and give us hope and father then use us in the lives of each other that we might give hope that we might encourage hope that we might all together stand firm in hope for more information visit us online at southwood.org for more information visit us online at southwood.org disfr becomes one one glaub that we should ask Lou that we joke well that I know that you that there are