

The Joy Of The Redeemed

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Date: 04 August 2019

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[0 : 00] I'm going to spend some time tonight looking at verse 11 in particular. That's Isaiah 51 and verse 11. The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing.

Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Perhaps you should welcome at this point those who will listen to or watch this on video who are not living in Stornoway.

I know there are some who regularly do this and because the first part of the intimations for welcome isn't actually on the final video, just the sermon, I'd like to welcome them if I can just do that just now just so that they can be assured that as they join us, even if it's at a later stage, they're still very much part of our thoughts as we pray that this service, this message, the gospel will be blessed.

To all who hear it. So verse 11, And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing. Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

You don't have to read into the Bible very much before you realize that its record of history is very much connected to the prophecies that you find in the likes of Isaiah and other biblical prophets as well.

[1 : 26] And in fact you'll find, like Isaiah for example, passages from Psalms or passages that are also used in the historical books of the Bible such as 1 and 2 Kings and Chronicles.

You'll find the passages more or less repeated here or taken up by Isaiah. Because it's never far from the mind of Isaiah and these major prophets especially that God's covenant people, Israel and Judah, went into, or in Isaiah's case would go into exile.

And so that exile in Babylon is never far from being in the minds of the prophets as they bring God's word to the people of their day.

So when we read these prophets, it should always be in the back of our minds, indeed near the forefront of our minds, that the exile, what led to the exile, the return from exile in Babylon back to Jerusalem to rebuild the covenant community there, that's very much part of what you must keep in mind as you read through these books of the major prophets especially.

Because here is Isaiah, as you read through this verse especially, verse 11, a similar passage in chapter 35, indeed almost identical, which speaks about the ransomed of the Lord, the redeemed of the Lord, returning and coming to Zion, back to Zion, to Jerusalem, to the place of the temple with joy and singing and everlasting joy shall be on their heads.

[3 : 03] And you notice in this passage as well that it uses the language of the Exodus. Back in the book of Exodus, chapter 6 for example, and from verse 6 you find language similar to what's actually here recalled by Isaiah in verse 9 where he appeals to the Lord to show again his strength.

Awake, he says, O arm of the Lord, as in days of old, was it not you who cut Rahab? And that's a reference poetically to the Red Sea. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces that pierced the dragon?

Or was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep, who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? In other words, he's saying, the redeemed as God redeemed them from Egypt, they were provided with a way through the Red Sea and on to the promised land to the inheritance.

Now that they've been displaced, or going to be displaced as Isaiah predicts, as God is showing him, he is here projecting things forward to the return from that exile. And he's using the language of the exodus so that people are listening to this and would afterwards actually come to know this teaching as well, would realize that the return from Babylon was such a great thing, such a

significant thing for the people, there was so much attached to it by God himself, it was effectively a second exodus.

Just as he delivered them from Egypt, so he delivered them from the thralldom of Babylon and brought them from that back to establish under Nehemiah and Ezra, especially the covenant community of people, the temple again at Jerusalem.

[4 : 50] But that's not all. Although he uses the words here, redeemed and ransomed of that return from exile, these people of God, the people, covenant people, Isaiah projects things forward so that we're taken really into the New Testament and we're taken into the kind of return that the New Testament speaks about, our return to God, our returning to know God as our Redeemer, as our Savior, our return from the ways of sin back to know God as our God, our Savior, our friend.

And so that's the wider scope that Isaiah's prophecy brings us into and in fact, as you come towards the end of his prophecy and there are other passages too, that bring us even beyond that where it speaks about God establishing a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells and of course that takes you forward to the return of Christ.

As for the New Testament uses the same language, you find in 2 Peter for example, that's the kind of language that's used where after the judgment, God sets the final order of the creation and things will remain then forevermore as they are then, but for God's people, a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

And that's taken from the language of the prophets as applicable to Christ and the kingdom of Christ and the return of Christ and the redemption that's in Christ.

All of that really is brought into the amazing way in which God brought these prophets to speak in this way and projecting things forward even as far as the return of Christ at the end of the age.

[6 : 40] We're looking at this tonight then, particularly in terms of redemption and rejoicing. We're applying it in its more limited sense of redemption and rejoicing as we ourselves have experienced or can experience it.

The property of God's people, what belongs to God's people and what redemption means and what this word ransomed also means along with it. You'll see the words there, the end of verse 11 has the word redeemed and the end of verse 10 rather, the word redeemed and the beginning of verse 11, and ransomed.

And these two words are so often tied together in the Old Testament because they belong together, they fit together. You can't understand the one without the other. So, by the time you reach the end of the New Testament, Zion, which is here spoken about, they shall come, they shall return to Zion, back as we said, from Babylon to Zion, but by the time you reach the book of Revelation, there's no reference there to Zion at the end of that book, it's actually the city, the city of God's final dwelling place for his people.

And that's really where this projects us forward to. So, let's look at these two great themes of redemption and rejoicing as you find them built into this verse.

First of all, redemption. Now, redemption obviously requires us to think of a redeemer. You can't understand what redemption is except as you think of a redeemer who redeems his people, who actually produces or creates redemption for them.

[8 : 18] And indeed, Isaiah uses the word redeemer 14 times throughout his prophecy. If you flick forward to chapter 54, you can see there in verse 5, for your maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name, and the Holy One of Israel is your redeemer.

And the same in verse 8 of that chapter, with everlasting love, I will have compassion upon you, says the Lord, your redeemer. Same in chapter 59 and at verse 20, the word again is repeated there.

These are two, three of the instances of the 14, chapter 59 and verse 20, which speaks of the redeemer, or a redeemer shall come to Zion to those in Jacob who turn from transgression.

And all of that, these references point forward to the coming of Christ. Christ as the redeemer, Christ as the one who came to pay the ransom price, as we'll see, for his people.

So this is a very important concept, the concept of redemption, the thread of teaching in the Bible that you find of, that you find referred to as redemption, which comes to be set in motion by and fulfilled by a redeemer.

[9 : 33] The best place really to understand what a redeemer is and is about is to go back to the book of Ruth. As you may remember there, the book of Ruth and the role of Boaz as he came eventually to marry Ruth, who had come back childless, her husband having died, and as she came

back with Naomi, her mother-in-law, she came to meet with Boaz.

And as you go to Ruth chapter 3 and verse 12, you'll find that Boaz was saying there was another person who was actually more closely related to Ruth's late husband than Boaz himself was.

So he had to, first of all, go and ask this other person whether he wanted to actually redeem the right of the deceased, in other words, the property including Ruth herself and take over the responsibilities of looking after her and being a means by which she would come to have children for this inheritance that belonged to her.

And as you read there in chapter 3, verse 12, this is what Boaz is saying. Now it is true, he says, that I am a redeemer, yet there is a redeemer nearer than I.

Remain tonight and in the morning if he will redeem you, good, let him do it. But if he is not willing to redeem you, then as the Lord lives, I will redeem you. Lie down to the morning.

[10:55] And then you read in the next chapter how he went to that relative. The relative didn't want to take Ruth, so he said, you can redeem the rights of the deceased.

Now you can see from that that a redeemer is exercising what is really his right. It's not simply a duty that Boaz was taking upon himself or that fell to Boaz to fulfill.

It was in fact a right that he was prepared to claim if the nearer relative wasn't willing to take that to himself. And when you think of that in relation to Jesus as the redeemer, when Jesus came into the world, he came actually to establish his right to redeem his people.

He came to, not just out of a sense of duty, but because it was his right to come and redeem them.

If you go to Hebrews, let me just read from Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 14 there.

You'll find there a teaching about him taking, Christ taking out human nature to himself. And what he's saying there in verse 14 is, therefore he says, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise partook of the same things that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death and deliver those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

[12:27] Therefore, in verse 17, he had to be made like unto his brothers, and of course that includes his sisters too, in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God.

And all that is really telling us redemption, including this redeemer that comes to redeem his people, he redeems them by becoming one of them, by exercising his right to come to partake of their human nature, of their predicament, of their conditions, of their needs, of their debts, of their requirements, and that is what Jesus did.

Where you read in Isaiah, a redeemer shall come to Zion. Where you read hear that the redeemed, the ransomed of the Lord, shall return. They come by way of the redeemer who came to redeem them, to purchase them, to pay the price of the redemption.

So when Jesus came, the amazing thing is the Son of God by becoming one of us. He didn't enter into taking our humanity in a way that left him kind of neutral, if you like, in relation to our sin, to our debt.

to the penalty that needed to be paid for that debt to be wiped clean. He took all of that to himself. Just as Boaz took Ruth and her needs and her debt and whatever else she had, so did Jesus in a higher sense take the debt of his people.

[13:58] Because a redeemer as we'll see is one who redeems by paying the redemption price, the ransom, which is why the word ransom is used as well. We'll look at that in the next point.

But, just to finish the redeemer and the meaning of redeemer, it means coming to actually exercise his rights, coming to exercise his rights of redemption by taking the debt of the one he's come to redeem.

It also means this, it means recovering what belongs to him. redemption means God engaging in an activity to recover what was lost, to recover what had happened in Adam, the fall of mankind, the guilt of mankind.

God is really saying, my people belong to me, they are mine from all eternity, they need to be redeemed from their sin, from the guilt of their sin, they need to be purchased back, so that they are now again mine, that they are my property, that they serve me, that they acknowledge me as their God.

And this is the message to Isaiah for his day as well. He's appealing to the people of Israel to look to the God who redeemed them from Egypt, from whom they have badly strayed, and God is appealing to them to say, do you not understand what redemption is about?

[15 : 24] Because redemption is me dealing with my property. You shall be a particularly unique people to me, or a peculiar people in the old translation, the A.V.

As God reminded them as they came out of Egypt, they were to be his. They were his property. He had redeemed them. He had brought them to himself. They had been in Egypt, but he had delivered them.

They were now his. They were his at the price of the Passover lamb, the shedding of that blood. Now Isaiah is taking us forward to Jesus and to his coming to recover what was lost, to seek and to save that which was lost, to redeem them, to bring them back to God.

For God sent him into this world to claim what was his, to be their redeemer. And that takes us to the word ransom. The ransom of the Lord shall return.

Now ransom is always tied to the idea of redemption or a redeemer. Because redeeming means to take back or to purchase back with a particular price, the ransom price.

[16 : 40] Now the question that you and I must answer, when you come across this in the Bible and you think of Jesus paying or being the ransom, the death of Jesus being the ransom that was paid for us to come back to God, for God's people to be purchased back to himself, the question you must not ask is, who was the ransom paid to?

Because the imagery is used not so that we'll ask that question, who did Jesus pay the price of his death, the price of his blood to? The focus is not on who it was paid to, but on the amount, on the cost of what was paid.

The cost of his life, the cost that is nothing other than the death he died. That's what it cost to redeem us. As Peter, in 1 Peter 1, verses 18 to 19 puts it, you were redeemed from your vain way of life received by tradition from your fathers, he says to them, not by silver and gold, not by the most precious things that you have in this world, but by the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

There is Peter reminding those he's writing to of the cost of their redemption. You were redeemed with a price and the price of it was the death of Christ. The death that atoned for sin.

The awful, agonizing, unfathomable death of Christ. That's the ransom. And you know, isn't it amazing when you go to read the Gospels that you come across in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10 and verse 45, in a context where Jesus is dealing with squabbling disciples, ambitious disciples, over-ambitious disciples, James and John, with a question for Jesus, with a request for Jesus, grant they said that we may sit one at each side of you in the kingdom of God.

[18 : 45] And then he taught them a lesson. He taught them that that's not the kind of lifestyle that disciples must show. He said, you know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great ones exercise authority over them.

It shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be servant or slave of all.

And he says this, for even the son of man, who is of course himself, he came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Think of the context. Think of where Jesus is wielding that massive theology where he says about himself, even the son of man, even I, the son of God, the son of man, the person I am, the God I am, even I came not to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. that should be forever sufficient to keep the people of God from ever squabbling amongst themselves about the idea of greatness and who is right and who is wrong and falling out over trivialities so often.

[20 : 21] Even the son of man came to give his life a ransom for many. And as Paul wrote to the Corinthians in chapter 6 of 1 Corinthians, he reminds them again of how they had to go back to basics as it were and change their lifestyle and change their whole attitude to what it meant to be a Christian.

He says, you are not your own. You can't just live to please yourselves or do what's right in your own eyes. You are not your own for you are bought with a price.

And by that he means a ransom price. Therefore, glorify God with your body as well as with your spirit, your soul. Jesus brought us back to the ownership of God in the ultimate sense, of course, God always owned his people, but they were lost, dead in trespasses and sins.

Having sinned against him and under his wrath and displeasure, Jesus came to pay that debt. He paid it not by skirting round the worst of it, by paying most of it, but he paid it all.

The cup, he said as he came out of Gethsemane's garden, the cup which my father has given me, shall I not drink it? Shall I not drink all of it?

[21 : 53] That's what he was committed to. That's what he did. That's what he finished. Now tonight, let me ask you this, as I ask myself too.

Do you know Jesus as your Redeemer? Is all of this true about him, and yet he's still not personally your Redeemer? Have you come to this great Redeemer with your sins, with your need of salvation, with your need of redemption?

Have you yet not known for yourself, the depth of your own soul, what it is for a sinner to be redeemed, to know the privilege and the benefit of redemption?

Think about it, if you're tonight here and you know you're not yet, you've not yet closed in with Christ, you've not yet accepted the offer of the gospel, where Jesus himself is speaking to you through the preaching of the gospel tonight, and assuring you as Isaiah, as God through Isaiah assured the people that he was indeed a Redeemer to them, that he was all about redemption, purchasing back what had been lost.

Isn't it difficult to find language really to describe the enormity of rejecting a Redeemer?

[23 : 23] But that's what we're doing if we're continuing not to accept Christ as he's offered in the gospel. Tonight we urge you if that's the case.

Think about what it costs to redeem sinners. Can you look in the face of Christ tonight as he speaks to you to the gospel and appeals to you to return? Can you look into his face and say, I know what the Bible is saying about you.

I know what it means when it speaks about redemption. I know what it says about the ransom price that was paid by you for the redemption of your people, the redemption of sinners.

But I need more time. I need to consider it further. Why is the price not enough? Do you think you can add to it by waiting longer?

Do you think you can make it somewhat better by putting it off once again? Isn't this redemption just so worth having here and now?

[24 : 28] And isn't it something so appealing to people so critically in need like you and I as sinners that surely it is the utmost foolishness and despite to God to say to him not for the moment.

I have other things to consider. imagine if Jesus had it been possible which it was not but imagine for a moment for the sake of argument that Jesus had listened to those people who were clamoring that he come down from the cross.

Let him come down from the cross. He saved others. Himself he cannot save. Let him come down from the cross now and we will believe him. Imagine if he had come down.

what would that have meant? No redemption. No ransom price paid. You and I would be forever bound in the consequence of our sin in the lostness of hell because this Jesus came as the redeemer to rescue us from it and he paid the price of it.

The ransom is accomplished. fully paid and that to you tonight is offered unto me in the offer of the gospel this redeemer.

[26 : 00] Well there's redemption and return it says to Zion they shall return to Zion we don't have time to go into too much of the detail that follows in the verse but just to say that it is in fact a redeemer himself who is calling through the gospel where it says here they shall come they shall return they shall come to Zion they come back to God they come back to the commitment of their lives to God again that's what the payment of the price is about and that's for you and for me tonight to consider but not to leave just in our consideration but to act upon it and to be fully persuaded in your own mind that that's all that God requires for you to be received back to acceptance with God redemption but notice this rejoicing yes they shall return and they shall come back to Zion they shall come back with singing everlasting joy shall be on their heads they shall obtain gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing will flee away notice what it's saying everlasting joy shall be upon their heads of course as we said that's projecting us forward into eternity and the brilliance of eternity for the people of

God for the ransomed for the redeemed when finally their journey is at an end and when the joy of heaven which we cannot possibly describe is experienced by them you notice the description everlasting joy shall be upon their heads God created human beings and set them above the creation he gave them if you like a kind of kingship under his own sovereignty a kingship to have dominion over all the creatures they were established as kings in the creation or kings of the

creation under God and in the environment of Eden God provided them with every facility for enjoying their kingship and relationship with God and they lost it and we lost it in them and now it's coming to be reestablished as we come back to God as we turn as we know the redemption of God as we receive that redemption as we accept that redemption that's when we come to know true joy that's when we come to know what it is to rejoice that's when we're crowned again if you like but it's crowned with rejoicing that's what

Isaiah focuses upon more than anything else in the context everlasting joy shall be upon their heads well if you carry that forward into the New Testament and the background that Paul especially had of the athletic games of those days you remember that he speaks about himself awaiting a crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge would give him at that day the day of judgment and when you put it all together really that's what it amounts to isn't it that the joy that belongs to God's people crowns them enhances them joy is joy is not just an adjunct of salvation of the experience of salvation it's not something that you can just pick and choose whether you accept it or not whether you take it as really of the essence of knowing Jesus or not it belongs to that essence of saving experience of knowing

Jesus as your redeemer you can't possibly know Jesus as your redeemer and think you can live without joy or that joy is not prominent in your saving experience where is there joy like the joy of the redeemed how can there be joy anywhere else like the joy of the redeemed how can there be joy like it in the world out there tonight that clamors for your attention that crowds in upon us with all its debauched lifestyles with its rejection of the gospel and of Jesus and of the joy of the bible and of joy that's conveyed in the message of the gospel you know people will say I have joy I enjoy myself I enjoy the world I enjoy the good things of life I enjoy my practices I don't want you to interfere with them I have plenty of joy in my life well those of us who are saved perhaps most of us indeed thought that way too at one time but we now say like the apostle in

Philippians 3 those things which were gained to me those things I thought of as joy I count but loss for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord the joy that really fits that vacancy in our human souls where we lost that joy in Eden in our fall well that that vacancy in our hearts that void in our hearts that once belonged to joy can never be filled again adequately except by this joy the joy of redemption the joy of the redeemed the joy of knowing Jesus the joy of knowing that there is no condemnation now to those who are in Christ Jesus the joy of knowing that you have nothing to pay for your redemption it's been paid by Christ the joy of knowing that God himself as he looks upon you in

[31 : 43] Jesus Christ finds nothing in which to blot your record in your justification in the righteousness of Christ as it's imputed to you and to your account we could go on and on giving reasons for joy why delay the joy if it's not usual ready and if it is usual ready why be reluctant to show it what is more effective to that unbelieving world out there than to know in your heart in my heart in our life as a congregation that we know what joy really is that we enjoy our God that we fulfill our chief end by his grace to enjoy him now and forever they're crowned with joy you know the idea that's in the text where it's saying they shall obtain gladness and joy these words in

Hebrew literally mean they've caught up with joy at last with gladness and joy at last because you know how it is even for us as Christians in this world of course we want to experience joy we want to experience more joy and joy as Paul puts it in his own language abounding but it always seems to run ahead of you doesn't it because we're still very much aware of sin working in our lives and things entering into our experience that really disturb our joy and our periods of joy and they're all too fleeting and they're all too short lived and they're all too shallow sometimes you know what God is saying especially for the joy of heaven which this anticipates the redeemed will finally have caught up with the joy that they always saw as just moving ahead of them and now it's there and it's theirs in its fullness and along with that sorrow and sighing shall flee away they're crowned with joy as they're finally in possession of its fullness and at the same time pain is banished when he says sorrow and sighing shall flee away it's not just something that happens what's built into this as well is very precious because it's telling us that

God is really going to say to we can personalize this for a moment sorrow and sighing the pains that you knew of through this life God is going to say to them you are now banished there is no entrance to you into this glory of my people and if you can picture it here's pain and here's sorrow and here's sighing as it were coming to the place of gladness and joy in heaven of God's people and if we can put it in such language appealing for an entrance and saying but I've been part of this person's life

all through their course in the world is it not right do I not have a place still in their life and wasn't pain and sorrow blessed to them during the days of their lives in this world isn't it still possible that it might benefit them in heaven and God says go away there's no place for you here sorrow and sighing are banished they flee away and that's of course found in revelation in detail in revelation chapter 7 for example we often read that but we shouldn't confine it to the funerals of believers you know what it says there they shall hunger no more they shall thirst anymore neither thirst anymore the sun shall not strike them or any scorching heat for the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes however much you have had pain as a

Christian however many things in your life have caused you concern and still cause you concern and worry and anxiety whatever it is is the source of that anxiety in your life as a believer in Christ you have something to look forward to that is just immense because the joy that will in fullness be experienced in heaven will far more than compensate and outweigh all the sorrows you have had in this life and God will demonstrate it by banishing them forever from your experience isn't that a great thing to be a Christian to be redeemed to have been ransomed by the blood of Christ who would want to be outside of that who would want to follow any alternative lifestyle who would want to have a journey full of tears with nothing like this to look forward to that's why the psalmist as will close in Psalm 16 is saying about God's own people and how he will come to bring them home and how he says there words that were used of course of Jesus himself as well

I have said the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand I shall not be shaken therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices my flesh also dwells secure for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol I mean he means the region of death or let your Holy One see corruption you make known to me the path of life in your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures forevermore may God bless his word to us let's pray Lord we thank you for the fact of your redemption for the glory of your redemption for your glories as the redeemer of your people we thank you for the way in which you have acted so completely and perfectly towards their redemption we bless you for your continuing presence with them and for the way that they expect rightly on the basis of your word to be welcomed by you into the joys of heaven where sorrow and sighing cannot enter

[38 : 38] Lord we pray tonight that each of us may know for ourselves of that joy and gladness and even though we may say that it is nothing like as full or replete as we would like it to be oh Lord help us to know that it is real that it is a joy that rejoices in your salvation bless us then we pray and bless this day to us and bless your word to us anew grant us as we go from day to day with all our concerns and all our troubles and all that causes in our heart sometimes to be despondent help us to look up towards you to look to the ransom price that you paid for your people help us oh Lord to be rightly glad that you came forth from the sufferings of the cross and said it is finished father into your hand I commit my spirit receive our thanks now we pray for Jesus sake amen

I will conclude by singing Psalm 16 the verses we referred to in the sing Psalms version on page 17 Psalm 16 the tune is Golden Hill verses 8 to 11 before me constantly I set the Lord alone because he is at my right hand I'll not be overthrown therefore my heart is glad my tongue with joy will sing my body too will rest secure in hope unwavering and after the benediction if you allow me to get to the main door please after we've sung these verses on the benediction before me constantly I say to the Lord alone before me constantly I said the Lord alone Lord alone because the years are my right hand I'll not be overthrown because the years are my right hand I'll not be overthrown themond Kansas and the depths of the benediction among the night of the mountain flowers will saytime to the wind I'll never sing as on the hour on the wind I'll never sing may as unity and the days are my right hand I'll never sing all right and the pulse of the h

You will rest secure And hope on with the King For you will not allow My soul in death to stay The well you leave Your Holy One To see the tomb's decay You have made known to me The path of life divine

There shall I go at your right hand Joy from your face will shine Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the communion of the Holy Spirit Be with you now and always Amen Let us pray For you is not Holy Spirit It slipped into an assistant The life of the Holy Spirit For you is not Holy Spirit Hear aeed Said Ho port The love of God the Lord And all of greatiki Flowers As always Peace Hear your sein As always This man Tem aslnda Himself modified