

“WE THE CHURCH...JOY”

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WE, THE CHURCH...

(Vs) Gal 5:22,23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

We spoke about ‘Love’ last week...

- We asked you to embody ‘Aliveness’ by committing to LOVE through ...
 - Caring for Yourself
 - Caring for your Family and Friends
 - Caring for your Neighbors/Community

This morning we are going to talk about another ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ ‘Joy.’

- Melissa Kruger – “In All Things: A Nine-Week Devotional Bible Study on Unshakable Joy”

“A Christian’s joy is rooted in theological understanding that overflows into our daily living. It affects the watching world, the church, and is important to Jesus.”

- Melissa Kruger

The World & Joy

- The Bible teaches us this idea that a joyful heart shines the truth of what we believe to the world.
- It’s emphasized over and over that, “Joy Matters.”
- It proclaims that although Christians are not immune to hardship, trial, and suffering, we are supposed to experience them differently than others do.
- This is because we are the only ones that have hope in any darkness.

Peter instructed, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, (Vs) 1st Peter 3:15

- Think about that! A Christian's hope shines to the watching world in such a way that we need to be prepared to defend our hope!
- Because of this, Peter is saying... we should expect and be ready for instances where people approach us, asking, "Why are you so hopeful?"

This is because our theology, our understanding of God's redemptive plan...

- ...allows us to hold joy and sorrow side by side and not be in opposition to one another.
- "We can mourn circumstances that are hard and at the same time rejoice in a God who works all things for good."

Illustration: Joni Eareckson Tada

- When Joni was a teenager, she was paralyzed from the shoulders down in a diving accident.
- She described those who suffer in profound ways—yet still have hope and joy—as "spectacles of glory."
- She says they're like the burning bush Moses saw and was confused by—how could the bush be on fire, and yet not consumed?
- The bush was a 'spectacle of glory,' something that made you turn and look in wonder.
- Joni explained that ...

"Christians who suffer faithfully shine the light of Christ in a way that is perplexing to the watching world."

- They simply don't understand how a person could be joyful, patient, and kind in the midst of such hardship.
- In this way, "Profound suffering opens us up to be a 'spectacle of glory' for all the world to see the beauty of Christ in us."
- It demonstrates we have something greater than this world... we can proclaim with the psalmist, "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Vs) Psalm 16:11

The Church & Joy

- When Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church, he shared with them his concern for their well-being.
- He knew they had suffered greatly, and he was deeply concerned about their faith, so he sent Timothy to check on them... Timothy returned with the positive report that Thessalonians were '*standing firm in love, hope, and faith.*'

- In the midst of his own suffering, Paul was encouraged:

"...In all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. For now, we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord. (Vs) 1st Thess. 3:7

This is because as we stand firm in hope, rejoicing in the Lord, the church is encouraged, and so...

"Our joy in the Lord stirs up fresh courage in others, blessing our brothers and sisters in and with our faith." - Melissa Kruger

Jesus & Joy

- On the night before he died, Jesus shared a final meal and conversation with his disciples...
- Though they didn't understand that Jesus was about to die, Jesus knew his time was short and so he comforted his disciples and encouraged them to not be troubled. He assured them that although he was going away, he would come back for them.
- He told them that if they loved him, they would obey him. He explained that the Spirit would come and dwell within them and be with them always, and then Jesus explained *why* he was telling them all these things...

Jesus was on his way to the cross...

- He was preparing to endure unimaginable pain and yet at this moment, what was on his mind?
- What goal prompted his last words to those he loved?
- He told them: *"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."* (Vs) John 15:11

"Jesus was concerned about their joy."

- At the height of his own agony, his love desired their joy! Incredible!

(Vs) Hebrews 12:2 "...looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

- That 'Meal of Joy' is the one we still celebrate as a Church body today and it's known as 'Communion.'
- It points to a Hope and Joy that is beyond all circumstances...

And so, remember that in this way our joy matters for more than ourselves, remembering:

“Joy causes the WORLD to question, the CHURCH to rejoice, and is the hope of our SAVIOR.”

- My greatest hope for you this morning is that you find this place of Joy, and that you come sit in communion with Jesus who desires to be near you

And so... Here's what I'd like for us all to do next...

- “Wherever you are and with Whatever you have.”
- ... I'd like to invite you to take Communion with me...

Communion

(Vs) Matt 26:26-28 *“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the^[a] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”*