



SPRING 2020 DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 1: MAY 18th – 22nd



**Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church
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These Joy-Filled Life in a Trouble-Filled World devotionals are written (1) looking at the various aspects of joy, in the both the Old and New Testaments, and (2) to challenge and encourage Christians in their understanding of why they should and how they can live a joy-filled life in this trouble-filled world. Blessings!

Monday, May 18, 2020

“Understanding the Meaning of Joy”

Most of us are familiar with the lyrics of this popular children’s song:

*I got the joy, joy, joy, joy
Down in my heart, down in my heart, down in my heart;
I got the joy, joy, joy, joy
Down in my heart; Down in my heart to stay.*

I am sure a few questions come to mind like, What or who is the source of this joy? Why don’t I experience this joy all the time? How do I keep others from stealing this joy? How do you have joy when life is so hard? All these questions deserve an answer, but before we can answer any of them, we must understand the biblical meaning of joy.

In the Hebrew of the Old Testament, there are multiple words used to capture the essence and expression of joy.

Out of the 161 times this word appears, the following are the most frequent.

1. רָנַן (*ranan*) (43 of 161) – it involves singing or shouting or calling out loudly in a triumphant way.

Isaiah 24:14 (NASB95) – They raise their voices, they shout for joy; They cry out from the west concerning the majesty of the Lord.

Psalms 71:23 (ESV) – My lips will shout for joy, when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have redeemed.

2. שִׂמְחָה (*símhah*) (36 of 161) – it involves being in a certain state or condition; having a specific attitude or spirit of jubilation or gladness.

Psalms 16:11 (NASB95) – You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

2 Chronicles 30:26 (ESV) – So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

3. רִנָּה (*rinnah*) (33 of 161) – it involves an unplanned utterance of emotion that one has in the wake of a breakthrough. It is also seen in times of lamenting or wailing.

Psalms 30:5 (NASB95) – For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; Weeping may last for the night, But a shout of joy comes in the morning.

Isaiah 49:13 (ESV) – Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.

In the Greek New Testament, the primary word translated for joy is **χαρά** (*chara*), and is used to communicate a gladness or great happiness that can be the state or condition of an individual; expressed as an emotion; or used to connote a characteristic that can be possessed or experienced.

Galatians 5:22 (NASB95) – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Matthew 2:10 (NASB95) – When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.

John 15:11 (NASB95) – These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

So, this idea of joy, in both the Old and Testaments, is based on being in a covenant relationship with a holy God, that can never be changed. He is the Source, Subject, Object, Cause of joy, and the occasion for rejoicing. This is because all of life revolves around Him.

Joy is the state of triumphant jubilation that is expressed emotionally when something or someone is experienced.

Understanding the biblical meaning of joy begins the journey of living a joy-filled life, in a trouble-filled world.

– Min. Ronell Peters

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

“The Joy of Being a Faithful Servant”

His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’

Matthew 25:21 (ESV)

I am reminded of a story about three young men who received an unexpected sum of money from their father based on their capabilities. The father explained that he was being sent on a business trip that would take him away from his family for several months. Being a wise father, he prepared his sons for this day by instructing them to use their monetary gifts judiciously, to make them multiply.

The oldest son was a talented musician, so, he brought a guitar and used it to entertain people, who gave generously to him in appreciation for his excellent singing and guitar playing. He doubled the amount of money that his father had given to him.

The middle son was a talented craftsman, so he manufactured custom made furniture for many of the people in town. They were very pleased with his work and compensated him well. He too doubled the amount of money that his father had given him.

The youngest son was a talented writer but, he lacked confidence in his abilities. Instead of using his talent to multiply the money that his father had given him, he tucked it safely away underneath his mattress.

When the wise father returned home, he listened to the report of each of his sons. The oldest son made him very proud, he praised him for being a good and faithful son. "I will give you more because you have proven your trustworthiness, come and rejoice with me."

The middle son also told the father about how he too had doubled the money he was given, which was half of the amount the oldest son received. The father replied in the same manner as he did with the oldest son - "you are a good and faithful son; I will give you more because you have demonstrated your trustworthiness, come and rejoice with me."

When the youngest son told the father that he had hidden his money underneath his mattress, the father became extremely angry, scolding him for being wicked. The father exclaimed that he could have at least taken his money to the bank where it would have earned interest.

The father required the youngest son to give the money back to him. Then, the father gave it to the oldest son

because he was given the most money, which was multiplied twice over.

Pleasing your heavenly Father by demonstrating faithfulness, being a good and productive steward over what has been entrusted to your care, will result in great rewards. More responsibility will be commended to you, along with an invitation to enter into the joy of the LORD.

When you abide in the joy of the LORD; you will have peace and contentment. Your soul will delight in fellowshiping with him. Your joy will be made complete, as you trust his word and talk with him daily through prayer. You will be strengthened and encouraged to continue in faithfulness because great is the LORD'S rewards. One day, you too will hear him say, "Well done thy good and faithful servant."

Because we are loved by Him, we are called to love like Him. The extent to which we love one another validates and communicates our faith.

Christ's love is the standard; how do you measure up?

– Sis. Myra Allen

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

“The Party that has Never Stopped”

⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. . . . ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

Luke 15:7, 10 (ESV)

A young man who had been raised as an atheist was training to be an Olympic diver. The only religious influence in his life came from his outspoken Christian friend. The young diver never really paid much attention to what his friend said about Jesus. One night the diver went to the indoor pool at the college he attended. The lights were all off, but as the pool had big skylights and the moon was bright, there was plenty of light to practice by. The young man climbed up to the highest diving board, and as he turned his back to the pool on the edge of the board and extended his arms out, he saw his shadow on the wall. It was the shadow of his body in the shape of a cross. It was as if God was reaching out to him. And so instead of diving, he knelt down and asked Jesus to come into his life. As the young man stood up, a maintenance man walked in and turned the lights on. The pool had been drained for repairs!

What an amazing story that illustrates how, Jesus is actively looking for those who are lost. It is never too late and He gives up on no one.

Our devotional passages today, comes from the context of Luke 15. Here, Jesus tells three parables to demonstrate

God’s heart for the least, the last, and the lost. The Parable of the Lost Sheep (vss. 15:1-7), The Parable of the Lost Coin (vss. 8-10), and The Parable of the Prodigal Son (vss. 11-31).

The theme running through these parables is simply this, “*there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents.*” All heaven rejoices and celebrates when any sinner gets saved, or delivered from God’s pending judgment against the sinful mankind, to eternal life.

The joy in heaven, that started thousands of years ago, when Adam, the first sinner who repented, is still going on today. And it will continue for all eternity. Even your salvation has added to the joy in heaven.

The Apostle John saw the magnitude of the eternity-future celebration,

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen. (Rev. 7:9-12, ESV)

Therefore, it is your greatest responsibility on earth to share the gospel with others.

Remember, when sharing your faith, God does the work; you cannot fail; it's all God's work. He gets all the glory!

Let God use you to add to the joy of heaven.

– Min. Mark Slone

Thursday, May 21, 2020

“Got Jesus, Got Joy!”

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 15:11 (ESV)

“We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced,” says Charles Swindoll, “that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.” Do you agree with this statement? Does it bring a sense of reality of what you are experiencing, every moment of every day?

I believe the attitude Charles Swindoll is speaking of is the attitude of joy. Joy is not an emotion or feeling, but an attitude or disposition of the heart. This what should control how we respond to the situations and circumstances of life, that are beyond our control.

The “*These things*,” in our devotional text, refers to what Jesus had just said in verse 10. “*If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.*”

Jesus uses the word, “*abide*,” 10 times, in John 15:1-11. The first time is in verse 4, where He commands His disciples to, “*Abide in me, and I in you.*” He then explains the reason for our abiding, using the metaphor of a vine and branches, that, “*As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*” To “*abide*” to rest, to dwell, to remain, and to persevere in Him. It speaks of spiritual intimacy with Jesus: our union (position, relationship) and our communion (practice, fellowship) with Him.

Jesus desires that we, His followers, share to the greatest extent possible the same fruitful joy by being obedient to Him, as He experiences by being obedient to His Father. But realize that it is not automatic or a given, that we will experience His joy. But it is possible. He says, “*your joy may be made full.*” The extent of experiencing His joy is directly related to your obedience to Him. In other words, we have a part to play in experiencing the fullness of Jesus’ joy. And it that starts with your obedience to His command to “*abide in Me and I in You,*” through all that life throws your way.

How can you tell when you are 'abiding in Christ'? It is not a special feeling, but an attitude of the heart, and there are unmistakably clear evidences, specifically here in John 15:1-11, and from the Scriptures. If you are abiding in Christ, you are submitting to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to fruit, the character of Christ, in you (John 15:2,

Galatians 5:22-23). Also, you are submitting to the Father's 'pruning' so that you will bear more fruit (John 15:2, Romans 5:3-5; 8:29; 1 Peter 1:6-9; James 1:2-5). Your prayer life is continuously progressing, effectual, and are being answered (John 15:7; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; James 5:16; 1 John 5:14-15). You are experiencing a deepening love for Christ, other believers, and all people (John 15:9, 12-13; Matthew 22:37-40). He also experiences joy (John 15:11).

Jesus is the Source of joy, that stems from your intimacy with Him.

How full is your joy, right now?

– Min. Mark Slone

Friday, May 22, 2020

“Kingdom Joy”

¹⁶ So do not let what you regard as good be spoken of as evil. ¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Romans 14:16-18 (ESV)

For ages and throughout human history, people have searched for joy and have tried to experience it in the many aspects of life. Until circumstances prove otherwise, joy is often mistaken for happiness. People have pursued joy in every avenue imaginable, which some have been successful in their pursuits while others have not. It may be easier to describe where joy cannot be found. It is not found in unbelief, pleasure, money, position, fame, and governmental actions. Joy is an emotion that is not obtained through human effort alone but rather experienced through supernatural power. For the Christian, joy is a spiritual necessity that not only impacts our lives, but the lives of others, and in the family of God joy is essential to harmony in the church.

Paul shares the importance of joy and how it is viewed through the eyes of God. In Romans 14, Paul discusses the acceptance of believers who are weak in faith and how a believer who is stronger in faith should not argue what they think is right or wrong. Paul uses a specific example of how one person believes it is alright to eat anything, while another with a sensitive conscience will only eat vegetables. Neither party should either look down on or condemn the other since God has accepted both, but through love for one another live in such a way that no one is caused to stumble and fall. When the desire to live in harmony is a priority, you cannot be criticized for doing something you believe is good. So where does Kingdom Joy come into play? In verse 17, Paul says the Kingdom of God is not about what you put in your stomach, but it is about living a life of righteousness, peace, and here we go, joy in the Holy Spirit. Kingdom Joy, God-given joy, a joy that is experienced and obtained only through a supernatural power, which is God. Kingdom Joy is what we should

pursue, and Kingdom joy should be a focus of Christian living rather than the trivial matters of a weaker or stronger believer in faith. When we serve Christ with this attitude, He will be pleased as well as people around you.

Do you possess Kingdom Joy or happiness that poses as joy? Are you pursuing joy through human effort alone or joy that is found through the Holy Spirit? Kingdom Joy is essential for Christian living and when obtained it causes us to love and live in harmony with those whose faith is either weak or strong.

If we place anything before righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, then we are hopelessly out of touch with God's priorities and His heart.

Make God's priorities your priorities.

- Min. Shad Comeaux