

FULLNESS OF JOY - December 27, 2020

We've just come through a season of gift-giving

Joy in Receiving

Joy in Giving

I'll be talking about "JOY." In doing so, I want to pull some from our study in Ephesians as well as the rest of Scripture, then, make two points and conclude.

From the Giver...

Ephesians 3:1-9

"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;"

This is the culmination of what we just celebrated at Christmas, that is, what Simeon declared when he saw Jesus being dedicated in the Temple as Joseph and Mary's first born according to the Law:

"Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a Light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel."

This was a quote from the prophet Isaiah (Ch. 9):

"The people who walk in darkness [Ephesians 2 – "dead in your trespasses and sins," influenced by the world and the devil, living "in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh," "by nature children of wrath," "separate from Christ," "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel," without hope and without God in the world."] will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them. You shall multiply the nation, *You shall increase their gladness; they will be glad in Your presence* as with the gladness of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For You shall break the yoke of their burden and the staff on their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, as at the battle of Midian [Judges 7 – Gideon has an army of 32,000 to meet a Midianite army of 135,000 till God pares it down to 300]." **For a child will be born to us..."**

Luke 2:8-14

"In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' *And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'"*

When these passages are read they bring up joy in us [gladness, pleasure, glory...]

What would cause a message of "joy" and "gladness" to be meaningful to us?

God created us in His image; God delights!

God delights in His name/glory/works

God delights in His Son; yet He also delights in the bruising of His Son

God delights in sinners

God delights in His name/glory/works

Ephesians – "...to the praise of His glory..."

No more telling than in His creation...

Genesis 1:31 – "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." [He created just for the pure joy of it; no one has seen the extent or utter beauty of the full creation universally; even on this planet there is the unseen]

Psalm 104:31 – "Let the glory of the Lord endure forever; let the Lord be glad in His works."

God delights in sinners

Deuteronomy 30:9-10 – "Then the Lord your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the Lord will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; if you obey the Lord your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul."

Zephaniah 3:17 [background is Judah's impending judgment at the hands of the Babylonians] – "The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy."

Luke 10:21 – “At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.’”

Romans 5:8 – “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave...”

God’s pleasure in His Name and in sinners is resolved in the bruising of His Son...

God delights in His Son...and in bruising Him

We know of His delight at Jesus’ baptism and at the transfiguration:

1 Peter 1:17, 18 – “For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ – and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.”

Colossians 1:19, 20 – “For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say whether things on earth or things in heaven.”

[All 3 delights of the Lord] Isaiah 53:10 – “But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand.” [Isaiah 1:11 – “I take no pleasure [same word] in the blood of bulls, lambs, or goats.” Isaiah 62:4 same word] “It will no longer be said to you, ‘Forsaken,’ nor to your land will it any longer be said, ‘Desolate;’ but you will be called, ‘My delight is in her,’ and your land, ‘Married;’ for the Lord delights in you and to Him your land will be married.’]

The original question: What would cause a message of “joy” and “gladness” to be meaningful to us? God created us in His image and He delights!

So, we are able to delight; we hunt for things that will bring us joy.

We begin the New Year resolved to make a fresh start: diet, exercise, quit a habit (i.e. smoking), pay off debt, learn something new, organize something, better friend, better spouse... It would delight us to be lighter, fitter, habit-free, debt-free, organized, friendlier, and if successful, we will have a degree of joy and gladness.

We know circumstances of life won't bring lasting joy. I'm reminded of Habakkuk who is wrestling with the evil in the world and God's impending judgment on Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. He ends his book with, "Yet I will exult in the Lord, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places." But before he expresses this worship he ponders, "I heard and my inward parts trembled, at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. Because I must wait quietly for the day of distress, for the people to arise who will invade us. Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olive should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord."

Things today aren't any less evil in the world. We don't know what the next year will hold.

Why else would a message of "joy" and "gladness" be meaningful to us?

In His presence is fullness of joy!! – Psalm 16

I love it when the scripture uses language that reflects the limitations of my humanity:

We saw it when thinking about the vast universe

Paul was always praying that God would illumine us. To the dimensions of His love (height, depth breadth, length); Ephesians 1 – to know the hope of His calling, the riches of His glory, the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Not just "joy" but "fullness of joy!"

Fullness – not just to the top but overflowing!

John 15:11 – "These things I have spoken to you [abiding in the Vine, bearing much fruit, abiding in His love] so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."

John 16:23-24 – "In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full."

John 17:13 – "But now I come to You; and these things I speak *in the world* so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." Psalm 4:7 – "You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and new wine abound."

Psalm 16:11 – "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." [See Psalm 16]

In His Presence!

There is joy in knowing He is there, that He is Immanuel, God with us. That presence is significant, at least it was to Moses when He said (Exodus 33:15), "If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here." What is more significant in the passage came in verse 13 when Moses declares, "Now therefore, I pray You, if I have found favor in Your sight, let me know Your ways that I may know You, so that I may find favor in Your sight."

Moses counseled the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land and said (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8), Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (This passage would be quoted in Hebrews when the readers were challenged to be content with what they had and to keep their character free from the love of money).

God revealed Himself to Ezekiel as Jehovah-Shammah, the God who is there.

Psalm 46

Jesus said when commanding the Great Commission, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

The promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14; 16); the discussion of abiding (John 15).

Revelation 21:3-4 - When John saw the new heaven and the new earth, a loud voice came forth from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain.*" Sounds delightful! Sounds like fullness of joy!!

Oh believer, there is more than just the knowledge that He is there; or the good feeling we get when the Bible says He will not leave us or forsake us. That's joy, but fullness of joy is me in His presence!

I can read a letter from my wife and know, to some degree, of her compassion for me, her love, her commitment. That is delightful! But it is another thing to be in her presence. That is a fuller joy.

Unbeliever – How long will it take for you to realize where you search for joy will not fulfill. Come to Jesus who will bring you a joy unexplainable and inexpressible.

Believer - Make one lasting commitment (making resolutions are okay too), that you will purposely get into the Lord's presence consistently. This is not just your daily devotion. It is a constant awareness of His presence. Make it tangible if you need to (i.e. set a chair).

Benediction: 1 Peter 1:3-9