

Joyful in Jesus

prayer

Welcome to Easter Sunday! With the solemnity of Good Friday in our hearts and a firm understanding of what the blood of Jesus has done for us, we move on to today. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto to his name!

Today we celebrate the risen Christ. It is because of this day that we have the hope of eternal life. Jesus was victorious, Jesus conquered the Grave, Jesus has given us a reason to be joyful and celebrate.

Psalm 16:8-11

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

⁸I keep the LORD in mind^[a] always.

Because He is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad
and my spirit rejoices;
my body also rests securely.

¹⁰For You will not abandon me to Sheol; (the pit)
You will not allow Your Faithful One to see decay.

¹¹You reveal the path of life to me;
in Your presence is abundant joy;
in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.

Footnotes:

- a. [Psalm 16:8](#) Lit *front of me*

Acts 2:28

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²⁸You have revealed the paths of life to me;
You will fill me with gladness
in Your presence.

If you will indulge me, let me ask a few rhetorical questions at this point:

How many people here want to be happy?

How many people are happy?

Let's go deeper...

Do you want your happiness to be happy but within the realm of conventional norms and the good taste of society?

Do you want complete and total, bursting at the seams happiness?

Do you want to experience happiness for brief moments, perhaps interspersed with tedium, boredom or normalcy?

Do you want happiness that doesn't end?

Do you know why I am asking these questions?

Do I have a purpose for asking these questions?

Yes... Actually I have. I want to be happy all the time. I don't want this world to phase me. I want to abide in the loving and everlasting presence of God all the time. I want all the Joy that Jesus has for me... and... I believe that every person in the room, once they have experienced the Joy of the Lord, would want that too.

The bible tells us that the Joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10)

Did you know that this is not just a whim or a sidebar, but I bring up Joy and Happiness because these questions are fundamental concerns from the bible?

How is the bible such a powerful tool for our lives?

We are told in 2 Timothy 3:16 that:

2 Timothy 3:16

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God^[a] and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness,

Footnotes:

- a. [2 Timothy 3:16](#) Lit *breathed out by God*; the Scripture is the product of God's Spirit working through men; [2Pt 1:20-21](#).

And this is excellent because when we learn what God wants us to learn we can truly be happy. Yet have you ever noticed that whenever the bible has had a profound effect on people, it hasn't been because there is a new duty to be performed, but it is because of the awesome effect in our lives of a new form of pleasure that God has released to us?

Here me: It is okay to enjoy serving God!

Despite the hardline teaching of years gone by, the bible has never told people to not pursue happiness or joy; we are in fact invited to experience pleasure. Not the shallow pleasures that the sinful nature of the world has to offer, but real lasting happiness, real joy, real and complete fulfillment.

What the bible does is essentially teach us how not to mess around with figuring out how to be happy, It shows us the pitfalls to our happiness, it is a solid source of divinely inspired wisdom, inspiration and thought that takes us beyond ourselves into the very mind of God. As we read and understand what door Jesus opened for us through the events at Easter, we become serious even dare I say desperate in our urgency in our pursuit of him. As we experience each new dimension of what God has to offer, we get more and more excited as the reality of his Joy lights up our lives.

If you are not experiencing the Joy of the Lord in your life or the happiness that serving him brings, you are stalled! Pick up the word, read and feed.

Think about it for a minute...

I thought if I was respected, I would be happy. I trained for years until I got my master's degree in martial arts. I could walk into almost any karate or tae kwon do school in the lower mainland and be recognized. I would have whole classes stop what they were doing and bow to me...

I experience pride... for a while, but there was no lasting fulfillment, no lasting happiness, it was empty. I helped a lot of people but it wasn't what God wanted me to do... and I knew it so I changed gears... I went into business as a systems engineer and business architect and worked my way up.

When I was a successful business architect, I would often go and sit by the lake, sometimes to fish other times just to evaluate my life. I would admire the beauty of God's creation. I would relax and watch the sunset or sit out in the campsite at night with a cup of hot chocolate and look at the stars. For the moment, it lasted, but all too soon I was back in my office looking contemplating how and in which direction to drive the companies I worked for in directions that would make them more money. It was never enough, there was never satisfaction. Even when I was making great money and could buy just about anything within reason that I wanted, there was an emptiness. Success was good, there was a lot less pressure. But there was still no lasting happiness... I acquired cool stuff, my bills were paid, but the need within me was still empty.

I stand here today as a miracle... before you is - what was once a selfish, insecure, introvert, who hated people. Jesus has made me what I am today and has filled up that gap that was in my life, with something that makes no sense whatsoever to many of the high level executive colleges that I once knew, but I can tell you here today, that there is nothing more rewarding than being a servant for Jesus Christ.

I am a completely sold out radical slave to Jesus Christ. And... I have never been happier.

Jesus never once in all the scripture I have read ever condemned anyone because they were on a quest for happiness and fulfilment. On many occasions though you can see where he rebuked those who took this pursuit too lightly.

Jesus paved the way with his body and his blood, his revelation of the scriptures and his life gave me the model for my happiness, this is why I stand here right now in Salmo, BC as your pastor. He told me to come, I said send me and he took me up on the offer.

This might sound mighty effusive, but people of Crossroads, I love you! It is a joy to be here.

All this me talk has a point which will come full circle but for now... Back to Easter:

Let's look at Acts 1:3:

Acts 1:3

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

³After He had suffered, He also presented Himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

Jesus showed his disciples over the period of 40 days that he was alive.

What was proven during this period?

- He proved that fellowship with his followers would not be temporary but permanent
- He proved that his death for sinners was validated and he rose again
- He proved that everything he claimed in his teachings was true
- He proved that his body was transformed and indestructible
- He proved that his cause would be victorious

Our saviour after these 40 days of proofs; went to sit at the right hand of God the Father. He is there right now as our high priest, our intercessor, ruling and reigning until he comes back for the people for which he made substitution.

Remember, because of him we are:

- Propitiated – Brought back into Favor before God the Father
- Redeemed – Saved and Purchased with his Blood
- Justified – Clothed in his Righteousness before the Father

- Reconciled – Back in relationship with God the Father

As we read further into the events surrounding Easter we see in the book of Acts that for 10 days after the ascension of Jesus that his mother and brothers and all of the apostles devoted themselves in prayer in the city of Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit comes upon them and they are bursting with scripture. It is this insight into the Word of God that they use to explain the event of Easter.

In Acts 2:2-28 the apostle Peter expounds on with a quote from the 16th psalm:

Psalm 16

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹Protect me, God, for I take refuge in You.

²I^[a] said to Yahweh, "You are my Lord;
I have nothing good besides You."^[b]

³As for the holy people who are in the land,
they are the noble ones.

All my delight is in them.

⁴The sorrows of those who take another god
for themselves will multiply;
I will not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
and I will not speak their names with my lips.

⁵LORD, You are my portion^[c]
and my cup of blessing;
You hold my future.

⁶The boundary lines have fallen for me
in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

⁷I will praise the LORD who counsels me—
even at night my conscience instructs me.

⁸I keep the LORD in mind^[d] always.

Because He is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad
and my spirit rejoices;
my body also rests securely.

¹⁰For You will not abandon me to Sheol;
You will not allow Your Faithful One to see decay.

¹¹You reveal the path of life to me;
in Your presence is abundant joy;
in Your right hand are eternal pleasures.

Footnotes:

- a. [Psalm 16:2](#) Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr, Jer; other Hb mss read *You*
- b. [Psalm 16:2](#) Or "*Lord, my good; there is none besides You.*"
- c. [Psalm 16:5](#) Or *allotted portion*
- d. [Psalm 16:8](#) Lit *front of me*

God gave David a promise that a person of his lineage would be the eternal king of Israel. A Son of David would be the messiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

⁶For a child will be born for us,
a son will be given to us,
and the government will be on His shoulders.
He will be named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷The dominion will be vast,
and its prosperity will never end.
He will reign on the throne of David
and over his kingdom,
to establish and sustain it
with justice and righteousness from now on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.

2 Samuel 7:12-16

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹²When your time comes and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod and with blows from others. ¹⁵But My faithful love will never leave him as I removed it from Saul; I removed him from your way. ¹⁶Your house and kingdom will endure before Me^[a] forever, and your throne will be established forever.'"

Footnotes

- a. [2 Samuel 7:16](#) Some Hb mss, LXX, Syr; other Hb mss read *you*

As Peter read the psalms of David we see that there is emphasis that as David expressed his hope and Joy in God that he would often be full of the Holy Spirit and say things about himself that went far beyond what he could know in and of himself. It at points appears that he was prophetic in what he said as he chronicled

things about his descendent son the messiah that he could not know except by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:25

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²⁵ For David says of Him:

I saw the Lord ever before me;
because He is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

Ever asked yourself; why David will not be shaken?

You don't have to read far for the answer...

Acts 2:26

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²⁶ Therefore my heart was glad,
and my tongue rejoiced.
Moreover, my flesh will rest in hope,

David's heart and flesh are secure in God, it is a security of soul and body which exhibits itself in Gladness and rejoicing.

Acts 2:27

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²⁷ because You will not leave me in Hades
or allow Your Holy One to see decay.

Next we see that David's flesh will never see corruption. Really, we all know that David died, David was buried, David's body rotted away, so what is David on about?

Peter is showing us here that David is no longer speaking about himself but the Holy Spirit has shown him the destiny of the Son of David, the messiah.

This is fulfilled in Easter, this is about Jesus.

The apostle Peter gets it, he makes it clear this for us in Act 2:31

Acts 2:31

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

³¹ Seeing this in advance, he spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah:

He was not left in Hades,
and His flesh did not experience decay.

God had a plan for Jesus to be glad after his resurrection. Gladness and Joy are of the Lord.

Acts 2:28

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²⁸ You have revealed the paths of life to me;
You will fill me with gladness
in Your presence.^[a]

Footnotes:

- a. [Acts 2:28 Ps 16:8-11](#)

So what does our Lord and saviour Jesus experience at the right hand of the Father?

He experienced Glory!

John 17:5 tells us:

John 17:5

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

⁵ Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence
with that glory I had with You
before the world existed.

Jesus laid it down and now picks it back up.... Praise God! If you think I am stretching this a bit far. I ask you to consider what Paul tells us in Philippians 2:8-11:

Philippians 2:8-11

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

⁸ He humbled Himself by becoming obedient
to the point of death—
even to death on a cross.
⁹ For this reason God highly exalted Him
and gave Him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee will bow—

of those who are in heaven and on earth
and under the earth—
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus did not just suddenly have a serendipitous little accident and suddenly gain Joy, no he went for it! Hebrews 12:2 tells us:

Hebrews 12:2

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

² keeping our eyes on Jesus,^[a] the source and perfecter^[b] of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him^[c] endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne.

Footnotes:

- a. [Hebrews 12:2](#) Or *us, looking to Jesus*
- b. [Hebrews 12:2](#) Or *the founder and completer*
- c. [Hebrews 12:2](#) Or *who instead of the joy lying before Him; that is, the joy of heaven*

Jesus knew what he was pursuing. "Joy"

At the start of this sermon, I asked you to consider Happiness and Joy. If you are a Christian who is seeking to have a better quality of life, a Christian who wants more, then you will not here Jesus telling you that this is not a most excellent goal. No he himself pursued the Joy and Glory of the presence of the Father. Jesus is our model, he has shown us the way.

I'd like to point out here that if all Jesus wanted was Joy and the presence of the Father, he could have stayed right where he was. Jesus came for you and for me. He came for the sinners. He came to save us. He came that we might have the presence of God with us in full. He came that we could be restored to relationship with the Father.

You want to see Christ's heart? It is laid out for you in John 17:24

John 17:24

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

²⁴ Father,
I desire those You have given Me
to be with Me where I am.
Then they will see My glory,

which You have given Me
because You loved Me before the world's foundation.

Easter Sunday is when Christ blew the lid off the prison of death and decay. This is the day when he opened the door for Joy and Happiness for all who would follow him. Jesus came to give us life and life more abundantly (John 10:10) He came to give us this quality of life and not just for now, but for forever.

Do you really know Jesus? Do you now have a better understanding of his purpose in coming and dying? Do you understand what he accomplished at the cross and with his resurrection? Have you gotten to know Jesus better this Easter?

Most sermons have a challenge to change in them and this one is no different...

Here is my challenge... Are you prepared to exchange your life for the one of Joy that Jesus is offering you today? Are you ready to go to the next level in your walk with him? Jesus wants you to be happy, he wants you to be joyful.

Paul learned the lesson... he said in Phil 4:11

Philippians 4:11

Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

¹¹I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

Who do you think taught Paul? Do you want to be happy and content in your life?

Reach out to Jesus this Easter season.

Prayer