

It's hurricane season again... with our last being 'Barry', which is now making his way up into the northern mid-west... We've had our share of storms and I'm sure there are more on the horizon... in our oceans and in our lives... We can even find Biblical words that back this up... John 16:33b Jesus tells us ³³ "In this world you will have trouble." Which sounds a bit disheartening standing alone ... But just like Jesus is surrounding you with His grace... the words surrounding this verse turn the frown upside down... the complete verse reads ... ³³ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

This brings my mind around to the words 'joy' and happiness'. Both words are similar yet different.... Together in meaning yet at times at different points on the pendulum swing... synonymous yet antonymous ... When you look up these words in the Webster dictionary 'happy' is defined as favored by luck or fortune, notably fitting, effective, or well adapted and 'joy' is defined as a state of happiness or felicity... but when I think of them from a spiritual point of view... I consider happiness to be something fleeting... a state of mind achieved a various point of our days and our lives... joy, however, is a gift from God. The Bible uses these words interchangeable... and for that matter so do I... but when I'm trying to discern my feelings... I know at times I can feel joyful without being happy... and this is because I always feel joyful... regardless of what emotions are showing up on my face... or in my words... or in my actions... For instance,... even when I have to labor in the hot sun... I am joyful... not because I enjoy baking in 90+ degree weather, (because I don't), but because I have been blessed with providing service to my Mother by mowing her lawn... or mowing and string trimming my own lawn... because God blessed me with owning a home... and a yard.... And a garden... and if you were to approach me while I'm in that hot sweaty state... smiling from ear to ear may not be what you see... but the joy is there... it's just not seeping out of my mouth in smiles of happiness...

It's sort of like packing for a trip... one of my tricks is to tuck dryer cloths into my cloths in my suitcase... as I unpack my clothes piece by piece I leave the cloths in the suitcase... but the refreshing smell of them lingers on the clothes... by the end of the trip I have a stack of refreshing cloths tucked into my drawstring bag with my dirty laundry... and remaining unworn clothes stay fresh as if just laundered instead of picking up the undesirable smell of the soiled clothes. The joy of the Lord in my heart is like the dryer sheets... it provides a sweet fragrance to whatever is going on in my life... and at the end of the day... even if I feel beat up... battered and bruised... I can smell the fragrance of the eternal joy as I pack up my day's woes until tomorrow...

Or it's like the rain storm you see on the horizon... as you stand there in your parched yard... seeing how desperately it needs some water you don't necessarily welcome the devastating winds that seem to be accompanying it,,, but you can smile as the winds start to blow and the drops start to fall because you know that whatever the outcome you will survive... a little stronger... a more lively...

We must learn to "dance in the rain" ... not just stand around waiting on it... Someone recently brought to my attention a saying which inspired this muse... "Life isn't about waiting on the storm to pass... it's about learning to dance in the rain.". Perhaps that's the lesson God desperately desires to teach us... the love that pushes us to dance... even when it's raining...

As I close this musing I'll leave you with a familiar song that plays in my head when I think of 'dancing' and rain'... and I can't help but smile ... picture a rainy city street... a streetlight on a corner and one happy man dancing... "I'm singin' in the rain. Just singin' in the rain. What a glorious feeling, I'm happy again. I'm laughin' at clouds. So dark up above. The sun's in my heart. And I'm ready for love, Let the stormy clouds chase everyone from the place. Come on with the rain. I've a smile on my face. I'll walk down the lane with a happy refrain. Just singin', Singin' in the rain, I'm singin' and dancin' in the rain. I'm dancin' and singin' in the rain"

The prayer list for this week: Crystal Barker—friend of Connie Collins, Tom McPherson - relative of Nancey Simmons, Bobbye Mebane, Nancy Thomas, Anna Gerow, Norma Simons, Family of Jeanne Williams, Family of Mary Jane Pettigrew, Family of Pat Sellars, Faye Strickland, Frances Morgan, Harvey Sharpe. And friends: Family of former member Harriet Bingenheimer - (she passed away Wed. morning), Children and Adults at our Southern Border, Pete Pate & Jane Pate—Family of Jamie Fonville, Family of Curtis Pass, Marilyn Parsonson—Aunt of Mark Garrison.

Happening around the church...

- Come out for the remaining two sessions of our Summer Symposium. We will meet at 6:30 in the Bray Hall tonight and tomorrow night.
- Newsletter articles for the August newsletter are due in the office next week.

This week's sermon title is "Okra or Egg or Tea" ... the scripture will be read from John 8:1-11 and Philipians 4:4-13.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Joan ☺

