

That your joy may be full – Sunday 24th August 2014

“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 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. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”

John 15:9-12

Beloved in The Lord,

There is a vast difference between worldly pleasure and the joy of The Lord. Worldly pleasure is dependent upon circumstances and dictated by feelings. It is the things that bring us pleasure, that we enjoy. Pleasure is a very unstable emotion as it is affected by so many outward factors.

The joy that Jesus is speaking about in our text is something so very different. True joy is not dependent upon outward circumstances, but it is something that is deep within the heart of a Christian. It is a state, or a position. It comes and remains in us when we live in faith and obedience to God's Holy Word. This joy is so much more than just a feeling. It is part of your being if you are a Christian.

Joy is one of the fruits, or more correctly a part of the Fruit of The Holy Spirit. Paul writes: ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).***

There are not many fruits, but one fruit with many parts. One of those parts is joy. As joy is part of the fruit of The Holy Spirit, that means that only a person who is abiding in Christ can experience this joy. Apart from Christ you cannot have this joy, that both Paul and Jesus spoke about. Jesus said: **“ These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. “**

You see the joy is Jesus’ Joy. Similar to what we considered last week when we looked at peace. We saw that Jesus imparts His own Peace to those who believe in Him. Today we consider the Joy that is His that He likewise gives to us.

If we desire to experience true joy, then we must be living in faith in Jesus Christ. He must be Lord of our life. Our text today is part of Jesus teaching about the Vine and the branches. We read:

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:1;5).

Apart from Him, if we are separate from Him, we cannot do anything. We cannot have, neither will have, true joy. It is only when we are abiding in Him, completely attached to Him, that we have this awesome joy in our lives. It is only when our focus is on Him, that we have true joy. This joy is by no means dependent upon our circumstances. This joy says no matter what, I am in Christ, and I know that all will be well.

Satan, the great enemy of our faith is working tirelessly to rob us of our joy. He is constantly striving to shift our focus off Jesus onto ourselves or the circumstances that surround us. If Satan can cause us to lose our joy, he knows that it will damage our testimony, weaken our witness. I truly believe that both joy and peace are very powerful testimonies that point to Jesus in our life. When people see and feel that we have joy and peace no matter what is happening around us, or in our lives, that speaks to them in a very powerful way. It opens the door for us to give effectual witness to the truth of Jesus.

One very important way that we can maintain joy in our lives is to be solidly in God's Word every day. We need to be drawing from the well of Truth every day. This is vitally important, it is crucial. When we read God's Word, we are feeding our inner man, our soul and spirit. Reading God's Word, keeps our focus on Him. The Bible fills our heart and mind with the things that are good, the things of God.

I find that the Psalms are especially good. We should read some everyday. One that we should read often, to recharge our joy is Psalm 103

“Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And all that is within me, bless His holy name.

² Bless the Lord, O my soul,

And forget none of His benefits;

³ Who pardons all your iniquities,

Who heals all your diseases;

⁴ Who redeems your life from the pit,

Who crowns you with loving-kindness and compassion;” (Psalm 103:1-4)

I need go no further than these verses today. If you have comprehended what David writes here, then you have no excuse for not having a heart that is overflowing with joy and thanksgiving. God forgives all of our sins, if we are in Christ Jesus. When we open our hearts to Jesus and accept Him as our personal Lord and Saviour, then at that moment all of our sin, past present and future is washed away in His blood. Hallelujah! Praise The Lord! His blood cleanses us from all sin and we are righteous before a Holy God. Through Jesus, our

names are written in The Lamb's Book of Life. Death has no more dominion over us. Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God. If you are in Christ then you have reason to rejoice now and throughout eternity. You are a child of God.

Isaiah wrote:

***"I will rejoice greatly in the Lord,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10).***

I will rejoice greatly in my Lord. The original text said rejoicing I will rejoice.

Paul wrote something similar in Philippians 4:4:

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!"

You see we have reason to rejoice and be glad. Isaiah so beautifully tells us that we are clothed in a garments of salvation and wrapped in a robe of righteousness. When we are in Christ, then our clothes are no longer filthy sin stained rags, but beautiful white robes washed in His Holy Blood.

God spoke through Isaiah saying:

***"Come now, and let us reason together,"
Says the Lord,
"Though your sins are as scarlet,
They will be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They will be like wool" (Is.18).***

You see in Christ we are cleansed from all sin and unrighteousness. Through His blood we are made righteous before a Holy God. Our place is prepared in The Father's House. All of God's promises are ours and in force.

How can we not rejoice? How can we not be thankful?

Let us listen again to our text:

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 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. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy

may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you."

What I would like to emphasise is that in order for our joy to be full, we need to keep God's commandments. The main one is of course:

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt.22:37-39).

When we keep the great commandment, when we love God with all of our being and our neighbour as ourselves, then our joy will be full. When we live in true love then our joy is full. There is a beautiful song that I love which states: *"It's not complicated, don't need a lot of rules. It's loving God, loving each other, making music with my friends..."* Fellowship with God, fellowship with each other! You see it really is simple. When we put God first in our lives, then our joy is full. When our heart is solely and wholly connected to God in love then our joy will be full. The greater our connection, our fellowship with God, the greater our fellowship will be with each other. The better our fellowship with each other, the greater and fuller our joy.

You see all of these things are woven together. Everything is dependent upon our relationship with God. This is why it is so important to spend time with Him, nurturing our relationship. We need to be daily surrendering ourselves to Him, placing all in His hands. I often remind you, and will again today of Paul's words to the Romans:

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:1-2).

When our life is surrendered to God every day, then our mind is renewed, and we understand God's Will for us, and when we obey His will then our joy is full and complete.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.