

The Joy of Jesus
The Real Jesus: Emotional Life
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Bible Text: John 15:7-11
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Our Scripture reading this morning you will find in John's gospel chapter 15 and verses seven through 11. The passage begins in the pew Bible on page 901 and for our children who have their children's Bible on page 1333. John chapter 15 verse seven. Let us hear God's Word.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I 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, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.¹

We are engaged these Sunday mornings in a series of messages on the emotional life of our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ. And we have seen how the gospels portray Jesus not only as the Son of God come to take our flesh in order that he may bear our sin, but they portray Jesus as the one who became truly man and fully man. We have noted, I think, on more than one occasion that, of course, we find ourselves under obligation to emphasize as Christians the deity of our Savior Jesus. But sometimes we can do that and remove from our thinking and also from our Christian experience the blessings of understand that while he was truly God and fully God he also became truly man and fully man. And he had an emotional life and he expressed his emotions in a variety of different circumstances. And so we have seen Jesus surprised and we have seen Jesus full of compassion. We have seen Jesus angry and we have seen Jesus sorrowing. We have seen Jesus loving and we have seen Jesus in deep distress.

And the marvelous thing, at least I find this myself in these studies, the marvelous thing is to sense the absolute reality of his humanity and, of course also the wonderful range of human emotion and human experience that leads us to believe that whatever our condition, whatever our circumstance, wherever our emotions are, the Lord Jesus knows.

¹ John 15:7-11.

He understands. He has actually tasted these emotions in a far purer way than we have and, therefore, in a far more intense way than we ever do.

And today, obviously, from this passage and especially from the words of our Lord in chapter 15 verse 11, we come to think about the joy of Jesus. I say we come to think about the joy of Jesus. It is just possible that it may never have crossed our minds that Jesus who is the same yesterday, today and forever was and is a joyful Savior. And the gospels speak to us about different ways and in different kinds of flavors of joy that the Lord Jesus experienced.

Back in Luke chapter 10 when Jesus had sent out the disciples on a great mission and they had returned to him and they themselves were on an emotional high they came and they had been preaching the kingdom and Jesus had given them his authority to do wonderful things and they were out of their minds with excitement that they had been able to cast out demons. They were absolutely ecstatic. Now Jesus gave them word of caution. He said the great thing is not that you have been able to cast out demons. The really great thing is that your names are written in the kingdom of heaven. And yet we are told that Jesus rejoiced in that hour. He himself was ecstatic. He inwardly danced with joy, not because they had power to exercise demons, but because, as he says, I thank you, Father, that you have hidden these things from the wise and the understanding and you have revealed them to these little children, my disciples.

The thing that really delighted him was the way God does things. And he was ecstatic to see God working in these disciples into whose lives he had thus far poured himself.

There is different language that is used here in John chapter 15 verse 11. This is not so much joy dancing as joy resting. This is joy as quiet and serene and constant pleasure. And Jesus is saying to his disciples, "Do you know everything I have been saying to you as we have talked together here in the upper room?" This is the evening before Jesus' crucifixion. "Everything I have said to you. I have really said to you because I want my joy to be in you in order that your joy may be complete."

If I can spell that out for a moment Jesus is saying, "Dear ones, your joy is incomplete unless you have my joy in you." And it is such a beautiful expression of the satisfaction, the pleasure of the Lord Jesus Christ that he wants his disciples also to experience.

You know, my friends, some of us are marred. I don't know why, because people try to beat us into some semblance of decency when we were youngsters, but the idea that Jesus would want us to have pleasure seems to be very far removed from many peoples' understanding of what it means to be a Christian. But as far as the Lord Jesus is concerned, at the end of the day he wants nothing more from us and for us than pleasure, that we should find pleasure in him and that we should know he takes pleasure in us.

The end of three years of instruction of these very slow disciples just like ourselves, he is now saying to them, "Have you understood what I have been doing? Have you really

heard where my message has been taking you? I want my joy to be in you so that your joy may be full.”

Actually, the first thing I think to notice here in Jesus’ words is the very unexpected context in which he speaks about this joy. You turn back a page or two to chapter 13 and verse 21 we find John saying:

“After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit.”²

So at one hour he is deeply troubled. He is distressed in spirit. And then within the hour he is speaking about the joy and pleasure that he and his disciples are mutually to have in one another. Is Jesus subject to mood swings? No, something has happened in this room. Jesus has been full of sorrow and distress because Judas is going to betray him. But now Judas has left the room, Verse 31 of chapter 13. When Judas had gone out it is as though God turns on a light in Jesus’ emotions. Now that the traitor is no longer present, the room is cleaner. Jesus knows that the dye is cast. Judas will now certainly sell him to the authorities. But, you see, the perspective he has on this, the time has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Yes, there will be the death and the pain and the isolation, but as our header text in the worship bulletin today reminds us, he despised the shame and endured the pain for the joy that was set before him.

And it is almost as though now that Judas is gone and the atmosphere is changed he gets a fresh glimpse of that glory that awaits him and why it is that he is dying, what the fruit of that will be in the lives of endless millions of men and women to the end of history and he begins to delight in the accomplishment that will be his. This is very unexpected on this dark night that Jesus would speak to them about joy. There is a very important connection between these two things. He actually explains it later on in chapter 16, to his disciples. He says to them:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.”³

He is thinking about his crucifixion.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”⁴

And then he uses this illustration. It wouldn’t be the kind of illustration I could use very easily. I am a mere man. Some of you who are physicians would be able to use it. But Jesus had brothers and sisters and no hospitals and he is able to use this illustration because he has heard it. He has perhaps even witnessed it in his own home with Mary his mother and so he uses this exquisite illustration.

² John 13:21.

³ John 16:20.

⁴ Ibid.

“When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.”⁵

Do you see what he is saying? Do you see the power of this illustration? The point of this illustration is not just that there is sorrow now for Jesus and the disciples, but one day there will be joy. The point of the illustration is that the sorrow and the joy are intimately related with one another. And it is out of the sorrow that Jesus will experience. It is out of the grief and desolation he will experience on the cross that his joy and our joy will be born, our joy in the forgiveness of sins, his joy that he has finished the work that his Father has given him to do, that that days of waiting are over, that the hours of labor on the cross are finished. And he is able to cry out, “Father, it is now finished. The new day of joy is dawning.” And he is wanting his disciples to understand that he longs for their joy, so much longs for their joy that he is prepared to pay the ultimate price in order that they may taste his joy.

There is that, of course, that points us to the second thing we need to notice, not only the unexpected context in which he speaks about this joy, but the deep fellowship in which Jesus himself tastes this joy. Jesus says, “I want my joy to be in you.” What could that possibly mean? What would it mean for you and me to taste the joy that Jesus himself has? Very interesting. He has been explaining this to the disciples when he says, “Now, dear ones,” he says, “I want you to abide, to dwell, to have your home in the Father’s love, so much so that, of course, as your home is in the Father’s love for you, then, of course, you will walk in the ways of his family. You will love him in return and you will be obedient to him in return.” And he is saying, “I want you to dwell in his life because that is where I dwell. That is the reason I keep my Father’s commandments, because I dwell in his love. And it is there in dwelling in the love of my heavenly Father that I experience this joy.” He says, “Now, if you also in and through me dwell in the love of the heavenly Father, if the love of the Father is the air that you breathe, the home in which you live, then there in that fellowship you are going to taste the most exquisite joy.”

John’s gospel is full of this really. It is one of the great themes in John’s gospel, that in the fellowship that the Lord Jesus has with his Father, into which fellowship he wants to bring his disciples, that fellowship is a fellowship of unclouded joy.

I was sitting in the Dallas airport yesterday afternoon and I happened to glance up at one of the many television sets they have in airports these days. And there was a little piece on that caught my attention. I saw that it was about baseball. I understand enough to know that that was a baseball bat and that that was a baseball cap and actually I am still a Phillies supporter which is a staggering thing to say here, isn’t it? And I noticed there was a large G on the cap and there was a little fish symbol on the back of the cap of this young man. And then I heard the words Gordon College. Now that will mean something to some of you. Gordon College. And I thought this is unusual. Gordon College, Saturday afternoon on this particular program. It wasn’t a sports program. And then as I listened

⁵ John 16:21.

the fellow had hit a homerun. Nothing unusual about that. But then you look closer and you saw that this young man's left arm ended in a stump. And he was essentially a one handed hitter. And then an interview with his father and then clips of the father and the son from childhood with this severely handicapped boy who, of course, at little league nobody would pick him, but he longed to play baseball and to fight through all of the struggles and pictures of this father and son throwing the ball, the son learning to hit, the son growing stronger and then the story ending with the father being present at a college baseball game. The boy was good enough now to play for Gordon College and witness his son against all the odds hitting a home run. And then the embrace. There were no high fives in this case, just a father and a son embracing.

For those of you who don't know Gordon College, it is a Christian college. There was nothing whatsoever Christian about this piece except they couldn't prevent the boy saying at the end, "I am so grateful to the Lord that I have had this privilege." But that scene, father and son mutually, you know, there was nothing hokey about that father. He wasn't one of these mad caps who wants to make up for his own baseball failures in his son's successes. It was pure mutual love, devotion, joy and the strengthening of the son to fulfill his ambition. And the joy of it was marvelous to behold.

That is what he is speaking about here, about the mutual joy of Father and Son together in the accomplishments of the Son and the Son wanting to share that joy with his own disciples who would see him demeaned and in shame and despised and rejected and a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief as one from whom men hide their faces as Isaiah had prophesied.

Father and Son together. It made me think of the other obvious illustration of what Jesus is speaking about here. There is a moment in ever wedding service—and I have married you, that moment came in your service when you were too busy to notice—when the man and the woman pour themselves through their eyes into one another. Even if there are hundreds of people present, it doesn't really matter. They only have eyes for one another. And if you are only two feet away from them, you want to look down at these two private to share.

But, you know, something in our etiquette, isn't this true in our etiquette? You should not dare lock eyes with a woman to whom you not married. A man locks eyes with your wife and he ravages your relationship. That look we reserve exclusively for the world of total, mutual devotion. And amazingly, right at the beginning of John's gospel, the very first thing John has said is this. In the beginning was the Word. He is speaking about our Lord. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God and the Word was face to face with God. He was God the Son and he was face to face with God the Father, mutually devoted to one another, locking eyes together in that inexpressible joy of knowing that you are absolutely and fully know and that you are absolutely and unreservedly loved.

And Jesus is saying that is the joy I want to be in you as well as in me. I want you to come and share my fellowship with the Father and to know and taste this joy. And here

they are on the evening of his crucifixion. And he is saying to them, “I feel like a mother who is about to give birth to a child and the time of sorrow has come. But I want you, my dear friends, to know that my chief desire for you is that my joy should be in you and that your joy should be full,” because the third thing that lies on the surface of this passage is that for all the unexpected context in which Jesus speaks about his love and the deep fellowship in which he tastes this joy, the really amazing thing is that he wants to share this joy with them. And they have been a pretty pathetic bunch, haven’t they? They have not understood very well. They have had three years of him day in and day out. They are about to deny him and run from him and one of them will say that he never even knew him and curse and swear as he did so. And the Lord Jesus is saying to them, “I know you through and through and I want my joy to be in you and your joy to be in me.”

He is really saying, dear friends, that if we find our joy anywhere else or in anyone else, without him, it can never be full. It can never be complete. But in him all joy will become complete, because in him there are solid joys and lasting treasures that none by Zion’s children know.

You looking for joy in somewhere else or in someone else? You will never be satisfied.

I tried the broken cisterns, Lord, but, ah, the waters failed.
Even as I stood to drink they fled and mocked me as I wailed.
Now none but Christ can satisfy, none other name for me,
There is love and life and lasting joy, Lord Jesus, found in thee.

You will never be a joyful Christian until you discover a joyful Savior and once you discover a joyful Savior all joys will be filled up through him.

Isn’t that something? That the Lord Jesus is joyful and it is his greatest joy to give you his joy. Would you receive it? Or to put it even better, won’t you receive him and he will give it to you?

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for these portraits of the emotions of our Savior Jesus at which we have been gazing as though visitors to the gallery of Scripture in which you have painted him for us. We thank you for the range of his emotions. Some of us are here today with great contentedness and happiness and others with great burdens. Thank you, whatever our situation today that our Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and that there is in him more grace than there is sin in us and more joy than there may be sorrow in us today. And so we pray that as we trust in him we may know what he meant when he said, “I want my joy to be in you so that your joy may be full.” Thank you, Father, for giving us a joyful Savior. Make us joyful Christians we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.