

Luke 10:17-24—Where Is Your Joy?

I want to begin with a question: what makes you most happy? Tied to that is a second question: what excites you about most about being part of this church?

- Being committed to mission means that God will use us from time to time to effect radical change in someone else's life.
- Sometimes we even get the joy of seeing it happen right before our eyes. It's very exciting!

—That's the experience of the 72 (continued from 10:1)—They were excited to see real radical change happening in front of their eyes. People's lives were never the same again.

That is what mission is about—real lives radically changed for the glory of God.

- In the thick of the excitement and enthusiasm, Jesus shares some necessary discipleship truth.
1. A fitting word for disciples
 2. A few words about Satan
 3. Final words from Jesus.
- There is a common thread of joy/rejoicing in the passage.
- The title *Where is your joy?* is a serious question.

1. A fitting word for disciples (v.17, 20)

- Prov 25:11 says “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.”
- I feel like I do this maybe 5 percent of the time. Jesus in perfect wisdom does it 100 percent.
- The 72 return from their mission and things are a success—their excitement is based on the authority to drive out demons.
- They are not taking credit for this; they know their authority is derived from Jesus...but the joy seems *misplaced*.
- So they need a fitting word from the Lord to even out their enthusiasm and put it in the right place (v20)

(v20): Don't anchor your joy in mission success, or any achievement for that matter. Anchor your joy in a place it can never be destabilized: *your eternal relationship with Christ*.

Our human nature is wired to find its identity in results of some kind. We want to feel useful and effective.

- And it even creeps into church life. The number one question I get as pastor over the years—not theological or Biblical, but, “How big is your church?”

- NT is *very* silent on numbers. We don't know how big churches were.
- The Bible stresses the awesome privilege of being in relationship with Christ, the only anchor of sustainable joy.
- Jesus offers something far superior to mission success (v20)
I heard a godly man once say it this way "Geography is identity."
There is a shirt I own that I wear on the weekends, it reads:
"Born and Raised in the Burgh"
That shirt raises a few conversations—probably a half dozen in SC so far.
Geography is identity. Unless you grew up in a very transient family, your identity is probably rooted where you spent the first decade or two of your life.
- "Rejoice that your name is written in heaven" similar to Phil 3:20 "Our citizenship is in heaven."
- (v20) Is your name written in heaven? Do you know Jesus? Will you have eternal joy in his presence, or eternal torment away? If you are not sure, I urge you to make that a *top priority*.

A fitting word for every disciple: anchor your joy in what Jesus has won for you, *because it cannot be destabilized*. Those who take mission seriously have to be cautious about misplaced joy when big things happen. The secure standing we have before God through Christ cannot be taken away. We can't lose it. We must aim for our joy to be in a superior and secure place.

2. A few words about Satan (vv.18-20)

- C.S. Lewis had the right approach in *Screwtape Letters*. Christians can swing to two extremes in thinking about the demonic. Either obsess over it or ignore it.
- We need the right balance of awareness, "a few words."
- (v18) Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."
- What exactly is that?
—Most curious Bible readers want to know the *when* of this verse. Was it a vision of before, during, or after Christ's earthly life?
- Read in its immediate context, and the reference to the strong man being overpowered (11:22), it makes most sense to understand this as the present reality in the mission of the 72.
- But I'm not sure that the *when* question is to occupy first place; more important is the *why*.
—There is a small minority of early church fathers who saw this as a main warning against pride. Jesus uses the example of Satan's fall to warn against unchecked pride.
- It fits with a theme in Luke—the exalted are humbled and the humbled exalted (1:52).
- The image of Satan's quick fall in vs 18 is drawn from the OT Is 14:12-13

12 “How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!

13 You said in your heart,
‘I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far reaches of the north;

- The King of Babylon, through *unchecked pride* has a great fall of judgment.
- It serves as a type of Satan’s fall and his judgment.
- Another biblical text is also connected:

(Rev 12:8-9)

⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

- Both images remind us: pride comes before a fall (Prov 16:18).
- The disciples are having a streak of unbroken success. Add to that a delegated authority.
- What’s the worst that can happen now? Success slows down?
No, the worst that can happen is the 72 get puffed up with spiritual pride. That may be the reason for the emphasis on humility in v21.

- Likewise, Paul warned the church not to let a young convert get placed into leadership too quickly (1 Tim 3:6)

“⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.”

It is when we are at our peak, that we are the most in danger. That is true personally, and as a church. Have you seen a string of unbroken success? Even doing good things for God? Failure is not our greatest enemy or threat...pride is.

When we are exalted in pride, we actually resemble our enemy more than we realize.

3. A final word from Jesus (vv.21-23)

- The final word of Jesus is a word of prayer and a blessing. Both contribute to the theme of rejoicing.
- Instead of analyzing this, I thought it would be helpful to see it as a model prayer.

- Don Whitney, author of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, said that we should tie our prayer with Bible reading. In other words, the Bible needs to be the main shaper of our prayer life.
- It seems fitting to focus on Jesus' prayer as a model for us in our prayer life—especially in *joy*.

(1 Cor 11:1) "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

Joyful, Spirit-filled prayer has several components.

1. Approaches God as warmly personal — (Father 5x). If we view God only as a threatening boss, there is not much delight. Prayer is delightful because we can call on Abba.
2. Reveres God as awesomely powerful. On the flip side, there is a godly reverence that is due the "Lord of heaven and earth."
3. Understands humility is essential. Note the great reversal: God chooses to show himself to the insignificant instead of the impressive (21b). What a joy when we can say with Paul "By the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor 15:10)
4. Celebrates Jesus as supremely sovereign. This prayer is *thick* with sovereignty (v22)—and carries one of the strongest statements about who Jesus is.

The Son shares in the Father's full authority; he shares equally with God's revelatory work; therefore he shares the very nature of God.

"true God of true God...of one substance with the Father." (Nicene Creed)

5. Thankful for God's sheer undeserved grace. At the core of this prayer is gratitude. Gratitude that God reveals himself. *Gratitude is at the heart of joy*.

The more we complain and grumble, the unhappier we are; the more we are thankful, it does our hearts good.

- What gives our Lord Jesus great joy is when people come to grips with the reality of who he really is.

Sum of Mission:

Mission is laboring under the authority and power of Jesus Christ so that others will come to see his greatness and find their joy in worshiping him.

Conclusion:

1. We are created and redeemed by Christ to be on mission. The sum total of the Christian life is not to just sit alone and mine the precious truth of the Bible only for ourselves and our family. We need to be about the work of expanding the family of God.

Someone once pointed out to me: You will find the most growth in your Christian life when you are actively sharing Christ with others.

2. The final response of the disciples is striking (Lk 24:52)
"returned to Jerusalem with *great joy*"

It's joy and empowerment of the Spirit that launches the church into mission in Acts 1.
The same is true in 2018.