

GALATIANS 2:22-23
(OT: Ps 37:1-4; NT: Heb 12:1-2)

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

- What kind of life have you been designed to live? That's what this series is about.
 - Last week we spoke about **love**.
 - Loved by God, we can love others.
 - People who are truly loving...
 - People who are like him.
 - Is that not the life for which you long?
 - This week we're going to talk about **joy**...
 - God wants us to be full of joy? YES!
 - Maybe being a Xn is the best life there is.
- So, let's read passage been focusing on and then pray. [**Read Gal 5:22-23. Pray.**]

INTRODUCTION: What comes to mind when think about happiest moments of your life?

- Doesn't have to be the single happiest moment → But what are some of the things that would make your highlight reel?
 - Maybe something from **childhood**...
 - Christmas morning and the excitement of that perfect gift... (bike).
 - Day you got your driver's license... (freedom).
 - Might be a **big event**...
 - Day you graduated or landed that first big deal.
 - Day you got married or your children were born.
 - Maybe it's **something smaller** → Moment in time that's captured in your memory.
 - Night you and your college roommates laughed until it hurt.
 - Day watched kid get off bus from first day of school with big smile across face.
- Turn to your neighbor and tell them what comes to mind...**
- And here's another question: What did it feel like?
 - What does happiness feel like?
 - Sometimes we feel fear/anxiety in the gut...
 - But happiness seems to well up to the heart, and from there it feels like it wants to expand → Like it might burst out.
 - We feel full, but also light → We feel alive...
 - Isn't it incredible that God created us with capacity for something so beautiful?
 - Bible suggests that such joy should be a mark – a characteristic – of our lives.
 - Our theological heritage has always understood this:
 - **John Calvin** wrote: *"There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice."*¹
 - **WSC #1**: *"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."*²
 - And the the Bible commands us to be joyful:
 - **David**: Delight yourself in the LORD (**Ps 37:4**).
 - **Paul**: Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice (**Php 4:4**).
 - **Jesus**: Rejoice and be glad (**Mt 5:12**).

Transition: Part of God's design for your life is for you experience joy.

- So, let's get into it by following the same outline as last week.
- **Definition** (What is joy?) → **Gospel** (How is Jesus the source of our joy?) → **Application** (How can we be more joyful?).

DEFINITION: WHAT IS JOY?

- Here's a Christian definition: *Delight in Jesus whatever the circumstances.*
- As you may know, NT was originally written in Greek.
 - Word used here in **Gal 5** is Greek word *Χαρά*.
 - It means joy, cheerfulness, gladness, or delight. (Appears 59x in NT.)
- Let's take a closer look at our definition...

Delight

- When talk about joy, not talking about an idea or a concept → Instead, talking about an experience, a feeling, an emotion.
- For this reason, I don't think distinction by joy/happiness is all that helpful.
 - Often hear that in church circles:
 - "Being joyful doesn't mean you're happy."
 - Often said with furrowed brow that suggests shouldn't expect to be happy.
 - There's nuance to it – and we'll get to that – but for now, note that in the Bible, joy/happiness are very similar ideas.
 - Joy is a happiness of heart where you feel cheerful/glad.
 - Biblical joy is an experience of delight.

This delight is in Jesus.

- This is where the nuance comes in → Pastor/author Steve Bateman makes helpful distinction bt immediate joy and ultimate joy.³
 - **Immediate joy** might come from how your day is going → Warm weather, success at work, time with family, drinks with friends.
 - **Ultimate joy** is only found in Jesus → His love for us, his presence in our lives, the hope we have for the life to come.
- As Xns, we experience both:
 - **Immediate joy** over the good things of the day.
 - **Ultimate joy** in Jesus no matter what comes our way.

As a result, we can experience joy whatever the circumstances.

- We can enjoy the good days, but we can have joy on the bad days as well.
- If you only have joy in immediate things, your can be taken away:
 - Warm weather can turn to rain...
 - Success at work can be followed by failure to meet a deadline.
 - Even time with family/friends can disappear as loved ones move away or die.
- But the ultimate joy we have in Jesus → It can never be taken away.
 - In fact, it can even exist alongside immediate unhappiness – the sufferings/struggle of life.
 - We can hold two things at the same time:
 - Sadness over **immediate** circumstances...

- But joy in the fact that **ultimately**, all is well...
- Paul describes this as being: **sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (2 Cor 6:10)**.
 - There's something indestructible about Xn happiness...
 - That's what we're talking about when we use the word *joy*.

Transition:

- Personally, I want some of that → **Delight in Jesus whatever the circumstances**.
 - Joy that can be experienced every single day...
 - Joy that we can feel through the good, the bad, and the ugly!
- And we can have it → But to understand how, we must first move to the gospel.
 - **Definition:** What is joy? Delight in Jesus whatever the circumstances.
 - **Gospel:** How is Jesus the source of our joy?

GOSPEL: HOW IS JESUS THE SOURCE OF OUR JOY?

- Studying the emotional life of Jesus is an intriguing exercise.⁴
 - We know he experienced full range of human emotion, but there isn't a single account of Jesus laughing → There is no story that tells us he smiled.
 - Instead, he's described as **a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering (Isa 53:3)**.
- The Bible gives us lots of details to explain this one-sentence description:
 - He SIGHED at the anguish of suffering (**Mk 7:34**).
 - He was ANGRY with religious hypocrites (**Mk 3:5**).
 - He was INDIGNANT when his disciples rebuked little children (**Mk 10:14**).
 - He was DISTRESSED in the face of the suffering he had to endure (**Lk 12:50**).
 - He WEPT: When his friend died (**Jn 11:35**) and people rejected him (**Lk 19:41**).
- We take great comfort in knowing that Jesus experienced all this.
 - We have a Jesus who understands.
 - Whatever pain you're experiencing → Jesus gets it.
- But here's the weird thing: Though Jesus is called the man of sorrows, many of those he came into contact with left with great joy.
 - ANGELS announced his birth: **I bring you good news of great joy (Lk 2:10)**.
 - WISE MEN saw star and **rejoiced exceedingly with great joy (Mt 2:10)**.
 - JOHN BAPTIST saw his ministry and said, **my joy is now complete (Jn 3:29)**.
 - 72 performed miracles and **returned with joy (Lk 10:17)**.
 - WOMEN left the empty tomb **afraid yet filled with joy (Mt 28:8)**.
 - DISCIPLES saw him resurrected and **disbelieved for joy (Lk 24:41)**.
 - Haven't even got to all the people he helped and healed!!!
- There just seems to have been something contagiously happy about Jesus...
 - They say smiling is infectious...⁵
 - Jesus had that effect on people – something about who he was, the things he did, the gospel he preached that made people joyful.
- And here's the gospel we need to see for his joy to infect us → That we might be added to the list of those who encounter him and leave with joy...
 - As we love bc he first loved us...
 - So we delight in Jesus bc he first delighted in us...
- **Heb 12:2:** [Look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross...

- Why did Jesus become a man of sorrows? Why did he endure such suffering, even death on the cross?
- The Bible answers: **For the joy that was set before him...**
 - Jesus experienced the **immediate** circumstances of betrayal, desertion, violence, pain, and death bc an **ultimate** joy drove him to...
 - He connected that suffering to the joy he took in saving us...
 - We are the joy that was set before him...
 - Right here in this church → Do you see his love for us?
 - As we love bc he first loved us...
 - So we delight in Jesus bc he first delighted in us...
 - Bc we were the source of his joy...
 - He has become the source of our joy.

Transition:

- Definition: We can delight in Jesus whatever the circumstances...
- Gospel: Bc he delighted in us whatever the circumstances...
- Application...

APPLICATION: HOW CAN WE BE MORE JOYFUL IN THIS LIFE?

- The simple answer is to connect everything to Jesus → Whatever your circumstances, connect them to Jesus.
 - As he connected the details of his life to us...
 - So we connect the details of our lives to him and his love.
 - We were the joy that was set before him...
 - Now he is the joy that is set before us.
- Joy isn't a switch you can simply turn on → It's experience we feel when we behold him.

THE CLOSE: Let's talk about what this looks like.

On good days → We connect our immediate joys to him...

- The Bible says every good and perfect gift is from him (**James 1:17**) → Remember that he is the giver of all the good things in your life.
- You might have heard me illustrate this in the way I try to drink my first cup of coffee...
 - There's two ways to do it...
 - Turn off alarm, stumble to kitchen, kick the dog, make a cup of coffee, sit there making clear no one should talk to me till it's finished.
 - Turn off alarm, stumble to kitchen, kick the dog, make a cup of coffee, and remember Jesus → Thank you, Lord, for making caffeine... delicious cup of legal drugs to get my morning going.
 - You see what happens when I connect my coffee to Jesus?
 - Enjoy the coffee itself...
 - And enjoy Jesus and his love.
 - In all your life, connect the dots – warm weather, success at work, family/friends, and all the rest – all of these things are his good gifts.
 - When we enjoy them as such, our joy is magnified.

On bad/ugly days, we do the same thing – we connect our immediate circumstances to him.

- Maybe best way to explain this is to give you a concrete illustration from people who are doing this in our church...
- This week we had a lunch for our caregivers...
 - Members who are giving their lives – behind the scenes – to care for loved ones.
 - Some have aging parents → Some have kids special needs kids → Some loving spouses wracked with dementia or Alzheimer's.
 - Hard/unglamorous work, where life's dealt bitter hand, but you've decided not to give up → Group of warriors who refuse to let go of the rope.
 - But if you'd joined us at that lunch → In that room, the dominant emotion was delight.
 - Does that surprise you?
 - That a room so full of suffering/pain would be marked by joy?
 - I asked those I was sitting with to help me understand: Given what's brought us here, how do you explain the joy in this room?
 - The answers were immediate, everyone spoke up at once...
 - But once we'd got ourselves in order, listen to some of the answers that came:
 - "These situations make Jesus real to you."
 - "I can't imagine life any other way."
 - "We have Jesus. We have hope. We have a future."
 - They speak honestly about their immediate circumstances (troubles of the day), but they connect them to Jesus and therefore experience joy.
- Is there something in your life you need to connect to Jesus like that?
 - Some struggle, some disappointment, some pain...
 - Some diagnosis, some failure, some family member...
 - Take them to him...
 - Walk through them with him...
 - Like these caregivers, you'll find that in Jesus, you have a joy that can never be taken away...

CONCLUSION: What comes to mind when think about happiest moments of your life?

- Enjoy the highlight reels, but don't be afraid.
- You can have joy – delight in Jesus whatever comes your way.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- Luke Bretherton, *A Primer in Christian Ethics: Christ and the Struggle to Live Well*.
- Jay Kim, *Analog Christian: Cultivating Contentment, Resilience, and Wisdom in the Digital Age*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*.
- C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.
- Martin Luther, *Galatians*.
- Douglas Moo, *Galatians*.
- Redeemer Presbyterian Church, *Paul's Letter to the Galatians*.
- John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*.
- B. B. Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*.

Endnotes

¹ Quoted in [this](#) article, accessed 4/19/24.

² As of 4/19/24 *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* can be accessed [here](#).

³ See *My Joy Depends on My Circumstances*, accessed [here](#) 4/19/24.

⁴ I owe much of the content in this point to B. B. Warfield, *The Emotional Life of Our Lord*.

⁵ I remember this poem from my childhood:

Smiling is infectious, you catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.

I passed around the corner and someone saw my grin.
When he smiled, I realized I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about that smile, then I realized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine could travel round the earth.

So, if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick, and get the world infected!