

Do You Have Enough of This?

Rev. Taek Kim

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:3-9

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

When taking an inventory of your life, when you look at what you have and who you are, and when you think about how God sees you, all of you, in what ways do you see yourself as having enough and being enough? And in what ways do you see yourself as lacking or in need of more and not yet become who God designed you to be.

Among all the things you have in life, do you have enough joy in your life? But what is joy? This could be a difficult question to answer. Depending on your definition, there are so many things that can bring us joy.

Joy for one person may not necessarily be joy for another. We are told in so many ways and from all kinds of sources that there is something that can bring you joy if you have it, gain it, buy it, hold on to it, and by the way, had lot of it. So we can seek to find joy.

But you know as well as I do that those things are not the source of joy, though many of the things we like not only make life easier but more enjoyable. Some of us find more joy in doing things rather than possessing things. And still yet, some of us have more joy in relationships and in community than in doing things, possessing things, and so on. I could continue with lists that are as numerous and diverse as the makeup of our community.

One thing that cannot be denied is that without joy every single thing and every relationship is far from being what God intended them to be for life and for love. It may be that Solomon explained it best when he wrote, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones." (Proverbs 17:22)

Our emotions do affect us physically, causing us to sweat, to weep, to tremble. Our emotions cause us to turn white with fear, red with embarrassment, purple with anger, and green with nausea. From worry and fear to trusting faith and holy confidence in Christ, our body is affected in ways that reflect such emotions.

As King Solomon knew, as one who was the wisest person who ever lived and would ever be, that with possessing just about everything and knowing just about everything, without joy life is like a slow wasting away of one's body and soul.

In a B.C. Comic Strip: One ant said, "Dad, who is Jesus?" The father ant replied, "He's the reason for the season." "But Dad I thought Santa Claus was the reason." And the father ant said, "He is, if you prefer a Sony Play Station instead of everlasting life."

Though we may want and get the gifts we have on our lists or in our minds, our hearts are to be set on the very reason we celebrate as we do on Christmas...if you want to have and hold on to the joy Christ offers us and the world.

When we sing "Joy to the World" on Christmas Eve and on the Sunday following Christmas, we sing with knowing that our joy, true joy that comes from Christ, is based on his love for us, his sacrifice for us, his call for us, and his future return for us. Do you consider yourself a person who has joy? How much joy? Do others consider you to be a person who is filled with joy? Much or little?

Joy and having enough joy come from:

- knowing and believing in the promises of God
- living in and by the truths of God
- Building on the right foundation...right relationship with God through Jesus Christ and right relationship with others through Jesus Christ
- traveling through this life with the right companions, journeying with others who love Christ and love others
- knowing and following the right goal/purpose for your life
- being able to see with the eyes of Christ that allows us to see ourselves, others, the circumstances around us, and the future in a much more hopeful light
- allowing Christ to calm our fears about the future...to be in the boat with Christ in the middle of the storm and not panic, scream out in fear, blame the things and people around us and even nature for our lives being difficult...

Joy is made real through choosing to live in Christ's joy. There are so many things that seek to rob us of joy. Circumstances will shake our faith, people will discourage us, and things will distract us from what God truly wants us to enjoy. However, joy involves a choice. We choose the level of joy we want to live on.

Have you made your choice?

As Christ came into the world, one who was God and who humbled himself and became human, he did so with joy and to bring joy into the world. It is the same kind of joy, the joy of knowing that his acts would bring salvation to his creation that he also went to the cross, as we are told in Hebrews 12:2, "...who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame."

Take hold of and share the joy we find in Christ is because there are many reasons for us to let joy slip out of our hands, out of our lives.

Christmas time is a time of joy and giving, of spending time with those we love and those we have not heard from or seen in a long time. However, for others, it is a time of sadness, loneliness, and depression.

In a survey asking people if they were looking forward to Christmas, most answered “Yes.” Those who answered “No” gave a variety of answers, such as “Christmas reminds us of things that ought to be, but are not.” “Christmas is a time of love, but we feel very much unloved.” “Christmas is a time of giving, but we don’t want to give, or can’t afford to give.” “Christmas is a family time, but there is conflict within our family circles. And “Christmas is a time of peace and good will, but too many are at war with themselves and with others.”

Do you fall into the group that answered “yes” or “no”? If no, what are your complaints, grievances, reasons, and issues that seem to be stopping you from having enough joy? Lift them up to God and ask for help.

We could prepare a long list of all the reasons people give for the lack joy in their lives. Some of the general categories include; sickness, stress (physical and emotional), setbacks, suffering, struggles of life, sin in our personal life, and sin in the world.

How many people do you meet that describe their life as being full of great joy? Yet that is the proclamation of the angels to the shepherds. The Savior of the world would bring good news of great joy for all people. Angels declared joy. Wise men were filled with joy. Mary and Joseph were amazed with joy. The shepherds returned with rejoicing in their hearts. Even John the Baptist jumped for joy in Elizabeth’s womb when Mary met her while also being with child.

When looking at the lives of some of those who visited Jesus at the manger, we should consider the shepherds. We can imagine how though the things in their lives changed, joy had entered their lives and changed everything in their hearts and souls.

When they returned after seeing baby Jesus, they were still much more financially poorer than the wise men who came with expensive gifts. They were still considered the lowest class of the social structure. Sheep still smelled bad and required constant care. They returned to the same situations at home, things did not change. However, they rejoiced! Their response illustrates a secret to joy that many missed. Circumstances contribute to joy, but they do not control joy.

In a society that is very production and task driven, even our relationships tend to develop in areas where we are seeking to accomplish shared goals; so much so that relationships are sometimes near the bottom of the list, not being considered as worthy goals...until it is usually too late.

Joy comes to us through Jesus Christ and our relationship with him. When that joy enters our hearts, it flows into and out from our lives into and through every relationship. God created us to have such joy that our lives reflect it; and yes through laughs, giggles, smiles, and all that go into what we attribute to being childlike.

You could say that one of the reasons why Jesus said, “To experience the kingdom of heaven, we must become as a little child” is so we would not forget the joy of being a child, and always being a child of God.

Great joy is one of God’s Christmas gifts to you. Will you open this gift of joy in Christ for yourself? I pray you do, and not let go of it once you have it; that it may only keep growing as your relationship with Christ grows, growing within you and through you into every person God has placed in your life. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I have come to realize some of you do not get church news since you have this sermon mailed to you and you do not have access to email or the internet to watch our recorded services. Therefore, here is some news that you may or may not know of. My family and I had COVID, I most likely contracting it after visiting a hospital for a dying person who was not a member of our church, but I was on-call for another pastor. We are all fine, though I had about 2 weeks of being bed-ridden at home. Jamie had fatigue for a few weeks. And 2 of our 3 children had mild symptoms for a few days. Thank you all for your prayers, card, calls, meals and gifts. We truly appreciate how God took care of us through each of you.

Also, those to keep in prayer include those we’ve been praying for in the past few weeks and months. Charlotte Harvell who has been in hospice at home. Don Grant at Fountain View who has COVID-19 and is not doing well. Gary Toffoli who has been hospitalized for pneumonia. Continued prayers for Brenda Stump who has been battling cancer with chemotherapy. George Maxwell who is having health issues, brother of Jean Baker and Cheryl Marlow. Jim Sweeney who was hospitalized for pneumonia and COVID-19. And Don Grant who passed away on Dec. 8 due to COVID-19. Please keep Don’s family in prayer.

Thank you for your prayers, faithfulness, and perseverance during these challenging times when we cannot be with each other as we used to. I do miss visiting many of you as I regularly have in the past. We all are praying that we will return to more of a normal life soon.

Blessings and with Christ’s Love,
Pastor Taek