

## Happiness or Joy

### Matthew 5:1-12

**Isaiah 12:2-6** *Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy...*

Everywhere you turn everyone is looking for happiness.

A song by Cheryl Crow from a few years ago that was wildly popular says, ***“All I want to do is have a little fun before I die.”*** Rather pessimistic to me, but that’s where a lot of people are now days, **sad** but looking for something to take their minds off of their troubles. It seems like most the movies produced are about death, destruction, or the end of all human life as we know it. I watched a little-known movie called ***Pandorum*** the other day that was about a space ship that carried the last remaining humans away to another planet to inhabit as war destroyed the Earth. They seem to be saying, ***“Things are going to get much worse?”***

Everyone wants to be happy; there is nothing wrong with that. But, many seek it as an **END**, and a few by any means possible. How about us Christians in Church, we want to be happy too.

**A young little boy** about three was with his mom in the pew at Church, standing up and looking backward smiling at the people sitting behind him and it was causing a bit of a stir. He wasn’t gurgling or spitting or making faces or tearing up the hymnal...he was just smiling. After mom realized that everyone behind her was looking at him and her, she jerked him down, and in a stage whisper that everyone could hear she said, ***“Stop smiling. You’re in Church, for God’s sake.”*** She gave him a little swat on the behind and as the tears rolled down his cheeks she added, ***“There, that’s better.”***

### WE ALL WANT HAPPINESS

We look for happiness in relationships. We look for happiness in money and the stuff it buys. We look for happiness in fun of all kinds. That seems to be the way it is now days, right? However, The Declaration of Independence, stated that our unalienable rights endowed by our Creator include the *“pursuit of happiness.”* It’s interesting that Thomas Jefferson decided to change the well established phrase of British upper class who believed it was their right to the *“pursuit of property.”* As Americans, our desire for happiness is deeply ingrained in our consciousness.

Our capacity for emotions like happiness and sorrow are part of what make us human. But, they are transient and subject to situations, often passing as quickly as they come. There is, however, a

deeper quality that is not subject our situation, consistent and stable, that lifts us up even in the hardest and most painful times, that is **JOY**.

The Bible is full of **JOY**. We find it repeatedly:

- **Psalm 100** *"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.  
Worship the Lord with gladness;  
come into His presence with singing."*

- **Ps. 16** *"You show me the path of life:  
in your presence there is fullness of joy  
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore."*

- We saw joy in **Isaiah 12**- *"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."*

- Joy is a frequent subject in the New Testament. In Jesus' most profound teaching on life, the "Sermon on the Mount," in **Matt. 5**, we read, the word that is usually translated "blessed" could also read, *"The poor in spirit are made joyful,  
those who mourn are made joyful,  
the meek are made joyful,"* (Greek word for **joy** as its root, literally, **"made joyful."**)

- **John 15:11**- Jesus' words to the disciples in the upper room,  
*"I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete."*

- And also for Paul, joy was a necessary part of the walk of faith.

- **Philippians 4:4**- He says, *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice."*

This is a man who suffered innumerable hardships, persecutions, and attempts on his life, but they could not stop or discourage him. He was filled the joyful Spirit of God.

## **JOY IS A PRODUCT OF A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS**

Someone has said, "The surest steps towards happiness are the church steps."

The person that exhibits such qualities like: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, "fruits of the Spirit," as they are called in Galatians 5, is living in close connection with God being filled daily by the Holy Spirit.

**The Joy-filled Church** is the place where people find the loving Savior and grow in their relationship with God and one another, a place for genuine spiritual & emotional **JOY...A FUN PLACE TO BE!**

I remember a fellow in one of my previous churches who had been a cowboy at the Fort Worth Stock Yards. He didn't have a much, his wife deceased for several years, but at 87 years, used to say, "It's a good day if I wake up and can feel the floor.," and, "It's a good day if you don't find your obituary in the paper." He didn't have a lot to be happy about, but he had joy in his heart, **JOY** that

his circumstances couldn't take away.

### **JOY SPRINGS FROM SALVATION**

In Christ, people find the source of true joy, salvation from our sins in God's great love. The passage from Isaiah 12 we read predicts a time when God would bring salvation to the nation of Israel after years of affliction and oppression. *"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation...Shout aloud and sing for joy."* **In the person of JESUS that time has come for us.** And, besides salvation, our hearts full of the Holy Spirit really gives us reason to sing and shout for joy.

There is a story told about a Baptist lady from South Carolina who was visiting her daughter in New York City. It was Sunday and the two women decided to go to church together. They decided to attend the large church down the street. It was a very prestigious church, a very formal church, where the ushers were still wearing frock coats with boutonnieres in their lapels. While the minister was delivering his sermon, this lively, vibrant older lady was particularly in tune with a certain point, and yelled out in this quiet church, **"Amen, brother!"** One of the befrooked and boutonniere ushers came running up and said, "Lady, are you ill?" "Ill, young fellow?" she answered, "I'm not ill, I got religion!" The usher then said, "Good Lord, lady! Not here!"

Jesus was a joyous, happy person and his **JOY** is ours as Jn. 15:11 said. A successful business man, Demos Shakarian, wrote a book about a group of Spirit-filled Christians he came to know; he entitled it **The Happiest People in the World**. Christians, of all people, ought to be happy, filled with the joy of new life in Christ. The Church should be the happiest place in the community.

### **BUT, WE MUST DEAL WITH THE OBSTACLES**

It is true that we cannot be happy all the time. There are times of pain and sorrow, grief and loss. At times like these we may not feel happy; the last thing we want to do is rejoice. Even though we may not realize it, we choose how we will react to each situation of our lives: fear, sorrow, anger, joy. Why would Jesus tell the frightened disciples, "Fear not" if they had no control over their reactions. We have more control over our lives than we think; we decide how we will act in each situation.

### **The biggest killer of JOY is FEAR, which leads to WORRY**

We may not realize that fear is in control of our lives, but we may notice when we are worrying. My dear mother used to tell me that she couldn't help worrying. She worried about one thing or another for as long as I can remember. For the last several years I tried to help her understand that **worry is just our fear that God can't or won't help us**. Someone said that, **"Worry is idolatry,"** It shows that there is some part of our lives that we won't let God into. We feel like we must remain in control. We refuse to turn it over to a God who knows all, is all powerful, and has our ultimate good in mind. We feel like we have power to influence the outcome by fretting about it, allowing it to consume our attention and energy. Jesus challenged his disciples that they could not change something as slight

as a hair on their heads by worrying. (I guess they could have pulled it out.) He reminded them that there were plenty of other things coming up tomorrow, so not to waste their energy worrying about something they had no power to affect. You see, **FEAR** is a killer. People die from fear. Even the Bible says that people's heart would fail from fear. It's not supposed to be that way for God's people. What do we have to be afraid of? What can we change by worrying except increase our blood pressure and shorten our life?

### **ANOTHER KILLER IS RESENTMENT**

We feel have been wronged in some way and it wasn't right or fair. Why should we just give up? We say to ourselves, "**I'm going to show that person by not forgiving them (and making myself sick). There, that ought to fix them!**" We think it gives us power over the other person. Does it? How? Maybe they don't deserve to be forgiven for their heinous crime against us and God. Maybe they escaped punishment by society. But, who else doesn't deserve to be forgive for their sins either? **Is it us?** Resentment is refusing to obey God by not forgiving someone for whom Jesus has already died, someone precious to God just like us. It's the same as having some other god before Yahweh. Besides, who does it hurt? Only ourselves! I know, because I tried and it doesn't work! It nearly killed me with depression. I lost all my joy over it. **Psalm 51** is the poem King David wrote after he was confronted by the prophet Nathan about his sin with Bath Sheba and conspiring to kill her husband. After he had confessed he wrote,

v. 8 ***Let me hear joy and gladness;***

***Let the bones you have crushed rejoice...***

v. 12a ***Restore to me the joy of your salvation...***

David knew that he could not regain JOY in his life without repenting and seeking forgiveness and forgiving himself. Only then could he regain the joyful relationship with God he had known before. We have to surrender our negative feelings against others, ourselves, and God. Then we can find peace and joy, but it isn't automatic. JOY is based on a decision and it springs from our intimate relationship of prayer with Jesus Christ. **Yes, We have to decide to be happy and joyful in the Lord.**

### **"Jesus, it's Jim"**

The story is told of a certain priest who was puzzled by a shabby old man who went into his church at noon every day and came out again almost immediately. What could he be doing? The priest decided to question the old man. "*I go to pray,*" the old man said. "*Come now,*" said the priest, "*you are never in the church long enough to pray.*" The old man replied, "*Well, you see, I don't try to pray a long prayer every day at twelve o'clock. I just go into church and say, 'Jesus, it's Jim.' It's just a little prayer, but I guess He hears me,*" he explained with a chuckle in his voice.

Sometime later, Jim was injured and taken to a hospital. There, he had a wonderful influence on the entire ward. Grumbling patients became cheerful, and often the ward would ring with laughter. One

day, the head nurse said to Jim, *"The other patients say that you are responsible for the remarkable change in this ward. They say that you are always cheerful."*

*"Yes I am,"* Jim replied. *"You see I can't help being cheerful. It's my visitor."* The nurse was puzzled. She knew that Jim's chair was always empty, for he had no relatives. *"When does your visitor come?"* the nurse asked.

Jim answered. *"Every day at noon He comes and stands at my bedside for a few seconds. I see Him and He smiles at me and says, 'Jim, it's Jesus.'"*

### **JOY SPRINGS FROM OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST**

There is much more to life than simple happiness, here today, gone tomorrow. Let's make the decision to be a joyful; let's make this a joyful Church. Let's practice rejoicing in the Lord. Paul said,

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

**JOY IS a PRODUCT of an INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST**

**JOY IS LIFE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT of GOD**

**JOY SPRINGS FROM SALVATION in JESUS CHRIST**

**JOY IS OUR CHOICE**

**So, let's REJOICE.** We've got more reason than anyone, don't we? AMEN!