

Advent 2018: Joy, Psalm 16
12/16/19

We have been looking at the advent themes in this series, Hope, Peace, and now we come to Joy. Our text for today is Psalm 16.

Psalm 16:1-11

¹Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. ²I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." ³I say of the holy people who are in the land, "They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight." ⁴Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.

⁵Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. ⁶The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. ⁷I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. ⁸I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, ¹⁰because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

¹¹You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Would you characterize yourself as a joyful person? Would people say you are known for your joy? How do you access joy? Philosophers like Epicurus, Psychologists like Freud, Religious Leaders like the Dalai Lama throughout the centuries have espoused their opinions about where to find joy-in everything from Asceticism to pleasure, from Hypnotism to Medication, from Meditation to Mantras (Serenity Now)...My favorite childhood philosophers, Ren and Stimpy. Happy go-lucky, Stimpy, convinced the always angry, Ren, to try to find joy with a mind control machine that repeated the song "Happy, Happy, Joy, Joy." Joy is something that everyone longs for and few ever experience, not for lack of trying. Maybe one of the challenges is trying to get our arms around what exactly joy is.

Notice I didn't say happiness. Happiness is an emotion based on your circumstances- Happy when I'm eating ice cream. I said Joy. It is an emotion, but it is more than that, it is rooted more deeply than mere happiness or excitement that comes from a momentary experience or favorable circumstances. As I studied Scripture this week, I came up with a definition, that I'm going to test on you. Joy is the emotional byproduct of peace and hope. The Bible seems to say that joy is something we experience as a result of a sense of peace- secure relationships, and hope- optimism about the future. So where do we find lasting joy? Some of you may be surprised to hear that the Bible is actually filled with the call and command to be joyful. God wants you to be filled and overflowing with joy. That contradicts some of our views of God, thinking that God is standing with a divine lightning bolt waiting for us to mess up, is angry and wants to keep us from joy. Maybe you just see God through a set of rules. But God actually is more invested in your ultimate joy than you are! In Psalm 16, God wants us to see how to

access lasting joy. David is going to tell us **three things about Lasting Joy: Where NOT to Find It, Where To Find It, Why it will Last.**

Where NOT to Find it

Psalm 16:4

Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.

Ancient people very religious, there was no such thing as secular people. All Israel's neighbors were polytheists. They believed in many gods. God of sex and fertility, beauty, wealth, war, god of partying, god of travel, god of athletics, gods of work and fields. David says they ran after these gods, this is a metaphor for worshipping...finding ultimate meaning, purpose, ultimate pleasure and joy in these gods. Of course, we don't believe in all these gods and we certainly don't worship them...or do we? **I think humanity is still running after every one of them.** We run after sexual fulfillment, beauty, wealth, war, experiences...The things that we run after, find ultimate meaning and joy in function in our lives like gods. We can find these functional gods by asking questions like **"If I have _____ then I will have a good life."** Now we may not pour out blood offerings to them...that's too primitive, but millions of people pour out their financial offerings to the gods of sex, beauty and entertainment. We won't physically sacrifice our children to them like some ancient cultures did, but millions of people sacrifice their relationship with our children or family for their god of work, god of money.

We today are no different than those in David's time because the human heart is like a giant vacuum cleaner, that has an enormous amount of suction and it fixes itself on something and says "this will really make me happy", "this will help me tap real meaning in life" "this will give me the security and optimism I've been chasing" but we know it will not last, and let us down and so we'll chase something else...new relationship, new video game...**David says, those who run after these things as time goes on will suffer more and more.** They are not only hopelessly temporary sources of joy, they break our hearts, they bring pain in the end. Even if you are in the lucky minority of people that actually get the things they run after... they will start slipping away.

Video from Eagles Game. Amazing moment. **Pt. 2 slide show (blank slide)** That was less than a year ago, and can I tell you, the Eagles have had such a disappointed season, and as happy as I was in that moment, it didn't last. It can't last...and it wasn't meant to last.

And ultimately, nothing on this planet can bring lasting joy because it dies. Beautiful flowers are going to be in the ground decaying soon and they are only on a slightly faster path than you and me...but we are on the same path. This life will take away everything that means anything, anything you love. There is no security in it. like a sandcastle on the beach, gone the very next morning as if it never existed...Merry Christmas...We all know this, at least when we get off our phones for a second, and this is precisely why we grip so tightly to these things because we know how fleeting they really are. So you see why David is so passionate about telling us about the only source of lasting joy.

Can you recognize what your heart is running after? Has it delivered lasting joy?

Where TO Find It

Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8

¹Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. ²I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."

⁵ Lord, you alone are my portion (wealth) and my cup (experience of pleasure); you make my lot secure (possessions).

⁷ I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. ⁸ I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

David says, God you are my peace- secure relationship with God. His relationship with God is what gives him meaning in life. In contrast to all the counterfeit sources of joy, he says- God is My true wealth and pleasure and greatest possession. Notice David's intentionality- meditation on the Word of God and prayer, even at night (all day). See what David is talking about here is not merely believing in God, it's running after God as the source of joy. And this is often the disconnect...this is what we miss. You might be very religious or have good theology- **and yet never experience this at all.** Go to church, say your prayers, give money...busy in religious activities... but approaching God like an insurance plan. I'm going to go run after all these other sources of joy and if something bad happens or at the end of my life I'll have God to fall back on, but the deception is that often when that happens, we find out just how ill-equipped we are because our relationship with God is anemic.

(Blank Slide) Your mother used to say, "don't eat that candy before dinner, It will ruin your appetite." The trouble with eating candy is it gives you a sugar buzz and masks the fact that your body needs true nourishment you don't have. Chasing temporary joys are like sugar. What happens to Christians when you say 'oh I believe in God and I know I'm going to heaven...' but you actually base your day to day joy and happiness on circumstances? It masks our deepest hunger.

What is your day-to-day source of joy? Are you eating spiritual candy and masking your deepest spiritual hunger?

Why it will last.

Other religions can offer this experience to you. So far, there is little that I said that is unique to Christianity or the God of the Bible. Buddhism says that the accoutrements of life aren't the source of joy...those things are temporary it is found in meditation, connecting to the god-force, Islam- God needs to be the most important thing in your life. Most transcendent religions will have a similar thought. What makes Christianity any different than the gurus of the east? Only Biblical Christianity can give you the second source of joy, HOPE- an optimism about the future. If you are just looking for some serenity and joy for these few short years on earth...pick

whatever does it for you. But if you want something that truly lasts, this is Christianity. Not only does it offer peace with God but Hope of the future. In these last few verses David tells us something we need to reflect on a bit, because what he says is remarkable, especially for the time that he wrote it.

Psalm 16:9-11

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure ¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

At this stage of God's revelation, the Jewish people had some understanding of afterlife, but it was not well developed. But David says that his relationship with God is so strong, his experience of joy with God so lasting that He says that even death cannot come between him and God. *Not abandoned to Sheol (realm of dead)*...But he will be in God's presence, word means face. He has a conviction that he will see God face-to-face. And when he does, the temporary happiness he experiences in this life (good food, sexual intimacy, comforts) will be a mere shadow of what he will experience in eternity. And this helps answer a lingering question you may have. What is the relationship between happy experiences and joy.

C.S. Lewis- Surprised by Joy (Blank Slide)

Talks about how happy experiences are like sign posts that point to the ultimate joy.

It (temporary happiness) is valuable only as a pointer to something other and outer. He who first sees it cries, 'Look!' The whole party gathers round and stares. But when we have found the road and are passing signposts every few miles, we shall not stop and stare. They will encourage us and we shall be grateful to the authority that set them up. But we shall not stop and stare, or not much; not on this road, though their pillars are of silver and their lettering of gold. For 'We will be at Jerusalem'.

All the things that we attach onto today and think "If I have that, then I'll be happy", they are just signposts. So as long as they are not sinful according to God's values...enjoy them, some of them are great! But don't set your joy on them...Don't mistake the sign posts for what they are pointing to which is the city of God and God himself.

Well that's great Nate, David had an optimism about his future that gave him lasting joy... and I can see why that would change me if I believed that, but what about us? How can we be optimistic of our future? Friends we have a far greater reason we can believe in an eternal hope with God than David. Why? He only could see clues of this...

Commentators to struggle to figure out what David is trying to say...but what does it say? David not only believes he will be in God's presence, he also says, *My body will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.* It seems that David believes that he was going to be resurrected, bodily. Remarkable, how could he say that? This was not something that people believed at this point. But here's what Peter

says at Pentecost, that David was actually pointing to one of his descendants, the Holy One, the greater David.

Acts 2:29-33

²⁹Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay.

³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

What does this mean. Because Jesus rose from the dead bodily and is in eternity, so we too in Christ will be raised bodily for eternity in the presence of God, where there is fullness of joy.

Acts tells us that Jesus' resurrection physically guarantees our resurrection. Now some of you don't believe this. Can you imagine if you did? Can you imagine how that would change you? How you think about your life, approach pain, think about funerals, spend your time, how you handle every trial...what about the rest of us...we believe in the resurrection, but imagine if you were 5-10x more sure of it. It would change you too.

A.N. Wilson- British intellectual. Didn't believe in resurrection of Christianity...laughed at it. Until a few years ago he became convinced because of the evidence is there. You can be rational and look into it. Look at the evidence. We think, well ancient people were just more gullible. First of all, look at all the wacky things politicians say that people believe... but that's another story... Jews in 1st century did not believe that people could rise from the dead, maybe at the end of history but not like this. Jews did not believe that a person could be God. And yet thousands were convinced and started believing that Jesus was the son of God and was resurrected. So what evidence did they get? What evidence would you need today? Must be pretty strong. And they did. A.N. Wilson, "We can easily dismiss the resurrection as a fairytale if we hide from ourselves the uncomfortable fact that the first men and women who claimed to be witnesses to the resurrection were prepared to be tortured and to die horribly rather than deny the risen Christ. It is hard to believe that those people didn't see what they saw."

Put it this way, if you believe in Easter you have a million reasons to have joy at Christmas...and every other day of the week, regardless of your circumstances. Run to the resurrection! Run to Jesus the source and eternal refuge of lasting joy.