

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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Jesus Brings Inexpressible Joy
I Peter 1:6-9

Of the four themes of Advent, I think Joy is the one that most represents the Christmas season in my mind. For as long as I can remember, I have always enjoyed Christmas. I enjoy the music of Christmas. Hearing Nat King Cole sing “The Christmas Song” is about as close to musical perfection as anything I know. In heaven, I believe I’ll be able to sing just like Nat King Cole.

I enjoy the decorations of Christmas. We put up our Christmas tree around Emily’s birthday at the end of October. I love the various nativity scenes that we have. I enjoy driving around and looking at lights. I even enjoy the ugly sweaters.

I enjoy Christmas movies. I get a little choked up each year when the Grinch’s heart grows three sizes in one day. I root for Ralphie to get his Red-Ryder range model air rifle. I feel like George Bailey is a close, personal friend of mine. And, let this be your annual reminder to watch “It’s a Wonderful Life.” I tell you every year and some of you still haven’t seen it.

Christmas is a season of Joy...that’s why I enjoy it.

But, as time goes by, it seems like it gets more and more difficult to enjoy Christmas. The darkness of our world and the trials of life don’t go away in November and December. As a matter of fact, every year seems to add new reasons to grieve. Friends and loved ones pass away. There are new wars and conflicts, some between nations and some within our families.

The result is that some of us find ourselves this morning singing Joy to the World while it feels like we are losing the fight for joy in our own lives.

So, this morning, I want to draw your attention to a passage of Scripture that teaches us about the Joy that Jesus came to bring. My prayer is that God will help us reframe our ideas about joy around a biblical framework so that we can know and understand the Joy Jesus brings and how we live in it.

1 Peter 1:6-9

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, 5 who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Two weeks ago, we began our Advent series by studying verses 3-5. Remember, Peter is writing to a group of Christians who are experiencing persecution. Many have lost their jobs and their homes. Some have lost their families and their sense of community. And Peter reminded them that they have

hope in the midst of suffering because of Jesus. And, because they have that hope in Jesus, they can rejoice in Him, as well.

Verse 8 says we are able to “rejoice with joy that is inexpressible.” How much would you like to be so joyful that you couldn’t even express it with words? Sounds great, doesn’t it? Verse 8 tells us how we enter into the inexpressible joy of Jesus. Peter says, “***Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.***”

As we love and believe in Jesus, we are able to rejoice with inexpressible joy that’s filled with glory. That’s the main point of verses 6-9 and that’s our big idea for today.

BIG IDEA: JESUS GIVES INEXPRESSIBLE JOY TO THOSE WHO LOVE AND TRUST HIM.

Now, let’s walk through our text and see what there is for us to learn about the inexpressible joy of Jesus.

THE INEXPRESSIBLE JOY OF JESUS IS UNIQUE

The word “joy” in verse 8 comes from a Greek word that means “the experience of gladness.” It’s a response to something favorable or good. For instance, if you get a call from your doctor saying that you have a clean bill of health, that’s good news and you’d be glad about it. That experience of gladness is joy. So, that word translated joy represents a very common experience of gladness.

But the word that is translated “rejoice” in verses 6 and 8 isn’t a common Greek word. As a matter of fact, it wasn’t even used by secular writers in ancient Greek literature. It’s a word that is only associated with a deep joy in God and what He has done. In other words, Jesus came to bring us a unique kind of joy. Jesus came to help you experience a kind of gladness that you can’t get anywhere else but Him.

And that’s been very helpful to me as I’ve considered the joy I can expect to find in Jesus. You see, I think many of us visualize joy to be something like the celebration dance after our team scores a touchdown and we feel everything from disappointment to despair when that isn’t always our experience of Joy in Jesus. We may be expecting something Jesus never promised to give. He gives a different kind of joy. And that brings me to the next description of joy we see in our text.

THE INEXPRESSIBLE JOY OF JESUS IS ABLE TO ACCOMPANY GRIEF

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

Peter points out that these believers rejoice even though they have been grieved by various trials. The way this verse is written indicates that both were happening at the same time. They weren’t happy about not having jobs and they weren’t happy about having to find new places to live and they weren’t happy about the persecution that had cost their friends and loved ones their lives. And at the same time, they were rejoicing with the unique and inexpressible joy that only Jesus brings. They were doing both at the same time. They were grieving and rejoicing.

And that’s one of the ways the joy of Jesus differs from the joy of this world. It isn’t the one-dimensional, shallow joy we get from sports or entertainment. It’s a deep, abiding joy that can handle the darkest, most difficult things in this world and allows you to grieve the things that are grievous.

It’s the kind of joy that Jesus lived with while He was on this earth. Here’s what I mean.

John 15:11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Jesus lived with full joy - deep, abiding joy. And that's the joy He promised to give to us. That's the unique joy the recipients of Peter's letter had. In John 16:22, Jesus said this joy is the kind of joy no one in the world can take away.

And do you know the next thing Jesus did? He entered the Garden of Gethsemane and labored in prayer over the suffering He knew was coming at the cross. He anguished to the point of sweating drops of blood. He asked the Father to allow the cup of suffering to pass from Him. Isaiah 53 says He was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. The full joy of Jesus is able to accompany grief.

The reason I feel compelled to dig in here for a minute is because many of us have been given such an unbiblical idea about joy that we feel guilty or disillusioned by the grief and sadness that are part of our hearts. And that can throw us into a spiritual and emotional tailspin. We are tempted to believe we aren't experiencing the life of Christ because we are saddened by the events of our world or the brokenness of our lives.

Listen, the joy that Jesus brings isn't an escape from reality and it isn't a state of denial. It isn't a perpetually manic state of shouting and laughter. Sad things are sad. Grievous things should be grieved. As you look around at our world, you should be grieved by what you see. The moral collapse of America is a grievous thing that should be grieved. The decay of our culture, the darkness of our world, and the suffering of our own lives are things we rightfully mourn.

And, at the very same time, Jesus wants you to have an experience of gladness today that isn't negated by your grief. I'll come back to this in just a few minutes, but let's keep moving to the rest of our big idea.

THE INEXPRESSIBLE JOY OF JESUS IS EXPERIENCED BY THOSE WHO LOVE AND TRUST HIM

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

Peter joins love and believing, together. We'll talk about love next week, but you cannot believe Jesus the way Peter is talking about here without loving Jesus. The two go together. The things that cause you to believe in Jesus are the same things that stir up love in your heart for Him. You can't separate loving Jesus and believing in Him. We'll talk more about that next week.

The word "believe" is the verb form of the word "faith." It means to "believe in a way that trusts in, depends upon, and rests one's confidence in."

There's an old illustration I'm sure most of you have heard. One day, a reporter decided to write a story about a famous tightrope walker. The reporter climbed up to the platform where the tightrope walker was performing, just to get a closer look at the man's ability. The performer went back and forth several times. At one point, he took a wheelbarrow across the rope and back. At that point, he stopped and talked to the reporter, answering several questions. Finally, the tightrope walker asked if the reporter believed he could carry him across the rope in the wheelbarrow. The reporter, who had just witnessed the man easily go back and forth across the tightrope with the wheelbarrow said, "Of course, I believe you can." To which the performer replied, "Then, get in the wheelbarrow."

Believing Jesus means you get in and depend on Him. It means you rest your confidence in Him.

And, in that way, joy and hope go hand in hand. Do you remember the definition of biblical hope? It's a confident expectation for our future good. That's what the first part of this text is about. It's about the good that Jesus will bring to those who trust in Him.

1 Peter 1:4-5 [we are born again] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Because of Jesus, we can be confident that we will inherit an eternal reward that is imperishable, undefiled, and kept by the power of God. That's heaven. And verse 5 says we are guarded by God's power. He's keeping us safe until He delivers us from every broken and sinful thing of this world. That's the hope, the confident expectation we have in Jesus. And having that hope brings us joy.

That's what verse 6 says: *6 In this you rejoice,*

We rejoice in the hope we have in Jesus...even in the midst of our grief.

A little over a month ago, Pastor Mark and I visited Mike Coco. His wife, Eva, and their daughter were there. Mike was at the end of his long battle with cancer, and we all knew that he would be going home to be with Jesus in just a couple days. As we sat in his living room, we talked about what was to come. And there was grief. We all grieved as we knew we were saying our earthly goodbyes. And, at the same time, there was joy. No one was dancing or shouting. But there was deep and sober joy in that room. It's hard to describe the joy, you might even say it was inexpressible, but it was definitely there. Because of Jesus, we knew we'd see each other again. We knew Mike would be seeing Jesus face-to-face by the end of the week. We knew he would be healed of his cancer and delivered from the sickness and sadness and sin of this world. And we rejoiced together because of Jesus. The hope of Jesus brought us inexpressible joy in our grief.

A couple weeks later, we gathered in the chapel at Mike's memorial service. There was grief and sadness there as we mourned the death of a really good man. And there was joy. We rejoiced as we thought of Mike, healthy and whole in the presence of God. Because we were trusting in Jesus, grief didn't nullify our joy and our joy didn't disregard our grief.

That's the inexpressible joy that Jesus came to bring us. A joy that is stronger than death because of the hope Jesus brings us beyond death. And, as we close, I want to show you several promises of Jesus from our text that bring us inexpressible joy in the midst of the suffering and pain in this world.

THE INEXPRESSIBLE JOY OF JESUS COMES FROM BELIEVING THE FIRE ISN'T FOREVER.

6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials,

The fiery trials of life won't last forever. Verse 6 says they are for "a little while." In comparison with eternity, our time on this fallen planet is just a little while. Life is like a vapor that is here for a moment and then passes away and all our trials will pass away with it. The way my mom would say it is, "This too shall pass."

And there's joy in knowing that. I hate going to the dentist. I hate sitting in that chair, looking at instruments that appear to have been designed to not only extract my teeth but to extract state

secrets from prisoners of war. I hate it. And the whole time I'm sitting in that chair, I remind myself that it will all be over soon. And I'm glad when I think that it will all be over soon.

And that's sort of like the joy we have in Jesus. Our hope is that one day, He will deliver us from the mess of this world. He will wipe away every tear from our eyes and there will be no more sickness or pain or mourning or sorrow. We will enter a Kingdom that is ruled by the Prince of Peace and not the politicians of Washington. Aren't you glad about that? He will rule in righteousness and not the upside-down philosophies of this age...aren't you glad about that? His glory will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea and we will rule with Him. Aren't you glad about that? So, believe that the fiery trials aren't forever and rejoice in that hope! Our King is coming, and the trials will be over, and it will be worth it all when we see Jesus!

I don't know what you are going through today. I don't know what trial in your life is threatening your joy. But I do know this: if you are trusting in Jesus, the fiery trial won't last forever. So, rejoice in Jesus. He is on His way to rescue you.

THE INEXPRESSIBLE JOY OF JESUS COMES FROM BELIEVING THE PAIN ISN'T POINTLESS

7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Peter says a reason God would deem it necessary for us to suffer is so that the genuineness of our faith might be tested. Another way of saying that is "A Purpose for our Pain is to Prove our faith is real."

The difficult times of life expose what we really believe. That's why our trials are necessary, they press into what we believe. And, when we walk through our trials and find that we are still trusting in Jesus, we should rejoice because trusting in Jesus is the way we receive every blessing God has for us in Christ.

- It's by faith in Jesus we obtain the salvation of our souls. 1 Peter 1:9
- It's by faith in Jesus we are guarded by the power of God. 1 Peter 1:5
- It's by faith in Jesus we live the Christian life by the power of Jesus. Galatians 2:20
- It's by faith in Jesus we are pleasing to God. Hebrews 11:6
- It's by faith in Jesus we enter into spiritual rest. Hebrews 4

Every blessing of God for us in Jesus comes to us through faith. We will literally inherit heaven and earth through the work of Jesus that we receive by faith and by faith alone.

Friend, your pain isn't pointless. It's allowed by God to show you whether or not you are actually trusting in Jesus. And genuine faith is more precious than gold. So, as you walk through the difficulty of this life, rejoice that you are trusting in Jesus and that the pain is exposing the fact that your faith is real which means you are set to receive every blessing Jesus has in store for His people.

And that brings me to the final word for this morning.

THE INEXPRESSIBLE JOY OF JESUS COMES from BELIEVING JESUS IS DOING MORE THAN WE SEE

8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,

Twice in that verse, Peter talks about the fact that we haven't seen Jesus, and we don't see Him now. Our faith in Jesus is beyond what we can see. Now, there's a lot more here than what I'm pointing out, but this includes the fact that we can't see all that Jesus is doing while we await His return.

- We don't see how He is working all things together for His glory and our good, but He is.
- We don't see how He is ruling over the affairs of this world, but He is.
- We don't see how He is accomplishing all of God's good plan or fulfilling every prophecy of the Word, but He is.

And joy comes in believing Jesus is doing more than we can see.

1 Corinthians 2:8 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

My mom is one of the all-time great Christmas gift givers. One of the joys I had during Christmas as a child came when mom gave us all the strict orders not to go into her room. We knew what that meant. We couldn't see what she was up to but we knew it was good. Her room became an extension of Santa's workshop. It was a veritable North Pole outpost in our home. She was working on Christmas morning for us. We couldn't see what she was doing but we all rejoiced. Christmas morning was on its way, and we'd be getting the gifts prepared just for us. I could barely sleep on Christmas Eve. I'd literally lay in bed shaking from anticipation and ADD and the caffeine from mom's sweet tea. Christmas Eve was a long night for me because JOY was coming in the morning.

And, in an infinitely greater way, that's the joy that Jesus brings when we trust in Him. He's preparing a place just for us in the house of God our Father. He has gifts to give that are infused with the fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. And they're waiting for us. He's on His way. We cannot see all that He is doing, but the long night is almost over. Morning is about to break. Glory awaits. So, rejoice with great joy. The Christ of Christmas is coming soon!