

Luke 10:17 - 24 Part I

17 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." 18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. 19 "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. 20 "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

21 At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. 22 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." 23 And turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, 24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

This is a rare morning. This is the single time recorded where we find Jesus rejoicing. The Bible knows Jesus as the man of what? Sorrows. From Isaiah 53 we get the dominant view of Jesus.

*3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face,
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

That view dominates most of the biblical account of Jesus. Always in conflict, always suffering, always sorrowful. Hated. Despised. Rejected. Crucified.

And I get reminded from time to time that my tone in this pulpit is perhaps more negative than what people would wish, and I have to reflect and say,

anyone who is faithfully teaching verse by verse this book is going to be subject to more cautionary warning and conflict against the way of this world than positive thinking.

If you're as old as I am you recall the Disney movie about Pollyanna Whitaker where she comes upon the stern presbyterian preacher practicing his sermon in a field and she converts him by her magical positivity and he goes and finds every positive happy thing in the Bible to preach positive sermons for the rest of his days.

She tells him that her father had a quote from Abraham Lincoln that said; *If you look for the bad in mankind, you'll surely find it.* And how her father who was also a preacher had been transformed and had searched his Bible for the "glad" texts. There are 800 glad texts. Did you know that?

And Hollywood, and Pollyanna, and no doubt some of you would rather I would do like the once stern preacher in that movie and go search out the 800 "glad" texts and only study those and leave off with all of the negative warnings and hellfire and such. Perhaps more seats would be filled.

We could do that, but we'd have to abandon our verse by verse book by book study of scripture. As many before us have. And just concentrate on the "glad" texts. Ignore the overwhelming message and cherry-pick the sweet. Put away the spinach and just have ice cream sundae's. Pun intended.

Let me take you back to Isaiah 53 and give you just a tiny bit more context into the man of sorrows.

*3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face,
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

*4 Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;*

*Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.*

Jesus is the man of sorrows not because that's the normal disposition of God. He's the Man of sorrows because of the four verbs in vs. 4 that describe the imputation of the sins of sinful men upon one person who is the Saviour.

He bore OUR sorrows
He carried OUR grief
He was stricken with OUR punishment
He was smitten and afflicted with OUR judgement.

Jesus is the man of sorrows because He came to receive the punishment that we were due. He took upon Himself all of the sorrow of all of the sin of fallen mankind. Of course He was the Man of sorrows. But the sorrow wasn't His. It was ours.

If you study the attributes of God, you discover that God dwells in what? Joy. Joy! In fact you could even argue that it's the Joy of God that drives all of the other attributes. Everything derives from Joy.

An exultation from 1 Chronicles 16 when Israel assembled with David to place the ark of the covenant in a tent; Listen to the joy of that occasion, the joy of the Lord's presence among them; a song of joy; God's joy.

*23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.*

*24 Tell of His glory among the nations,
His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.*

*25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
He also is to be feared above all gods.*

26 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,

But the LORD made the heavens.

*27 Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and joy are in His place.*

*28 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.*

*29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come before Him;
Worship the LORD in holy array.*

*30 Tremble before Him, all the earth;
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.*

*31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;
And let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns."*

*32 Let the sea roar, and all it contains;
Let the field exult, and all that is in it.*

*33 Then the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD;
For He is coming to judge the earth.*

*34 O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.*

Joy is normative for God. It is the overwhelming attribute of God that He dwells in joy. *The trees of the forest will sing for joy before the Lord; why? For He is coming to judge the earth.*

And therein lies the dichotomy of joy and sorrow that is the theme of the whole Bible from beginning to end. The Bible begins with unspeakable joy, and it ends with unspeakable joy.

The problem is we live in the middle. Satan destroys the joy of the Lord by introducing sin and rebellion against God and His joy. We live in a world that is ruled and dominated by Satan. Darkness and sorrow reign. Joy is momentary in this world where Satan is the king and ruler.

Why is it that I absolutely love to go out into the Nevada outback to gather firewood. I've never not experienced the joy of the solitude of just simply being in God's creation devoid of any human influence. The solitude of God's created world, unmarred by the fall. I exult in those moments.

That's why we fight to keep just a few truly wild places. We need to have those moments of solitude with no other influence but the glory of God's creation. *The trees of the forest will sing for joy before the Lord; why? For He is coming to judge the earth.*

Even the trees rejoice at the coming cleansing and judgement where the ruler of this world will be cast into hell and the earth is restored to the glory, and the joy that it knew before the fall into sin and rebellion.

We could outline the entire Bible simply; Joy, Sin, Sorrow, Redemption / Judgement, Joy It begins in joy and it ends in joy.

From Genesis to Revelation we have the theme of Joy. We begin in Joy. Sin and sorrow comes. But God redeems this world, some to judgement, and some to joy. The final chapters are Joy restored. God dwells in joy.

In the parable of the talents, Jesus says; "*enter into the joy of your master*" And that's the introduction to this passage, this one time where we see Jesus, not in sorrow and conflict with this world, but in joy! This morning is about joy!

17 And the seventy returned with joy,

It's been a few weeks since we took a break from our verse by verse exposition of Luke's gospel. Christmas and a New Year have come and gone

since we studied about these 70 missionaries that Jesus has sent out 2X2 with the message of the Kingdom of God.

That study and manuscript are on line if you're curious. 35 teams of 2 canvas the countryside for an undisclosed amount of time with the message that the ruler of this world has been deposed and the authority to reign of God is here. That's what *the Kingdom of God is at hand* means.

Redemption is available. Forgiveness is available. You can come out of Satan's kingdom, satan's rule and come under the authority to reign of God. That possibility is here. That's available by grace to every person. That was their message.

It was a prototype test run for what would become the mandate of the Church that bears His name. These 70 are the prototype of what the church will be tasked to accomplish in Satan's world. It had a start and a finish. And having completed their mission, the 70 return with what? Joy!

Have you ever met these christians that are junkies. There is a kind of high that we experience when we're out on the front lines, enemy combatants in the war against Satan, the current ruler of this world, and when you're on the front lines taking shots at Satan, telling someone how they can come out of his sorrow and into the Lord's joy, that's a bit of a rush.

You get this sense about you that something bigger than you is at work. That your mouth is moving, and sound waves are emanating from you, but it isn't just you. When we're telling other's about what Jesus has done for us and the joy, even now, that can be deep seated in us, because we're literally snatched out of the fires of the judgement already set in place for this world.

That's a rush. And occasionally, although not nearly often enough, we meet these christians that are junkies for that rush. They live for that sense of otherworldly purpose when you're on the front lines taking shots at Satan. That's totally a rush. And that's what we have here.

These guys have returned, and the excitement of the joy of doing that, is just bursting out of them!

17 And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."

He had sent them out with power to do miracles in His name. Heal the sick. Raise the dead. In Matthews account He tells them to; *8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.*

There's a sense there that of all of those things, sickness, death, leprosy, those are physical things that you can see and touch, but the demons are invisible to us. And the 70 who return with joy are most astonished by the miracles they've witnessed in this spirit world of demon possession.

2000 years later, and indeed, after the first century of the church was closing, as the texts that we know as the New Testament were written and collected, the miracle age of the founding of the church ended.

The miracles were proof to Israel that God was indeed in their midst doing a new and different work through His Son. Miracles had been the agency of new revelation during the formation of God's people Israel and the receiving of the law by Moses.

Then as God spoke to His people through His prophets with new revelation, miracles accompanied that. But never before had there been the kind of miracles that accompanied the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus, as He comes with a new and different message for His people, Israel.

They crucified the messenger, and the risen Lord, after His ascension into heaven, accompanied His chosen apostles with miracles as the New Covenant unfolded during the first decades of the building of His church.

When the text was complete, the letters and autographs of the New Testament

were complete, the church established, the miracles ceased. Their purpose was over. The new had come, bathed with miracles. Written down by solid witnesses. Finished. We hold that text in our hands 2000 years later, but the miracles did their assigned task and vanished.

And 2000 years later we are far removed from this sense and understanding of demon possession and influence. Our world gazes at a man who breaks out a hotel window and senselessly slaughters people below with automatic weapons and we ask why?

A man is the leader and mastermind of men who plant bombs in roads and places to indiscriminantly slaughter other humans and he's the mastermind of all kinds of ways to murder Americans, blow up buildings and bridges, do who knows what next, and this week soldiers eliminate him, and no one asks, was that man demon possessed.

Did fallen angels, spirit beings, who are in the control and employ of the ruler of this world, Satan, possess that man and cause him to seek to destroy as many other people as he possible could. No one asks that question. To do so moves you out of the study of the seen, into the unseen. This world looks at you askance if you ask those questions.

Why are there pictures on the internet of the heads of christians out in front of a building like so many pumpkins in front of a house on halloween. Are demons involved in this obvious warfare where anyone naming the name of Christ are the targets.

And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." I can't help but wish we were not so far removed from this as is the case 2000 years later. I wish we understood this better.

These 70 were on a mission doing battle directly with Satan's armies and they were seeing first hand the dis-arming and subjection of those enemies of God, and the result was joy.

We don't have miracle powers today, but . . . we sort of do. I haven't cast out demons, but I've been in situations where I was totally aware that the Holy Spirit was present and using me to do battle with the enemy. And that's a rush. This kind of joy is available to us, 2000 years later.

Same Holy Spirit. Same enemy. Same problem. Same grace available. Same joy when someone hears and responds to the truth.

If you take away nothing else but one thing this morning, take away this; In this single passage where we see Jesus exulting in full joy, the cause of His joy, is the report of victory in the ongoing battle in this world between God and Satan. That's what's happening here.

The seventy return with joy and their joy is in the defeat of Satan and his kingdom in this world. They had gone out and engaged the devil, the ruler of this world, and had made inroads into his territory. They gained souls from Satan for God. They had been out on the front lines of battle and had gained ground for their King, Jesus. And they had returned with joy.

And likewise, the only time we see Jesus exulting in joy in the entire New Testament is here, in this situation. His prototype army has returned from the trial with stories of victory over Satan's realm, Satan's kingdom, and Jesus exults in that. Jesus exults in spoils of war. Takings. Souls snatched away from Satan and his dark kingdom and given to God. Taken back by God.

We sometimes watch as a nation when some captives in some hostile evil land are re-captured by a seal team, or like what the Israeli's did at Engedi, and we rejoice over prisoners set free from evil and re-united with their friends. We all rejoice any time that happens. The whole nation rejoices together.

The book is about that battle but on a spiritual level far more dynamic and important than physical rescues. Paul says: *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* Eph 6:12

We know who wins. We've read the end of the book. But here, we have a little window into the joy of taking ground for God. Winning souls. Taking from Satan and seeing them transferred to the victor. God, enlarging His territory in this world, one soul at a time. And Jesus exults.

Take this away too. When we do that; When God uses us to engage with Satan's kingdom in battle and take spoils for God, there's always a rush. There's always joy. Anytime God is winning and Satan is losing and we get to be involved in some small way, you can count on joy.

And Jesus just breaks out in language that is speaking in earthly terms of the heavenly battle. He's using physical images we can relate to, but this whole section is about God taking ground away from the enemy. God wins, Satan loses. And that gets Jesus fired up. This is what that joy sounds like.

18 And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

The only way to begin to make sense of this is to think outside the box for a moment or two. We live in a time - space continuum. We're locked in that box. Jesus lives in eternity. No time like we understand time.

And Jesus is speaking here in that sense. We'll understand it better by and by, as the song says. In our vernacular, it might be like this; You guys were out in Satan's realm enemy territory, setting prisoners free, retaking souls imprisoned by sin and Satan and bringing them safely back to God, and I was watching him in eternity fall from heaven like lightning.

Every time you guys did a miracle, set a demon to flight, snatched some soul out of the fire and brought them to safety in heaven's camp, I watched every one of those like lightning flashes, over and over. And with every flash Satan lost, and God gained.

And then He continues in that same vein. He's talking in the spirit realm but

using imagery we can make pictures in our minds with.

19 “Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.

This is exciting to think about. In the war between God and Satan, we are indestructible. We are hands off, to Satan and his demons.

Remember, this is all within the over-arching sovereignty of God. Within that sovereignty, Satan has no power over us. John says we are overcomers.

1John 4:4 says; *You, little children, are from God and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

You say, why then is christian blood being spilled all over this world for the last 2000 years. We don't feel very indestructible.

In the spiritual realm and in the physical realm, you are. Jesus says, not one hair of your head will perish. Satan can't even touch one hair of your head. Unless it's within the sovereign plan of God for you to be physically harmed or killed.

Paul says, Ro. 8:36 As it is written: *“For Your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”* Both are true in God's sovereign plan. Not a hair of your head can perish outside His permissive will, but a day is coming, and we think likely very soon, when being a christian will cost you your head. All day long.

Jesus says; in this war with Satan, and all of his magots, his scorpions and serpents, you are off limits. He can't touch you. Not a hair of your head can perish. Unless it is part of God's plan, and even then, all Satan can do is kill you, physically. We still overcome.

20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

It's fun being in the battle. Kickin butts and taking names in the spirit world. Claiming souls for God. Gaining ground in that battle of the ages of this world. Enlarging God's kingdom and diminishing Satan's realm. But that isn't where we base our rejoicing. The source of joy is in the truth that your name is written in the book of life in heaven.

Ultimately, because we have been purchased out of this world and belong to God, our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, we're going to dwell with God in His joy, forever. Rejoice in that.

I can't resist the temptation to quit right here for this morning and to have a second week of Jesus rejoicing in our study.

As I reflected this week on these things with all of the current events in our world, our president giving the command to eliminate an incredibly evil person, and then the aftermath missiles fired and mis-fired, Iran killing 170 people on an airline that should have been neutral territory;

As the talking heads on TV go on endlessly you can't help but think of how wicked and dangerous our world is. We're lucky to be huddled in a little tiny place in Nevada that no one is paying much attention to.

One of the things I listened to this week was an interview from 2003 about the conflict that immediately followed the 911 twin towers attacks. Evangelical leaders, good ones with names that you would recognize for being rock solid Bible people were called to the White House for council. The differences in our world from 2003 to 2020 are shocking. Things are changing so fast now.

The differences in just a few years of the influence of the people of God in the governance of the world to now are incredibly disturbing. 20 years ago, christians had a huge voice. A huge collective influence in the affairs of this world.

In just 15 - 20 years that influence has shriveled up to almost nothing. The world dismisses christians as a group of people who are no longer to be

considered in the discussion, folks with white hair who will soon be gone. A nuisance class of people whose views based in this book can barely be tolerated any longer.

I was a little shocked the other evening, the last one I had at work, a little group of folks had gathered in the day room upstairs in the living quarters out there, and the TV was on while everyone was laughing and light hearted.

There was a comedy club sort of thing on for a while, and if that wasn't filthy enough, then this cartoon series that I've never once paid a minute's attention to before, called South Park. Sort of an eye opener to me. I guess I'm an ostrich with my head in the ground.

Or maybe it's that thing Paul says to the Phillipians; 4:8 *Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.*

I watched that show and thought to myself, this is post-modernism at it's worst. Post modernism at it's logical conclusion. Everything that we thought was true, honorable, accepted, moral, whatever; is stupid. Everything's stupid. Everything.

And if that's true, nothing is any of those words Paul used. Nothing is true. Nothing is honorable. Nothing is right. Nothing is pure. Nothing is lovely. Nothing is of good repute. Nothing is excellent or worthy of praise. Everything is just . . . stupid.

Of course. Where else do you land when you're just a pile of cells and organisms that happened by accident flying through space on a rock going nowhere in particular. South Park makes perfect sense. Post modernism and post post modernism have no other possible conclusion. Nothing means anything and everything is stupid.

But I was thinking, how do you span that gap. How do you even begin to tell

these folks that they're actually dupes in an ages long battle between God the Creator and Satan the usurper of authority that doesn't belong to him in this world.

You aren't a meaningless collection of plasmas and spasmas flying through space on a meaningless rock going nowhere. You're a child of God created in His image, to give Him glory who has been robbed, stolen from the Creator and born in sin and rebellion. And judgement is near. Come out of this world that is perishing and be re-united with God who dwells in Joy.

You can enjoy Him both now, and for eternity with your sin removed by His Son Jesus who died for you, in your place.

That's not so different from what the 70 went out preaching. The Kingdom of God is present. The authority to reign of God, as opposed to the ruler of this world, is at hand. That kingdom authority is present. That's what they went out preaching. And our message doesn't need to be much different for the post-modern crowd.

Most churches are no fun. People don't want to be there because it's no fun. It's a bore. God's a million miles away and it's no fun because it isn't real. Everybody gets grumpy and dis-satisfied. I've been in places like that. Why do you think the normal stay for a preacher is just a couple of years.

This passage we studied this morning is about joy and it's source. These guys were full of joy because they had been out engaging Satan, and winning. And that's a pattern for joy and excitement in God's people that is just as valid today as it was 2000 years ago. The recipe for joy is to go do battle with Satan and recapture some territory that belongs to God. I guarantee, you'll experience joy when you do that.