

September 15, 2019

John 16:16-33

"Real Joy"

Have you ever had one of those days? It can be described in one word - ***apathetic***. I thank God they don't happen very often. Do you ever have one of those "meh" days?

In **Galatians 4:15**, Paul asks, **"What then has become of the joy you felt?"**

That's a good question to ask. "Where has the joy gone?"

Jesus did not save us to live a joyless life. Never settle for a lack of joy in your life. Never let a joyless rut cut a path through your life. Jesus didn't die on the cross for that to happen. It's not what God has made us for. God has made us for joy. These words of John 16 are Jesus' words to you.

Here's the truth we're going to see in them. In the days when things are going great, it's easy to talk about joy. When life is fantastic, we are not hard-pressed for joy. What about when things are rotten? What about when plans don't work out? What about when challenges pile up and

hardships increase? Can you look someone in the eyes and tell them you have a joy in Jesus Christ you can't find anywhere else?

Do you have joy **in all things?** Today, and next Sunday, we're going to find out how Jesus gives us joy in all things.

First thing we need to do is understand the context. Who is Jesus talking to? The disciples. These are the last words Jesus is going to have with his disciples before he goes to the cross. That alone is reason enough to take our time with these 18 verses. Jesus is speaking to them about a kind of joy that can face the cross. Jesus has it. And he says he wants his joy to be their joy. Jesus is facing the cross tomorrow. But before all that happens, he needs them to know what real joy is.

So that's our context. **Jesus wants his disciples to know real joy.** In spite of a world that can sometimes overwhelm with sorrow and sadness, Jesus wants them to have real joy. Today, and next Sunday, we're going to look at how Jesus brings joy into our lives.

Let's start with **John 16:16-20**:

"A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking about." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

Here are some words that probably apply to Christians you know:

- Secure.
- Burdened.
- Peaceful.
- Worried.
- Reasonable.
- Uptight.
- Pressured.
- Generous.
- Stressed.
- Joyful.

Those are but a sampling. Those words could probably describe most of us, at any given time or place. A mixed bag. Is that the kind of joy Jesus wants for us? A mixed bag? "I've got joy but I also worry a lot." "I've got joy but sometimes I get really stressed out." "I've got joy, but I also get angry over many things." Does that make sense? Would it make sense to say that Jesus wants that for your life? What kind of joy does Jesus want for your life?

Here's a thought to hang on to, and one that keeps me centered:

I would rather Christians be known for the joy they have than for what they are against.

Do our moments of joy surpass everything else? I think we want that to be true. How does the attitude of a Christian compare to that of a non-Christian? In other words, is there a noticeable difference between the attitude and outlook on life between the two? Is it an oxymoron to be an uptight Christian? Or a stressed-out Christian? Or a burdened Christian? Or a worried Christian? While our salvation is not dependent on a level of uptightness, certainly there ought to be a qualitative distinction about us.

That's exactly Paul's point in Galatians 5:22-23. Christians are loving and joyful and peaceful and patient and kind and good and faithful and gentle and self-controlled. What Jesus says here in chapter 16 is foundational to what Paul talks about in Galatians 5.

Here's what's important to remember. In these verses, Jesus gives us the key for joy in our lives. That's huge. There's no place else to find true and lasting joy. It is in Christ and Christ alone. Jesus talks about the difference between living with apathy and worry or with the excitement of finding joy each and every day. **What Jesus offers us is a joy that neither disappoints nor disappears.** Are you ready for that kind of joy in your life?

As we've seen for several weeks, chapters 13-16 are pivotal for the movement of John's gospel. They take place at the end of Jesus' time in the Upper Room with his disciples, on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. That's where Jesus will be betrayed, arrested, and set on his course to the cross. It's important to keep in mind that this teaching on joy happens right before those horrible hours.

Did you know that the conversation Jesus has with his disciples in chapters 13-16 runs about 30 minutes? That's it. Thirty minutes. Can your life change based on a thirty-minute conversation? Yes it can. It doesn't mean it's simple. All I know is with this pivotal teaching, God makes dramatic changes in people's lives. And that's something we all need when it comes to joy.

Between now and next Sunday, we're going to look at three requirements for real joy.

First, you have to understand God's process.

How does God bring joy into our lives? If you don't understand God's process when it comes to joy, you're going to spend a lot of time lost in the land of confusion. What that means is you are going to subject your life to a never-ending cycle of up-and-down; joy-and-no-joy. When you don't understand the process by which God brings joy into your life, you're going to bring stress into your life. The last thing you want is to fight against what God is trying to do.

To understand God's process for bringing joy in your life, first you have to deal with the confusion. Clearly, in verse 17, the disciples are confused.

"What is this that he says to us?" What's going on? They don't understand.

Have you ever felt like that? When looking at the circumstances in your life, do you ever ask, "What does it mean?" "Why is this happening?" "I don't understand what's going on right now." Have you ever felt that way?

When you're going through a time when you don't know the answer yet, here's something you might want to keep in mind:

God Knows More Than We Do.

{Let's all say that together.}

In their confusion, did you catch the first and biggest mistake the disciples make? They've got Jesus right there. He's sitting right there. And what do the disciples do? They start talking among themselves. They're probably whispering under their breath. Why do that? Jesus is right there in the room with them. Go to Jesus first.

What we're looking at here is foundational to every Bible study you will ever do. One of the things I like to say when we're looking at a passage is *in teaching his disciples, Jesus is teaching us, too*. That's the whole point and purpose of what Jesus is doing here. He's teaching them and, by extension, he's teaching us. So make sure you always turn to Jesus first. Know what he teaches in the Bible in a broad enough sense so you go to him first. Talking to others is important. Turning to other resources is good. Going to the Google machine is rarely a bad idea. Just make sure you go to Jesus first.

What happens when, in a time of confusion, we first and foremost talk among ourselves? We end up sharing our mutual ignorance. It's like saying, "I'm uninformed. You're uninformed. Let's share our uninformedness together." Never a good strategy. We wade out into a swamp of clichés and biases. Instead, turn to Jesus. What does Jesus have to say?

Here's the choke point with confusion. We're big picture people. We generally need to see and know what's going on. That's how we plan and

how we prepare. Big picture. Massive downloads of information. We like to have all the blanks filled in. But listen to **Hebrews 10:37:**

Yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay.

Jesus Christ will come again. That's when all the data gaps will get filled. But not until then. So there will be times of confusion. We don't see what God is doing. We can't see what God is doing.

Here's what God is teaching us. It happens in our confusion. It's two really big things.

1. Let the confusion drive you deeper into the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ.
2. And receive his gift of joy even in the midst of confusion.

The first thing we need to do is let Jesus overcome our confusion.

Second, you have to understand grief.

There is going to be loss in our lives. The disciples have spent three years with Jesus. Three years of intense experiences and teaching and friendship. Three years. And now he's telling them he's going away. He's going to suffer and die and leave them. Loss is real. And here's what

happens. There are things in our lives that we're hanging onto that don't bring us joy. Loss sucks the joy right out of us.

Here's where the perfect storm hits. There's going to be loss in our lives.

One of my favorite words in the English language describes it...*inexorable*.

Loss in life is like the one thing I have in common with John Elway. We have this hand tendon thing where the tendons tighten like winding a rubber band. It cannot be slowed or stopped. It is inexorable. That's loss.

The perfect storm is when loss crashes into a world that cannot give us joy.

If you think it's the world's job to give you joy or other people's responsibility to bring joy into your life, then you are grossly confused. It's like what I always say when someone complains, "I'm bored." You have to be honest and rephrase it with, "I'm boring." The world is not responsible for alleviating your boredom. Does that make sense? You have my permission to use it next time someone says, "I'm bored."

The world can't give us joy. Your life in this world isn't where joy is. Joy is in heaven. And please, please, please, don't hear that as an escapist cop-

out. One of the things we've already learned from John's gospel is that, once you embrace Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you already have eternal life. In Christ, you have a taste of heaven right now. That's why the Apostle Paul was able to say, "For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain." Eternity with Christ in heaven is already now, and it's only going to get better when we die.

So, you have joy in the face of loss because your future is eternity. Starting the moment you said "Yes" to Jesus Christ, God began pouring joy into your life.

Here's something you might want to write down:

GRIEF IS A PART OF THE PROCESS OF JOY.

That's where we're going to end. Come back next week...the first Sunday of fall...as we let Jesus speak joy into our lives.

