

God's Joy in Us

by John McGregor

The sermon emphasizes the importance of joy in our lives, which comes from God and is experienced through surrender, service, and faith.

Duration: 31:00

Scripture: Matthew 8:2-3, Matthew 28:1-10, Luke 2:22-24, Luke 7:11-15, John 9:1-7, Acts 3:1-10, Romans 12:1-2

Topics: "Joy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares stories of individuals who experienced the joy of serving God. He mentions a dear old saint named Hutchinson who encouraged a young girl by telling her that God has a plan for her life. The speaker also talks about D.L. Moody, a great evangelist with only a grade three education, who was inspired to surrender his life to God after attending a Bible study. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and appreciating the work of God in our lives and being available to serve Him. He concludes by highlighting the joy that comes from being chosen by God for a special service, referencing Luke 1:30-33.

Transcript

Joy. Jesse did a good job. He identified that happiness and joy are different, and indeed they are.

I just want to walk through some of the folk around the Christmas story. You notice here, Zachariah is quite filled with joy, as he's saying, praise the Lord, and giving blessing to God for what he's doing. That's joy when disappointment is overcome.

And this life can have many disappointments, can't it? But when it comes into the season of the birth of Jesus, one of the things that happens just before is the birth of this baby whose name is John. We call him John the Baptist, or John the Baptizer. And you know, it is a time in his father and mother's life, Zachariah and Elizabeth, when disappointment is overcome.

You see, for so long, they had been childless. But listen to the praise and the joy that's flowing because of the touch of God. And it is because of the coming of the Savior, all of this is to set the scene for him.

I think of a dear lady that we ministered to in Saskatoon, who would say every time somebody announced they were pregnant, it seemed like somebody was sticking a sword through her heart. And I remember praying with her at a communion service one day. And in December and in March, she called me and

said, you remember what you prayed? And I said, no.

She said, you said, Lord, let there be a little person on her knee by this time next year, and it's going to happen. And he's a fine redheaded specimen of a lad called David and going on strong with the Lord. You see, joy comes and touches our areas of disappointment.

And you know, there can be quite a few of them. Our failure to achieve our goals. I like to write down 10 things that I'd like to do at the beginning of every day.

And all too many days, there's still a bunch of them left come the end of the day. And you can get disappointed in not being able to do everything that you wish you could do. But Jesus, his coming addresses that failure, that humanness that we have.

And emptiness and loneliness and all of those kind of things that can come and come into our life so quickly. It is the joy of the coming of Jesus that sets that hope before us, that God is still at work and he is still on his throne. When opportunities don't work out.

I wonder how often Zachariah had thought, oh, you know, something's gonna work out, but it never did. Until that day when he was serving the Lord in the temple and the angel came to him. So how would you feel this morning? The things that have cast you down in the dumps, perhaps for a long time.

And an angel just walks in there and says, it's gonna be different now. It's gonna be different now. Now, Zachariah was just like you and me.

He had a struggle with unbelief. Am I really seeing this? Am I really hearing this? Because of his unbelief, the angel system, you're just gonna be dumb now until the baby is born. And when John is born, they're gonna name him Zachariah, like his father.

See, that's one of those traditions that goes along and we have it in my family except it skips every generation. My grandfather was called John and his grandfather was called John and so on. But as you think here, Zachariah steps in and says, no, no, his name is John.

You see, the joy is just bubbling out because he has not only heard what God said, he has seen it fulfilled. And you know, there are times when nobody understands the things that are going on in our hearts, but God sees and knows it all. I love in the Exodus when the children of Israel are crying out to God, set us free, set us free.

And what does scripture say? It says that God came down. Not only did he hear their cry, but he came down. And there's the touch again of joy and hope that comes through that.

The coming of Jesus addresses our disappointments. There have been times in my life when I wanted more than anything to be something or be somebody or have something or get something. And I smile even as I say it.

My first thing that I can remember really wanting was a pocket knife. Oh, if I could just have a pocket knife. And my mom and dad would say, you'll cut yourself.

But of course I said, no, I just had a pocket knife. I'd really have it together. So guess what was the first thing I did when I got my pocket knife? Embarrassing to go and ask for a Band-Aid.

You see, the things that we look for and think that that would be best for us often aren't. But the coming of Jesus, he comes to bring real joy and real hope. And sometimes when he just redirects things, oh, how good it is just to give it up.

We were talking upstairs at prayer time about the heart that really honors God. And I think about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Do you remember those three guys? And the king says to them, is your God able to deliver you? And they say, yes, O king, our God is able to deliver us.

But if not, don't you love those words? If not, we're okay. We're not gonna go your way anyway. We're going on with God.

Now what a picture of surrender and total surrender that is. No longer to be troubled and to be mad at people. There's no animosity toward that king who in human terms is about to take away their life.

They're just saying we're in the hand of God. And he is the real joy bringer. You find in the Christmas story that joy comes when we're chosen for a special service for God.

If you turn back just a few verses to Luke chapter one and beginning at verse 30 and down through 33, it says, but the angel said to her, this is Mary, do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the son of the most high the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

His kingdom will never end. Earthly kingdoms come and go. Things change in the heartbeat, don't they? But here is the joy that comes from being chosen for a special service.

What is the result when that is announced to Mary? The result is what we call in scripture, Mary's song. Because the coming of the savior brought such joy. She couldn't contain it, it just kind of bubbles out.

And she's thanking God for all that he is doing in her heart and in her life. She is one who is available to God. And you know, there are many times in your life and mine when God would seek to use us and we just need to be available to him.

But when was the last time that you heard a Christian say, praise God from whom all blessings flow. He chose me to go and tell you about the Lord Jesus. Do you know, Darren, that the Lord chose me this morning to speak to you about, oh, this is a different kind of joy than the joy that presents bring or the joy that material things work.

This is a joy that is so deep seated, you just can't keep it in. God's plan of redemption is in place for you and me because of the coming of Jesus. And when we walk by faith, the joy of the amazing works of God is there.

I wanna tell you, we have seen God amazingly work in this congregation in the last seven days. Indeed, the last nine days, because Brad saw him at work in that Omni as many young people from all over the city came and other great things have happened this week. You know, when that thing called the clothesline happened, about 80 people walked through here and picked up some clothes for children and so on.

And a lady wrote to us in an email expressing just her gratitude and the job that you as a church did was remarkable to touch her life. Wonderful things. But you know what happens? We so easily can drift by them and forget that this is the gift of God at work in us, day by day, doing so many great things.

And we need to just say, Lord, I wanna take every opportunity to serve you. Now, I've never found a congregation that loves me or that I love as much as Glenn can. But I wanna say this to you graciously and with respect.

I'm still looking for a congregation and long to be a part of a congregation that is saying, Lord, Lord Jesus, pick me, pick me. Lord, I'd love to go. Lord, I see that young person and the pain in their eyes.

Is there some word, Lord, you could give me just to say something to them? Lord, I see that senior citizen and the pain of all that life has thrown. Is there an encouragement that I could bring? Oh, God. Now, you see, the joy, you just can't contain it because the other side of that reminds me of a young Metis lady that we ministered to oh, so many years ago.

We went one night to do a service in a lodge for seniors who couldn't move around anymore. Remember Shelly's face as we came out of that place? She had a glow and a big smile. And I said to her, you enjoyed that? She said, something wonderful happened to me.

And I'm thinking, well, I wonder what that could be. Maybe somebody gave her some financial help or something, you know? And I said, well, what is it? And she said, Mrs. Hutchinson. Is this dear old saint sitting in a wheelchair? And what did she say to this young girl? She said to her, God has a plan for your life.

God has something that he wants to give just to you. You just say tender before the Lord and let him work it out. Oh, I think about this opportunity to serve him.

Maybe this is why we're so short on joy these days. Because we don't have that sense of report. Look at what the Lord has done.

D.L. Moody, great evangelist, grade three education. Gotta love it. Only God can do that.

He went to a Bible study one day and the guy who led the study just finished the study with these words. The world has yet to see what God will do through one person who is totally surrendered to him. And Moody walked out of that place and said, God, I'm gonna be that man.

Oh, I don't have time to tell you the whole story of Moody, but I tell you this. In a week in London, he watched 80,000 people respond to the gospel. No wonder he had joy.

The Queen, Queen Victoria came to one of those services and they said to him, the Queen is here, the Queen is here. Moody said, I hope she'll be blessed. He wasn't worried about the Queen, he knew the King.

And he knew the outcome of serving the King with a full heart. There's joy and amazement all over the place when you look at the scriptures concerning the birth of Jesus. There's joy and amazement in heaven.

How do we know that? Well, it tells us here in Luke's gospel and the second chapter that at his birth, the angels did what? Sang. They poured out praise, they poured out joy at the birth of the Savior. When God

became a man, heaven could not contain the joy.

Oh, I tell you, when we walk by faith, this joy is intended to be ours. Friends, what is it that you're looking for this Christmas time? Is it peace in the family? Is it a togetherness for the family? Is it all those good things that traditionally Christmas brings? Can I just say to you, the greatest gift is that Jesus lives in you and longs to work through you and will do a change in hearts and lives through you and through us as a congregation, even in this area and in this city. Did you notice that the joy and the amazement that pours forth from heaven speaks about the birth of the King? Now, I've pondered this a little bit and all through history, I see that there are people who are born princes.

You know what I mean? When they're born to a royal lineage, they are born a prince. What do we call Charles? Prince Charles, right? Well, isn't it unique to be born a King? And that's our Jesus. He is the unique Son of God.

As we think in John 3, 16, the only Son of the Father in that sense. Born a King, not diminished in power. Yes, he shed that kingly spot there in glory to come here, but he was born here as a baby, yes, but as what? King.

And the gifts that they came and brought to him of gold and frankincense and myrrh, you know, gold is a gift for a King, yeah. You'll find that there is joy of promises that have been given by God and they are fulfilled as you look at the text through Luke's gospel, especially about the coming of the Lord Jesus. I'll go turn with me to chapter two in verses 26 to 29 for just a couple of moments.

Chapter two, 26 to 29. Begin at 25. It says, there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon.

He was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the law required. Simeon took him in his arms and praised God. There is that joy coming out in praise again and again and again.

How many years had Simeon waited since God gave him the promise? I'm grateful that God doesn't give me a promise today and fulfill it tomorrow. I'd grow so callous with that. But there are times when we wait upon God knowing that he will do exactly what his word says and how wonderful it is.

As you look at the examples in scripture, you think about Simeon here. He must have gone to the temple day after day after day. He must have wondered, is this ever gonna happen? God, I know you said it, but is it gonna happen? The great promise of life, the great promise of Christ is always fulfilled.

That day when he walked into that temple, think about the coincidence that he came into the temple just at the time that Mary and Joseph are bringing Jesus in. Don't you love this? How in scripture, things just interact in God's perfect time and way. He had gone there thousands of times, but that day, it was different.

What is it that you've gone to God for? Thousands of times. Oh, that in faith believing, it would be different today. And the joy of Jesus would pour out.

It would pour out promise. Two more and I'll quit. There is the joy of seeing Jesus in chapter two, verses 36 through 38.

It says there was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old. See, Brad, there were old people in the Bible.

She had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage and then was a widow until she was 84. She never left the temple, but worshiped day and night, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

There's that pouring forth of praise and joy again. Here is this one who is coming just again at the right moment. There she's coming to worship and here he is, the Savior.

Here. You know, in North America, oftentimes, we have this thing called easy believism where we say, say this prayer and you're saved and that's the end of it. Couple of years ago, I was ministering in Holland in some of the reformed churches there and I stayed with a couple and the wife said, I've gone to church all my life, but I'm still not sure that if I died today, I'd go to heaven to be with Jesus.

And I said, have you prayed for it? And she said, yes, I've prayed for it, but I don't know if I have it. And I said to her, you know, there comes a time when we just have to believe what Jesus said. But you know what her situation was? She didn't want to be mistaken.

She understood that this was the most important thing that she could ever know or do and she just did not want to be mistaken. But I remember on toward one o'clock that night as we just looked at verse after verse after verse of how Jesus says, if you call, I will answer. If you invite me in, I'll come in.

And I remember the tears as she said, oh God, you did it. You did it the first time I asked you. I've just tried to go on in unbelief.

I said to her, what is it that changed in your heart this night? She said, as we looked through these verses about Jesus, I saw Jesus, I saw that he came for the world. Yes, but he came for me, for me. Isn't that how Anna must have felt that day? Here he is.

She didn't find a program. She didn't find a philosophy. She found a person, a savior.

I want you to notice she was going to worship and that's where she found him, at the place of worship, the place of the word and prayer and fasting. If we want answers, this is still where we find him. One last thought before we move to the Lord's table.

And some of you will be in shock because you didn't think I could preach in less than 30 minutes, but it has happened before. Think for a moment about the joy of the leper who comes to say, Jesus, if you're willing, you could heal me. And Jesus says, I'm willing, be healed.

Think about the joy of the blind man, born blind, who meets the Lord Jesus and he touches his eyes. No wonder when he was questioned, he just said to the leaders, to the Sanhedrin, I don't know if he's a sinner or not, but I know for sure that when he touched my eyes, they opened. Think about the joy of the mother leading a burial procession out of the community called Nain.

And she meets the Prince of Life at the city gate and looking at the circumstances and the pain and the agony. Jesus just says, young man, get up. Think about the joy of those ladies, the mourning that they went to the tomb, trying to sort out, how are we gonna get in there? Isn't that always our problem? How are we gonna do it? And what is it that they discover? God has already done it.

The tomb was opened. And again, the angels are singing joy. Let's take a moment or two just to meet the Lord in prayer, just right where we are.

When was the last time, my dear friend, that the Lord Jesus filled you with such joy you could not contain it? Yes, there's hurt in this world. Yes, there are difficult circumstances in this world. Yes, there are things in this world that we cannot change.

But beyond all that and above all that, the coming of the Lord Jesus fills us with joy because truly nothing is impossible with God. So let me just encourage you in these moments as we pray, those issues and burdens that you're carrying, those changes that you're looking for, those plans that you have, set them at the foot of the cross. And just take a moment of absolute surrender and like those three young men of old say to the Lord, but if not, I'm still going on with you.

For you are the life giver and the joy bringer. You are the hope of time and eternity. Lord, we're so grateful that you're here in this room at this moment.

And just as we have been looking at the testimony of your word and the fact that it brought such joy to so many lives around the birth of our Savior, Lord, would you grant to us in this moment of quiet surrender, freedom. Joy, faith, hope, strength, love. Lord, would you continue with us as we come to meet you at your table? Would you do such a continuing work in our hearts just to draw us on after yourself? Lord, we'll be careful, Lord, to give you and you alone all the glory in Jesus' name.

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