

A Gospel of Great Joy

by K.P. Yohannan

The Gospel of Great Joy is a message of hope, light, and celebration that brings joy to a sin-ridden world.

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 16:11, Luke 2:10, Luke 15:7, John 16:33, Acts 16:25, Romans 15:13, Philipppians 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, James 1:2-3

Topics: "Joy in Christ", "Celebrating Faith"

Description

K.P. Yohannan emphasizes that Jesus embodies joy and celebration, contrasting this with cultural perceptions of spirituality that equate holiness with solemnity. He highlights that Jesus came to bring light and hope to a troubled world, as evidenced by the joyful announcement of His birth and the celebratory parables He shared. Yohannan encourages believers to recognize the joy that comes from God, which can sustain them even in difficult times, and to actively seek out the blessings in their lives. He challenges the audience to reflect on their own joy and to make a conscious effort to embrace the happiness found in their faith. Ultimately, he asserts that a joyful believer serves as a powerful testament to the reality of the Gospel.

Transcript

When I first saw a few clips from The Visual Bible's Matthew, I didn't like it. It showed Jesus laughing, celebrating after healing the sick and throwing children up in the air and catching them. He always seemed to be enthusiastic and happy when He was teaching or dealing with people. You see, I come from a culture in which spirituality is measured by how solemn, dignified and holy your appearance is. This means that as a servant of God, you must wear white clothes, keep a serious face even if you are happy and carefully guard your behavior.

You wouldn't want to spoil your image by laughing out loud or running around playing with the kids. All this actually comes from eastern mysticism, in which the way to holiness and spirituality is asceticism--the renouncing of all worldly pleasures, comforts and emotions. It is a counterfeit spirituality produced by Satan. After viewing this film, I read through the four Gospels again just to see what Jesus was really like. For the first time, I gained an awareness of someone who was genuinely happy.

There was a spirit of celebration, a positive note that I saw in His life. People felt drawn to Him, and in His presence, those with deadly diseases and even the worst sinners were filled with new hope. Jesus came to this earth not to add gloom and hopelessness to people's lives, but to bring light, hope, laughter and the joy of heaven to a sin-ridden world. The angels didn't announce His birth by saying, "Oh, what a sad and

gloomy event. God's Son is going to be persecuted and killed.

Let us mourn and weep." No! They were praising God and telling the shepherds about the good news of great joy for all people. Jesus vividly illustrated for us with the parables of the lost coin, sheep and prodigal son how all of heaven breaks out in elaborate celebration over each sinner who turns to God (see Luke 15:7). He even portrays God the Father as the One who initiates the banquet, singing and dancing. Above all, the joy, happiness and celebration will never come to an end in heaven.

Psalms 16:11 says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." What a place that will be! As believers, we have something outstanding that the world yearns for. Think about it--why do people like to listen to music, watch comedy shows, tell jokes, read cartoons or storybooks and play games? There is something in human nature that longs to smile and be happy. Yet all the happiness the world can offer is short-lived. Our joy originates from heaven and is therefore able to fill our hearts even in the midst of suffering and difficulties.

Paul and Silas, severely beaten and in chains, were celebrating in prison. Why? Their joy was anchored not in their own strength but in the promises of God: that all things would work out for their best, that Jesus had gone to the Father to prepare a place for them and that He would return to take them there. What about us? Do people encounter that overflowing joy, found in Jesus and the early Christians, in our lives as well? There is no more powerful advertisement for the reality of the Gospel than a believer filled with the love of Christ and the joy of heaven.

Why is it, then, that our joy is so often nowhere to be found? We allow the problems of this world to overtake our heart and emotions. At the same time, we forget--or simply don't believe--the promises of God that tell us not to be anxious for tomorrow and not to fear because He has overcome the world. We start counting our woes instead of counting our blessings. And we fail to recognize the goodness of God and His encouragement in our surroundings. To begin to live a life filled with the joy of heaven, we must make a conscious decision to reverse all these trends.

One of the best ways to learn to smile is to go on a "God Hunt," which is how my dear friend David Mains would describe it on his radio program. This simply means that I look every day to discover even the tiniest thing God deliberately arranged in my life to tell me of His love and care: Perhaps somebody writes a letter, calls on the phone or says a kind word, just when I need it. A motorist stops to let me safely cross the street. Someone offers to carry my grocery bag when I am exhausted.

A total stranger smiles at me when I feel gloomy, as if God is reminding me, Be happy--I am with you. Jesus, the One we serve, is the Light of the World. In Him there is no darkness, and there is so much to be happy about as we follow Him. Praise God! What good things did God do for you today?

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