

Constant Joy

by Richard E. Bieber

The sermon emphasizes the importance of joy in Christianity and provides practical advice on how to overcome barriers to joy and experience joy in daily life.

Scripture: Luke 10:20, John 15:10, John 16:20, Philippians 4:4, 1 Peter 1:6

Topics: "Christian Joy", "Spiritual Peace"

Description

Richard E. Bieber preaches about the promise of joy that Jesus gives to His followers, even in the midst of tribulations and persecutions. He emphasizes the importance of having God's joy in our lives, as it sustains us through trials and keeps our minds clear. The sermon highlights that true joy comes from knowing, loving, obeying, and walking with Jesus, and that rejoicing in the Lord affects every aspect of our lives, bringing hope, peace, and deliverance from anxiety.

Transcript

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

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. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

But now I am coming to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Jesus not only promised that we'd have tribulation,

that we'd be persecuted,

that the world would hate us,

he also promised that we would have joy.

Just as surely as we cannot survive as God's sons and daughters without love,

- he that loveth not his brother abideth in death,

and just as surely as we cannot survive without God's peace dwelling in our hearts, neither can we survive without God's joy.

Without joy in us, the whole gospel of Jesus becomes pie-in-the-sky by-and-by---wishing and guessing but never knowing. Joy is

- God's reality in us now.

- God's Spirit in us now.

- Jesus' presence with us now.

When we have God's joy in us we don't need to go sniffing at every side road. We're satisfied, we're fulfilled,

confident,

strong.

God's joy,

- carries us through our tribulations,

- sustains us on our desert journeys,

- keeps our minds clear even when the flames sear our bodies.

"But I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you."

This is what marked the lives of our brothers and sisters of apostolic days. Their families were torn apart, their bodies were tortured, many of them met violent death, yet to this day we can still feel the warmth of their joy as we read the scriptures. How else do you suppose they survived, but through their joy?

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy.

Peter was going through it and so were the people to whom he was writing, but they had this divine joy in them nobody could take away and this was the mark of God's presence.

Many of us pretend to have joy when we really don't.

We read scriptures about joy, hear a teaching about it, and say, "Amen," and then pretend we have it. But the emptiness in our hearts is so obvious. We're so restless, so unstable, that anybody can see it isn't there.

I was at a meeting at a university one time - a little gathering of professing believers huddled together like frightened mice in this room overlooking the campus. While we were praying, one of the believers said, "Lord, help us to be able to share our joy with those masses of students out there who don't know you."

"Help us to share our joy....." You almost felt like crying. The first thing anyone out there on the campus would have said is, "Joy? You call that frightened, timid, ingrown spirit joy? Keep it friend!"

That student was dreaming. There was no joy there. There was a presence in that room which would even have dampened the spirit of the happiest child.

And how often we do exactly what those religious students were doing: piously ask God to help us share a joy we don't even have.

- How can we bring joy to this troubled city if we don't have any?

Better we should admit the truth.

"Lord, you promised joy" - yet it keeps getting away from us.

We taste it - then it evaporates.

We touch it sometimes as we worship - then it fades.

Was it only to the twelve that you said, 'I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.'

"Lord, give it to us! Help us find it!"

Notice how simple the promise is: I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice.

Not: you'll get gifts and your hearts will rejoice, you'll see visions and
your hearts will rejoice. Rather:

- I will see you.

- I will come to you.

- I will be your joy.

Once we come to the point where we really meet Jesus,

just knowing him,

just walking with him is our joy.

The Kingdom of God is joy in the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit makes Jesus real.

- What do we need besides him?

One day everything else we have will be taken from us, even these bodies. But Jesus will still be there. And our joy will be undiminished because he is with us.

Ah, but for that joy of the Lord to well up in our hearts and spill out over our lives and fill them constantly, there is one thing we have to do: we have to rejoice in him.

When you married the girl you were joyful. But as the years passed your joy faded. You say it's her fault. You say she changed. But more likely you failed to rejoice in her. You stopped delighting in her. She didn't kill your joy - you did!

How much more is this true with Jesus.

- His presence in our lives is joy.
- He fulfills and satisfies as nothing else does.

But we have to rejoice in him, delight in him,
open our hearts toward him with thanksgiving and praise.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

Rejoice in him so much that it affects your relationship toward all men, delivers you from anxiety,
fills you with hope,
lifts your prayers.

What a difference it makes,

- in our worship,
- in our dealings with each other,
- in our family life,
- in the quality of our work,

when we are constantly rejoicing in the Lord.

"But I just can't seem to do this. I try to rejoice in the Lord, but it isn't real. It seems phony."

Some things to keep in mind:

1. We can't rejoice in the Lord when we're all taken up with ourselves.

Here's a brother who's very, very serious, it would seem, about the things of God. But the truth is, he's very, very serious about himself. He quotes the Bible endlessly, seems to have a profound grasp of truth. But all the

time he's standing outside of himself, watching himself, watching his good deeds, watching his mistakes, watching his ministry unfold, watching himself pray. Then he wonders why he has no joy. Who of us can have joy watching himself? It will make any of us sick.

What a relief when we come down off our pedestals and turn the spotlight off ourselves and look at him.

Look unto him and be saved, all the ends of the earth.

2. We can't rejoice in the Lord when we're critical.

We can go through the motions of rejoicing. We can say, "Praise the Lord." But a critical spirit and a spirit of joy cannot inhabit the same person at the same time. When we're critical our attention is fixed on those we're critical of.

When we're joyful our attention is fixed on the thing we're rejoicing in. And when we have given ourselves over to a critical spirit that finds fault with everything except its admirers, how can we rejoice? It's not worth it! Let go of the critical spirit and start rejoicing in the Lord and you'll not only have joy, you'll have all the wisdom you need to steer clear of false prophets, hypocrisy, and whatever demon may come along dressed like an angel.

3. We can't rejoice in the Lord when our minds are cluttered.

When the moneychangers get into the Temple worship ends and it's all business. And when the cares and riches and pleasures of this life get into our hearts and distract us from the glory of our Lord, when we allow ourselves to be so bogged down with the details of living that we lose sight of the purpose of our life, our joy in the Lord is gone.

It's all calculating business. Even our hopes shrivel down to covetousness. What many of us need to do is see what this clutter in our minds is doing to us.

- Push back the clutter and clear a path so that we can rejoice in the Lord.

4. We can't rejoice in the Lord when we're holding back part of the offering.

Nobody told Ananias and Sapphira that they had to sell that field and lay the proceeds at the apostle's feet. Nobody told them they had to give the entire amount.

But when they pretended to be giving all while they were only giving part, they put themselves under judgment. And when we give the impression that we're sold out to the Lord when in fact we're holding back, when we try to make the brothers and sisters think we're absolutely surrendered, when our private thoughts,

our home life,

our work habits, are far from surrendered, there's no way we can rejoice.

What a relief when we bring our deeds in line with our words - when we let go of this secret reserve we've been holding on to and abandon ourselves to him.

5. We can't rejoice in the Lord when we're prayerless.

It happens so gradually that we aren't even aware that our prayer life is drying up. A little less time in prayer, then a little less. A little more daydreaming until we have our prayer life down to a dead routine.

We're saying prayers, but we're not communing with the Lord of our lives. So how can there be any joy until we wake up and start to pray once more?

6. We can't rejoice in the Lord when we're uncommitted.

When the rich ruler approached Jesus he came with great hope that was almost joy. But when he wouldn't let go of his riches and commit himself to Jesus he went away sorrowful.

And a great deal of our sorrow is,

- the sorrow of a soul which is walking away from commitment,
- the sorrow of a soul that refuses to be tied down.

Many a marriage is lacking joy because the man and woman aren't really committed to each other. If you're having trouble rejoicing in the Lord, ask yourself if you've really committed yourself to him.

- To the work Jesus has given you to do.
- To the brothers and sisters where Jesus has placed you.
- To the lost to whom Jesus sends you.

"I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you."

The joy is in knowing, loving, obeying, walking with Jesus.

HE IS OUR JOY!

May God help us to clear out of the way those things that have divided our hearts, cluttered our minds, darkened our spirits.

Whatever is hindering us from rejoicing in our Lord is not worth clinging to.

. Get rid of it.

Cast it aside.

Turn from it,

and begin this hour to rejoice in the Lord who is with us now and will be with us forever if we but walk in his light.

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