

What Is Joy?

by Stephen Kaung

Joy is a deep and lasting sense of well-being that comes from God, and it is found in Christ and in Christian fellowship.

Duration: 1:05:57

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 16:11, Psalm 30:5, Psalm 51:12, Philippians 2:1-2, Philippians 4:4-5, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Joy"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that true joy can only be found in the Lord. He quotes several Bible verses that highlight the connection between joy and the Lord. The preacher contrasts the temporary pleasure found in worldly things with the lasting joy found in God. He also emphasizes the importance of Christian fellowship and the role it plays in experiencing joy. Overall, the sermon encourages believers to find their strength and joy in the Lord.

Transcript

verse 10 the last sentence. for the joy of the Lord is your strength. the joy of the Lord is your strength.

psalm 16, psalm 16 verse 11. thou will make known to me the path of life. thy countenance is fullness of joy.

at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 2. looking steadfastly on Jesus, the leader and completer of faith, who in view of the joy lying before him endured the cross, having despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. And finally, Philippians.

Philippians chapter 2 verses 1 and 2. Philippians chapter 2 verses 1 and 2. If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any vows and compassions, fulfill my joy, that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing. Chapter 4 verses 4 and 5. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice.

Let your gentleness be known of all men. What is joy? Why is joy so essential to life? Where can we find joy? Is what we commonly call happiness, joy? I believe we need to answer these questions. Lest we seek the wrong thing.

Pleasures that give us temporary enjoyment, delight and satisfaction, are not joy. Joy is something that is sustained and lasting. It is something within us.

It is in the Spirit. Joy is something that is not affected by outward circumstances. Because joy is in God.

Do we really know joy? What the world has, does it give us joy? Now brothers and sisters we all know that we live in a very cruel world. Since the fall of man, thorns and thistles have grown on the earth. And in a sense this represents what life is.

Life on this earth is full of thorns and thistles. Toil and pain are the norms of life. And because of this, men try to find something to alleviate their pains and sorrows.

They seek for pleasures to compensate the tragedy of life. And you may find it very interesting that it is the descendants of Cain who first practiced polygamy. Pleasures of the flesh.

They invented music, the pleasures of the ears. They were the inventors of tools of iron and brass. Pleasures of comfort in life.

And they were the first who built cities and laid in tents for protection. What we consider as civilization or culture actually begins with the seeds of Cain. Not the descendants of Abel.

Why? Because they want to find something to compensate this difficult hard life. And they try to find pleasures in material and earthly things. In physical things.

Because that's all they know. But brothers and sisters, do they find joy? They have pleasures. The pleasures of sins.

The pleasures of the things of this world. But do they find joy? Do they really find strength in their life? As a matter of fact, the more pleasures they derive from the things physical and material, the weaker they become. And the more disturbed, confused they are.

In other words, these things in which they try to find pleasures, do not really give them joy. They do not last. They are not the joy that the Bible talks about.

Take away a little thing from their life. And you'll find immediately they become sad, disappointed, frustrated, despair. That is what you'll find in this world.

The Bible says, the joy of the Lord is your strength. Only the joy that comes from the Lord gives us real strength. But what is the joy of the Lord? The psalmist said, Thou wilt show us, show me the path of life.

What is the path of life? What is life? What is the way to life? How do we find life? He says, Thy countenance is fullness of joy. To put it in another way, in thy presence is fullness of joy. Better than that, in thy face is fullness of joy.

This is to say, if we can see God, if we can see his face, if we live in his presence, then we will have joy and we will be full of joy. Conversely, if we do not see his face, if we do not live in his presence, then there is nothing that will give us joy. In thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Only when we see his hand, then we have pleasures forevermore. It is not just a passing, transient, fading pleasure, but it will be an everlasting pleasure, when we see the hand of God moving. So brothers and

sisters, joy is not in things, joy is not in circumstances, joy is in God, it is in Christ.

If we really abide in him, if we see his face continuously, if we see his hands moving, no matter what happens around us, there is joy and the joy of the Lord is our strength. The prophet Habakkuk says, for though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines. The labor of the olive tree shall fail, and the field shall yield no food.

The flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Now he is describing a scene, which will give everyone despair and disappointment, because the fig tree shall not blossom. You know in those days, they depend on the fig tree, on the vine, on the olive tree, for their food, they depend on the field, and depend on the herd in their stalls.

This is their very living, and yet the prophet says, even if all these have failed, yet I will rejoice in Jehovah, I will joy in the God of my salvation, Jehovah the Lord is my strength. So you can see very clearly, that joy is not in things, joy is in the Lord. Once upon a time there was a great king, his name was Solomon, and Solomon wrote, in his old age, in Ecclesiastes.

He said, I the preacher was king over Israel in Jerusalem, and I apply my heart to seek and search out my wisdom concerning all that is done under the earth. This grievous occupation hath God given to the children of men to weary themselves therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the earth, and behold, all is vanity and pursuit of the wind.

I said, you my heart, come now, I will try thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure, but behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, madness, and of mirth, what a valedict. I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me gardens and parks, I planted trees in them of every kind of fruit, I made me ponds of water, to water therewith the wood, where the trees are reared.

I applied servants and maidens, and as servants born in my house, also I had great possession of herds and flocks, above all that had been in Jerusalem before me. I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of provinces. I got me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the children of men, a wife and concubines, and I became great, and increased more than all that had been before me in Jerusalem, also my wisdom remained with me.

Often times when you have these things, your wisdom is lost. And whatsoever mine eyes desire, I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labor, and this was my portion from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that it had cost me to do them, and behold, all was vanity, and pursuit of the wind, and there was no profit under the sun.

Brothers and sisters, what a contrast! If we try to find joy in the things of this world, it may give you a temporary pleasure, but then it will give you a lasting regret, because joy cannot be found in things, not even in laughter. Sometimes I think the people in this world know more how to enjoy themselves than Christians. Sometimes I even find that the people of this world seem to be very happy.

They joke, they laugh, they seem to be happy, but is that joy? Once a man came to a medical doctor to be examined, and the doctor found that there was nothing wrong with that man, and yet that man was depressed, unhappy, having no will to live. So finally the doctor suggested, I think the best thing for you to do is to go to the theater, and to watch the clown, a famous clown, and then you will forget all your

sorrows, and you will be very happy. That man shook his head and said, it won't work.

Why? Because he said, I am that clown. I make people laugh, but I cannot laugh. You cannot find joy in things, nor in your circumstances.

The only place where you can find joy is in God. The joy of the Lord is your strength. Look at our Lord Jesus, when He came into this world, the angel told the shepherds, that I am bringing to you the good news of great joy, because in the city of David a child is born, who is the Savior.

You know we often think that when Christ came, He has brought peace into this world. Now that's true. Peace on earth, and good will towards man.

But we forget that when our Lord Jesus came into this world, He not only brings peace into this world, He brings joy into this world. He knows how unhappy men are, and that's the reason why He comes, to bring joy to our hearts. But look at the life of our Lord Jesus.

So far as His life was concerned, His life was hard, was difficult. He was born in a manger. There was no place for Him.

No home, not even a hotel. He was real in Nazareth, an out-of-the-way, hilly place. A Nazarene, a Galilean.

He said, the foxes have homes, the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to rest His head. A hard life. He was often misunderstood.

More misunderstood than understood. He was misunderstood even by His brethren in the flesh. He was misunderstood even by His own disciples.

He was misunderstood, of course, by the people at that time. He was misunderstood by His enemies. How He loved, and yet they repay Him with hatred.

They rejected Him. How He toiled and labored, and they did not believe in Him. Anyone who is in that kind of circumstances, and being deprived of all the earthly things that make up pleasure, so-called, will be depressed beyond measure.

But not our Lord. At the depths of disappointment. In Luke chapter 10, He lifted up His head.

He rejoiced in His Spirit. And He said, I thank you, Father. I praise you, Father.

Because this is Thy will. Thou dost reveal these things to the babes, but not to the wise and the prudent. At the depths of disappointment, He was filled with joy.

On the night of His betrayal, His disciples knew something was going to happen. They did not really understand, but they sensed something was going to happen. The Master was leading them.

They were sorrowful, grieved. And yet, if you read John chapter 14 to chapter 16, you'll find that our Lord Jesus, even at that moment, knowing what exactly would happen to Him. Knowing that one of His disciples would betray Him.

One of His closest would deny Him. And all of His disciples would be scattered. And He would be alone.

And yet, when He talked with His disciples, He said, I say these things to you, that I may give my joy to you. And that your joy may be full. He had joy.

Nothing could take away His joy. My joy. And He had joy to spare.

Joy to impart. To distribute. He told His disciples, for the time being, you will be grieved.

But, I'm coming. And when I come, your grief will be turned to joy. And a joy that no one can take away.

A joy that no one can take away. Dear brothers and sisters, oftentimes what we consider as joy can easily be taken away. Anybody can take it away.

Not only your enemies can take it away. Your friends can take it away. Your husband can take it away.

Your wife can take it away. Your children can take it away. A little something can take it away.

But the Lord said, when I come again. And remember, this does not refer to His second coming. This refers to His resurrection.

In that day, when He shall come to His people, in the Holy Spirit. And He will dwell in them. And they shall see Him every moment.

And that's the reason why no one can take that joy away. And He said, in that day, whatsoever ye shall ask, it shall be done to you, that your joy may be full. What is the joy of the Lord? Surely the joy of the Lord is not in things.

The joy of the Lord is not in circumstances. What is the joy of our Lord? Why is it that He has so much joy? It does not depend upon what happens. Why? Because our Lord Jesus took His Father as His joy.

The joy of the Lord is not in things. It is in a person. It is in the person of the Heavenly Father.

The joy of the Lord is in the countenance of the Heavenly Father. When He sees the face of the Father, He is full of joy. But at one time, the Father hid His face.

While He was crucified on the cross, at noontime, suddenly the sun was covered with darkness. And our Lord Jesus cried, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken? He lost His Father's face. But even so, He knew that He was fulfilling His Father's will.

And as long as He fulfills His Father's will, His joy is full. What is the joy of our Lord? For the joy that is set before Him. He endured the cross and despised the shame.

It is the joy of doing the Father's will. And that joy enables Him to endure the cross and to despise. Therefore, the joy of the Lord is His strength.

That is His strength. That is the reason why He overcomes. Because He always set the Father before Him.

And even when the Father's face is hid from Him, He has the knowledge, the assurance that He is doing the Father's will. That is the joy of the Lord. Dear brothers and sisters, what is our joy? Where can we find joy? The only place where we can really find joy is in Christ.

As our Lord Jesus takes the Father as His joy. So today we take the Lord Jesus as our joy. If we really take Him as our joy, if we really see His face, if we really will to do His will, and if we know that we are doing His will, then dear brothers and sisters, nothing can take away our joy.

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever. And because He is the same, therefore, if we take Him as our joy, our joy never changes. It is permanent.

It is always the same. Circumstances may change, and they always change. Things may come and go, and that is always the case.

Sometimes you are in abundance, sometimes you are in lack. But thank God, if we really take Christ as our joy, if we really take the will of God as our joy, then nothing can take our joy away. Our joy is in Christ Jesus.

How can we find our joy full? You remember in Romans chapter 14, verse 17. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Joy is in the Holy Spirit.

We who believe in the Lord Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit dwell in us. And the Holy Spirit in us is to give us joy. Make us joyful.

Joy is not just an emotional uplift or release. Joy is deeper than emotion. Joy is a character, a nature, a character of God.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace. So here you will find joy is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It represents the very nature and the character of God.

It does not depend upon outward circumstances. It is rooted in God Himself. In the Holy Spirit we have fullness of joy.

You know the Holy Spirit dwells in each one of us. He dwells in our very spirit. Our spirit is the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, where the Holy Spirit dwells.

We can grieve Him, and how often we do. We grieve Him because we do not listen to Him. We grieve Him because we do not obey Him.

We grieve Him because we do not do what He wants us to do, and we do what He does not want us to do. And when we grieve Him, do you think we will have joy? If we grieve the Holy Spirit, we are grieved. No matter what pleasures you are enjoying, you are grieved.

You do not feel happy. You feel dead. We may quench the Holy Spirit when the Holy Spirit prompts us, when He constrains us or He restrains us.

We may quench it, but when we quench the Holy Spirit, are we full of joy? We are sad. It is only when we listen to the Holy Spirit, when we obey the teaching of the anointing, it is at that moment that joy really fills our heart. Sometimes you may be crying, but through tears, joy you feel deep down in your heart, the joy of the Holy Spirit.

The kingdom of God is not in eating and drinking. In this world, people try to find their joy and happiness in eating and drinking. Because this is the nature of the kingdom of this world.

If you don't enjoy yourself in eating and drinking, what more do you have? Just like I remember a sister whose husband is not a believer. And that sister is so worried about her husband. So one day she talked to a servant of the Lord and she said, now what should I do? I pray for my husband and I press him, I push him, I pull him, I try to force him, but he wouldn't believe.

Now what can I do? And the servant of the Lord said, one thing you can do. That is, you cook the very best meal for him, treat him like a king, do everything you can to make him comfortable and enjoyable. So this sister listened to the advice of that servant of the Lord and began to cook the food that her husband liked to eat and serve him like a king.

And after a few days, the husband began to wonder why? So one day the husband asked her, why do you treat me like this? And the wife said, you have only this world to enjoy, so I want you to have everything that you have, because after this you will have nothing. And you know that converse the husband. Because eating and drinking is the very token of this world.

This is the kingdom of this world, eating and drinking. But the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking. The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

If we really rejoice in the joy in the Holy Spirit, we are in the kingdom of God. Where do we find joy and have our joyful in Christian fellowship? 1 John 1, verses 3 and 4. That which we have seen and heard, we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we to you, that your joy may be full.

Dear brothers and sisters, what gives us great joy on earth, aside from our Lord Jesus, is our brothers and sisters. Fellowship, sharing what we have in common. And what do we have in common? There is one thing that we have in common.

We may not be having things in common so far as material things are concerned. Some people are richer, some people are poorer. Let not the rich be proud, nor the poor be envious.

If the Lord wants you to be rich, thank God for it. If the Lord wants you to be poor, thank God for it. We do not have in common in our background, in our education, and in our positions in this world, and whatever it may be.

But there is one thing that we all have in common. Fellowship means having things in common. And that is, we have Christ.

That is fellowship. And fellowship gives us the greatest joy we have on earth. Brothers and sisters, it is much better than going to theatre.

You know, sometimes people say, well, you people, you people do not know how to enjoy yourself. There are lots of places you don't do, you don't go, lots of things you don't do. Now, you must be a very sad people.

But they do not know that in Christian fellowship, we have the fullness of joy. Oh, how we enjoy one another because we enjoy Christ in one another. That is fellowship.

Fellowship is different from social, you know, it is different. Because when you are having social, it is just, well, what are you exchanging? You are exchanging what you are and what you have in the world. But

fellowship is sharing Christ.

Sharing Christ. The Christ that you know, you share with me to enrich me. And the Christ that I know, I share with you to enrich you.

And what riches it is. It is heaven upon earth. Brothers and sisters, how we need to treasure Christian fellowship.

We treasure our communion with God. And we treasure our fellowship with the saints. That makes our joyful.

What makes our joyful? The joy in serving God. In doing His work. In being interested in His interest.

In Psalm 126 verse 5 it said, You sow in tears, but you reap with joy. It is true that if you are really serving Him, if you are really interested in His interest, if you are really doing His work, you may have to sow in tears. You know, sometimes we think that, wow, what a joy it is to serve God.

Try it. There are lots of tears. But you will reap with rejoicing.

When you bring in the shame. Paul in Philippians said to the Philippian believers, You are my joy, my crown, if you stand fast in the Lord. For the joy that lies before Him, our Lord Jesus despised the shame and endured.

There is joy. There is joy in heaven when one sinner. There is joy in the family of God when one's soul is restored.

There is joy when there are fruits to be brought in and offered to God. I cannot forget, by the grace of God, when one of my clansmen came to the Lord, my joy was bursting. The joy of the work of God is worth all the tears and all the toils.

What makes us full of joy? If we suffer with Christ. The suffering, fellowship of His sufferings brings us joy. Now you may think, that's absurd.

Sufferings, of course, brings us sorrow, pain. But in Colossians, chapter 2, chapter 1, verse 24. Now I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I feel of that which is behind of the tribulation of Christ in my flesh.

For His body, which is the church. Paul said, I rejoice in sufferings for you. And in 1 Peter, chapter 4, verse 13.

But as you have here in the sufferings of Christ, rejoice, that in the revelation of His glory also ye may rejoice with exultation. Now if we suffer because we have done something wrong, there is no joy in it, there is sorrow in it, and we need to repent. But if we cheer in the sufferings of Christ.

And brothers and sisters, you know that the sufferings of Christ is a mystery. On the one hand, there is the suffering of Christ that we cannot share. It is the atoning suffering of Christ.

He had to bear the cross, the atoning sacrifice. He was alone. He shed His blood for the remission of our sins.

We cannot share in their sufferings. But there is the other side of His sufferings that He calls us to fellowship with His sufferings. That is, if we suffer for His name's sake.

If we suffer as Christians. If we suffer for the sake of righteousness. If we suffer for our conscience sake.

If we suffer for the body's sake. That is for the building up of the body of Christ. Just like Paul said.

It is true that during the suffering is painful. But rejoice. Even in pain let us rejoice.

Why? Because we know at the revelation of Jesus Christ and of His glory. We shall rejoice in exaltation. If you read church history, you'll find that during persecutions, when the dear saints of God suffered immensely, beyond human endurance.

And yet you'll find, when they were suffering for the name of Christ, deep down within their spirit, they are full. You say, how can it be? But this is what it is. One brother asked a question.

How do we differentiate between joy and what the world thinks of happiness or, I don't know the word, being hilarious? How do you distinguish? People may be very excited, very hilarious and excited and seem to be bubbling with joy. Now how do you know that this is real joy? How do you find out? At that moment, the answer was, you'll find out in sufferings. When you suffer and all these things gone, you know that is just awkward emotion.

But when you suffer and deep down within you, there is hilarious joy. You know that's the real thing. Then, where can you find fullness of joy? In discipline.

You know, we may think that in discipline, no. No child will find it is a pleasure to be disciplined. Come to the parents and please, please apply the rod.

No. And even in Hebrew chapter 12, it is said that during the time of discipline, of chastening, it is painful. That's true.

But it will produce the peaceful fruit of righteousness. It will bring in great joy afterwards. A child that is not disciplined will bring great sorrow, not only to his parents, but to himself.

But one who is disciplined will bring great joy to his parents and also to himself. You remember David, after he was disciplined, or while he was being disciplined. He wrote a psalm, Psalm 51.

And he said in verse 12, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and let a willing spirit. It is through discipline that the joy of the salvation of the Lord is restored. That's where the joy is restored.

You know, when a brother or a sister, a believer, when a believer has gone off the track, and the Lord disciplines him, this is the way to restore the joy. And in another psalm, Psalm 30, verse 5, For a moment is passed in his anger, a life in his favor, at eve, at even weeping cometh for the night, and at morn there is rejoicing. But finally, I would like to leave with this thought.

We take our Lord Jesus as our joy. We make the will of God as our joy. And if we really look to His face, and we really fulfill His will, then we find that nothing on this earth, nothing external can take away our joy.

We will rejoice always in the Lord. But, let us remember, that not only we should take the Lord as our joy, but the Lord actually has taken us as His joy. In the Psalm 16 that we read in the beginning, verse 2, You know, this is a psalm of David, which is a messianic psalm.

It prophesies of the Messiah of our Lord. Thou, O my soul, hast said to Jehovah, Thou art the Lord, my goodness extended not to Thee. In other words, here you find the Messiah.

He is expressing His thought towards God. And He says, You are the Lord, my goodness extended not to Thee. In other words, in You I find my delight.

In other words, He makes God His joy. Our Lord Jesus always makes God His joy. And then verse 3, To the saints that are on the earth, and to the excellent Thou hast said, In them is all my delight.

Our Lord Jesus not only takes God His Father as His joy, but He takes His saints as His delight. He considers us as His joy. Then in Proverbs, chapter 8, again here you find it is spoken of our Lord as written here.

Chapter 8, When God prepared the heaven, verse 27, When He prepared the heaven, I was there. When He ordained the circle upon the face of the deep, when He established the skies above, when the fountains of the deep became strong, when He imposed on the sea His decree that the water should not pass His commandment, when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him His nursling, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men. Here you'll find how our Lord Jesus as the Son is the delight of the Father, and how He delights the Father.

And then further than that He said He rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth, that is His delight is with the sons of men. So you'll find that our Lord Jesus takes us as His joy, as His delight. And because of this, no one can hurt Him more than we do.

The angels cannot hurt Him more than what we can hurt Him. If our Lord Jesus really takes us as His joy, and He does, if we do not love Him, if we do not obey Him, if we go against Him, remember, there is nothing that can hurt our God, our Lord, more than us. Human beings.

We who are redeemed by the blood. And that's the reason why you'll find in Philippines, Paul said, fulfill my joy. In other words, you'll find in the church in Philippi, they have exhortation, they have fellowship, they have compassion.

And yet, they are divided. And because they are divided, Paul's joy is affected. So Paul cries out to them and said, fulfill my joy.

Make my joy full. Yes, I rejoice in you because you are the Lord. I rejoice with you because you preach the gospel.

I rejoice with you because you have fellowship. Because there is compassion among you. But, I want you to be of one mind.

Of one thought. Think the same thing. Love the same love.

Have the mind of Christ. Be one. And then, my joy will be full.

Now Paul here is representing the head. It is as if Christ is crying out to his church. I do rejoice in you all.

I do see there are lots of good things going on if we may say this. But, so long as you do not have one mind. Think the same thing.

Have the same love. Joining souls. My joy will never be full.

How essential it is therefore for God's people to be really one. Because this is the heart desire of our Lord. Even before his crucifixion that was his prayer.

That they may be one as I and the Father. So dear brothers and sisters, as we are thinking of this matter of joy, remember we take Christ as our joy. As Christ has taken us to be his joy.

We certainly want him to rejoice in us. As we rejoice in him. May the Lord bless us.

Shall we pray? Our Heavenly Father we do praise and thank thee because God has given us a joy that nothing can take away. We do praise and thank thee that the joy of our heart is a person is not a thing. We do praise and thank thee that our joy does not rely upon outward circumstances.

Because our joy is rooted in Christ. Thou art our joy. Oh how we praise and thank thee because our joy never changes and our joy increases as the days go by.

So we do want to worship thee. We ask thee O Lord that thou will enable us to fix our eyes upon thee. Not on things not on ourselves.

But Lord we ask that thou will enable us to forget ourselves and just concentrate on thee. That our joy may be full. And Lord we pray that we may truly rejoice thy heart.

That we may be children of thine whom thou canst said thou art thou art delighted we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus.

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