



THE JOURNEY CHURCH

SERMON GUIDE 4.3.2022

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST
The Fruit of Abiding

SCRIPTURE:

John 15:11

RECAP:

There is a statement that often gets made by Christians that says, "God cares more about your holiness than your happiness." This is often aimed at people who are not living in obedience to God. They are seeking pleasure. Or maybe they are afraid if they can't act on their fleshly desires they won't be happy. So people tell them God is more concerned with your holiness than your happiness. I understand why people say this. God does care about our holiness. He commands us to be holy as He is holy. We live in a culture that undermines holiness and obedience. In a culture that worships a therapeutic deity who exists to dispense out our wishes and desires, I get why some want to emphasize holiness and obedience over happiness. Right, we are to consecrate ourselves before God, and live lives in holy obedience to Him. We can all agree with that. But I think the statement itself is wrong.

Listen to a sampling of these passages:

"Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name" (Psalm 97:12).

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart..." (Matt. 22:37).

"Shout joyfully to God, all the earth; sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious. Say to God, 'How awesome are Thy works!'" (Psalm 66:1, 2).

"Delight yourself in the Lord" (Psalm 37:4).

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).

Notice that these verses all point to affections of happiness (love, rejoice, delight, shout joyfully). In fact, these things are commanded in these verses. In other words, we can't be holy if we don't obey the commands to be happy. God desires our happiness. Did you know that the most repeated command in the Bible could be summarized as: Be happy. It is said in a number of different ways. We hear "praise the Lord," "do not be afraid," "rejoice," "give thanks, ". But these all get to the subject of joy. The Bible speaks about sin, sorrow, wickedness, covenants, redemption, betrayal, and many other things. Real life stuff. But a predominant theme throughout is joy.

So does God care more about your holiness than your happiness? No. He cares about both. In fact, God has created us to seek our happiness. We are made for it.

Blaise Pascal -- "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves."

Pascal, the mathematician and philosopher, highlights this incredible idea that we don't have to be taught to seek happiness. It is what we do in everything we do. We have happiness as our goal in anything. Why are you at church today? Some may say to worship God, because it makes you happy. Some may say to worship God, so I won't feel guilty. Why does that matter? Because you want to be happy. Some may say to make my wife or husband happy, which keeps you happy. You see, the same action, motivated by many potential things, still aiming at happiness. Joy is the goal.

And as we continue studying what the Bible says about communion with Christ, and abiding in Him, I want you to see the aim for this is joy. We should strive for communion with God so that we might enjoy Him.

Scripture Exegesis: John 15:11

We covered John 15:1-5 in a previous message in the series. Jesus tells us to abide in him. He compares himself to a vine and we are the branches. If we abide in him, and he is in us, we bear much fruit. Jesus talks about abiding in him, remaining in him, staying in him. We highlight that we do this by reading the Word, meditating on the Word, praying, fasting, gathering in corporate worship, community, fighting sin, and these are means of grace God has given us. We said that these practices or spiritual disciplines are not ends

in themselves, but means to end. They are a means to abiding in Christ. But abiding in Christ is a means to something too.

John 15:11 -- *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

Jesus summarizes his teaching on abiding in him by saying, "these things I have spoken to you." He's summarizing his teaching and wrapping it up in a single point. What is that point: I've spoken these things to you SO THAT my joy may be in you, and your joy may be full." He wants there to be an effect. Jesus says if we abide in him, his joy will be in us.

What is Jesus' joy? What is the joy of the Son of God? There are two things this joy may be. 1. It can be the joy he has in them as they abide. God delights in His children. Christ delights in His bride. There is a real joy in Christ as we abide in him. So he's saying that the joy he has in us will be experienced by us. 2. It is referring to the joy He has eternally as the Eternal God and Second Person of the Trinity. There is a joy that exists within the Godhead. As we abide, this joy is experienced in us. Either way, it is THIS joy that will be in us. Those who abide have this joy in them.

If Jesus' joy is in us, our joy will be full. If it is full that means it can't be added to. There's no room for anymore. There's no lack. David echoes this reality in the Psalms.

Psalm 16:11 -- *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

The psalmist says that the path of life is found in God. It is in His presence where we experience fullness of joy. And your right hand are pleasures forevermore. At His right hand is another way of saying in His presence. Pleasures forevermore is another way of saying fullness of joy. The key is this: it is abiding in the Lord and being in His presence that brings our hearts real, lasting, full, eternal joy. Jesus wants us to abide in Him for our joy and happiness.

Piper's definition of joy: "Christian joy is a good feeling [emotion, affection] in the soul produced by the Holy Spirit as He causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the Word and in the world." Remember in our previous sermon we talked about the veil being removed and beholding the glory of the Lord. We see His beauty, majesty, and glory. As we see and behold Him, abide in Him, we find our hearts delighting in Him. Joy is a delight in the soul. It is a real affection and emotion of satisfaction in the soul.

What's fascinating is that Jesus promised his disciples that if they abide in Him, he would give us his joy, and our joy would be full. So as we read throughout the New Testament we see the reality of this fulfilled. Listen to these passages.

Acts 13:52 -- *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*

Romans 14:17 -- *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 2:3 -- *And I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all.*

1 Thessalonians 1:6 -- *And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit*

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 -- *For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.*

1 Thessalonians 3:9 -- *For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God*

1 Peter 1:8 -- *Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory*

Romans 5:11 -- *More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

2 Corinthians 7:4 -- *I am acting with great boldness toward you; I have great pride in you; I am filled with comfort. In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.*

So the overwhelming evidence of the Scriptures is that joy is a real experience of the people of God as we abide in Him.

Now as we abide in Him and have his joy in us, and our joy full. Our lives begin to bear the fruit of people who have full joy in them.

C.S. Lewis - "We delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed."

Lewis is saying that a part of our joy being experienced, even maximized, is by the sharing of it with others. We want to bring other people into our joy. We do this in other things as well. What do you do if you find a good tv show or watch a good movie? You tell others. You say, "Oh it's so good. You've got to watch it." What do you do if you find a good restaurant? You tell others. You post a pic on social media and tell others how great it is.

1 John 1:1-4 -- 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life 2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

- vs 4 The goal of John writing these things (preaching the gospel and inviting them into communion with God and the church) is so their (John and the apostles) may be complete. Look at that again. The motivation is for joy.

So I want to connect some of the practices of the Christian life that often get treated like obligations, and I want to show them as an overflow of our joy. I want to show how Giving, Serving, and Going are overflows of our joy in abiding.

1. Giving

When giving is talked about and sermons are done on it, we often focus on the duty of giving. We talk about the commands and instructions to give. But we rarely show how giving is an overflow of delight.

2 Corinthians 9:7 -- Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Notice that our giving is not under compulsion, it is from joy. Cheerful. Delight. Why is that? Because we recognize all that Christ has done for us, and we want to see it in others. We give to the work of the local church, to see its mission furthered. We give to ministries that we align with, to see its mission furthered. Why? To make our joy complete. To bring others into our joy.

2. Serving

Serving is often thought of as an obligation but serving others with our spiritual gifts, and contributing to the work of ministry is an overflow of our joy. Why do we serve? Because we want to bring others into the joy we have in fellowship with Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:24 -- *Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.*

We work with you "for your joy." We labor from our joy, for your joy.

3. Going

Why do we take the gospel to our neighbor and the nations? Why do we share the gospel and bear witness to the truth about Jesus? Not out of obligation. Out of joy. Because we have fullness of joy, we want to bring others into that joy.

John Piper famously says, "Missions exists because worship does not." In other words, because people are not worshipping the Triune God and experiencing joy in Him, we go. This is the C.S. Lewis example. When we have joy in Christ, we want others to know it and experience it.

The goal in sharing these three things (giving, serving, and going) is not to give you a list of stuff to start doing. We should be doing those things, but they should flow out from us as the fruit of our abiding.

If the roots of our lives are grounded in abiding in Christ and communion with Him, then the fruit that will blossom off our lives will be joy. But it won't be just joy, it will be joyful giving, joyful serving, joyful giving, joyful singing. In other words, the activities (if I could put it that way) of the Christian life are no longer detached from their source. They're not cold actions done out of obligation. They overflow from the fountain of our joy. They are the fruit of our abiding in Christ. We delight in doing these things because they spring from our joy, and for the joy of others.

I want to wrap up my message with an appeal to your heart to seek God. I want to call you right now to give up half-hearted devotion to Christ. Go all-in. Pursue him with everything.

Jesus tells us a parable in Matthew 13:44 -- *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

Christ is the treasure hidden in the field. Knowing God is the treasure in the field. He's the worth that surpasses every other worth. And Jesus said in the parable that the man who discovered the treasure hidden in the field sold everything he had to buy that field. But notice the heart behind it: in his **joy**.

With joy he laid everything else down in order to buy that field. In his joy. Some of you today need to "in your joy" lay down everything else entangling you from following Christ and come to him today. He is the treasure. He is the prize. He is the worth that surpasses every other worth. And if you abide in Him, His joy will be in you and your joy will be full. Come seek your joy in Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. What is something that you get excited about and have to tell other people about (a movie, tv show, restaurant, vacation spot, store, app, etc.)? Does it bring you joy to talk about these things with others?
2. How does abiding in Jesus give us joy?
3. What is Jesus' joy?
4. Have you experienced the joy of the Lord? If so, how does it flow out of you in serving, giving, and going? If not, what spiritual disciplines do you think you could implement to experience that fullness of joy?
5. Do you give from a generous heart or is it from compulsion?
6. Do you use your gifts to serve the body of Christ? If so, how? If not, fill out a connect card to get plugged into serving.
7. Do you share your joy with others by spreading the gospel? What does "going" mean to you? How can you live on mission where you are right now and share the joy of Christ with others (your job, people at your gym, or grocery store, or favorite restaurant, etc.)?
8. What are some things that we use to fill up our joy? Do they last? Do you need to lay them down to experience the joy that the Lord has waiting for you?