

Good News -of- Great Joy

SERMON NOTES

Week 1 December 3, 2023

"Finding Joy in the Darkness"

Hebrews 12:1-2; James 1:2; Psalm 30:5, 11-12;
Jeremiah 29:10-11, 31:2, 4, 9, 13; Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 1:1-3;
Romans 8:28; Nehemiah 8:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18;
Habakkuk 3:17-19

I. Introduction

- A. There are many ways we prepare for Christmas, but the real preparation for Christmas happens in _____.
- B. There are times and seasons in our lives when we don't want to sing "Joy to the World," because we don't feel _____.

II. Defining Joy

- A. Joy - noun: a feeling of great pleasure and _____.
- B. Sometimes in the Bible, joy is the exuberant feeling you have, but most often it is a disposition of the _____.
- C. We can have joy in the midst of _____ when we recognize that God is walking with us.

III. Joy: A Future with Hope

- D. Joy is described in the Bible when people believe their circumstances will _____ (a future with hope) based upon what God has done in the past.
- E. The Israelites had a disposition of joy because they knew that one day God would _____ them from Babylon.
- F. Dietrich Bonhoeffer had a disposition of joy because he knew that the Nazi's will not have the _____ word.

IV. Joy: Believing God Brings Beauty from the Ashes

- A. Joy is described in the Bible when people believe that somehow God will force _____ to come from the adversity they are walking through right now.
- B. The "Hymn of Promise" reminds us that we can believe that in our death is a _____.
- C. The reasons Christians can choose joy in the darkness is because _____ has come.

Things I Would Like to Remember About This Message



ASBURY DAILY STUDY GUIDE *December 4-9, 2023*

INTRODUCTION

Every Christmas Eve after we share the light of Christ and sing “Silent Night,” we end our services by singing “Joy to the World.” It’s such a special moment in the service where we experience joy. But sometimes we go through seasons of life when we don’t feel like singing “Joy to the World.” So how can we find joy in the midst of dark seasons in our lives?

Monday: Psalm 30:1-5, 11-12

Scholar Donald Williams wrote, “In [the psalmist’s] illness there has been weeping, the sense of God’s absence, and mourning. Now... the healing of God has turned sorrow into joy.”* Is it possible for difficult times to make God feel absent, even for people of faith?

Tuesday: Habakkuk 3:17-19

At the end of his short book, Habakkuk pictured utter disaster in an agricultural land. No figs, no grapes, no olives, no crops, no sheep or cattle - it’s hard to imagine how things could get much worse. Did “*I will rejoice in the Lord*” mean the prophet would say, “*Oh, boy - it’s great that we have no food*”? What might “rejoice in the Lord” mean when life is difficult?

Wednesday: Jeremiah 31:10-13

The promise in verse 12 that “they will grieve no more” fit well with the words of Isaiah 25:8: “*The LORD God will wipe tears from every face.*” What events or situations have brought the most grief into your life? How meaningful to you is the promise that God will ultimately heal your grief - that you will grieve no more?

Thursday: Psalm 126:1-6

The first half of this psalm was a journey in memory. The Israelites never forgot the Exodus from Egypt - their “defining story” - nor their jubilation when God set them free from exile. God lifting them up from captivity was a permanent part of their history. What do you remember as a time when God did “great things” in your life? How do you keep that memory alive?

Friday: John 14:1-3, Acts 1:10-11

At times we tend to ‘sell’ people on heaven by listing benefits: golden streets, no death, mansions. What one specific feature of the future life did Jesus mention in verse 3? How appealing do you find the promise of being with Jesus? Have you faced and dealt with your fear of death and what comes next?

MOVING FORWARD

There are over 400 verses in the Bible that use the word “joy.” Sometimes in the Bible, joy is the exuberant feelings people have, but most often it is a disposition of the heart. We find joy when we have faith that God will deliver us from adversity. We also find joy when we have faith that God will force good to come from our season of darkness. In the end, joy is a choice we make. The reason we can choose joy in the darkness is because Christ has come.

*Answers to the sermon notes: IA) worship, B) joy. IIA) happiness, B) heart, C) adversity.
IIIA) improve, B) deliver, C) final. IVA) good, B) victory, C) Christ.*

* Donald Williams, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 13: Psalms 1–72*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986, p. 239.