



“Joy”

Text: Nehemiah 8:9-12 & Luke 2: 8-11

Question If we had only one month left, what would you pursue? In the movie “The Bucket list” they pursue action and happiness. But do we need this kind of bucket list? Can we have Joy already?

Ecclesiastes 2 (King Solomon, wisest man who ever lived) 2:1, pleasure is meaningless, but is Joy different? Paul counts all things as rubbish Philippians

Introductory comments:

Intro Nehemiah, The Jews had been in exile for 70 years and here we had the first reading of the Law of Moses in obedience to Deut 31:10-11 (And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of *every* seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is to come to appear before Jehovah your God in the place which he shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing). As they were listening to Ezra the people became aware of their condition, the reading of the Law convicted the people of their sin in transgressing the commands of the Lord, and of the punishments to which they had exposed themselves. They wept and mourned in repentance.

Like them we need to become aware of our sins, in this country and even in this great city of ours. For we have a solution to sin, yet we do not apply it, we as believers need more than ever to show the world that joy as well as peace is the inheritance of the children of God.

Joy is divinely given and is the substance of the good news from heaven. Joy is mentioned in 37 books of the Bible, it is an expression of God’s dealing with His people. We have shouts of joy, hearts leaping for joy, people falling facedown in exuberance singing for joy and cries of joy. It comes from the Lord and produces strength of and to the believers.

Joy is a powerful tool given to us, by the Lord, we produce strength in us. I believe there are time of mourning and weeping [Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4 For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: (4) a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;] but our faith is not a mourning religion but a joyous expression of our relationship with the eternal God of all creation.

What is Joy? Some distinctions are called for here.

Joy is different from happiness/pleasure, for example, happiness/pleasure comes to us usually from things that affect our senses: a beautiful sunset, a fine painting, a son or a daughter's wedding/ graduation, the birth of a child, an exquisite meal, and so on. But all these things are vulnerable to disappointment, even tragedy and loss. It can be stolen from us by such minor irritations as a toothache. Joy, the joy which comes from God however, is something that can never be taken from us. Happiness/Pleasure depends on circumstances, but joy that flows into our hearts by the Holy Spirit – is independent of circumstances. The joy of the Lord is deeper than a happening, or a circumstance. Happiness depends on Happenings, good things happen, I am happy, bad things happen I am sad.

I). Precondition:

- a. Yeshua [Luke 4:18] quoted the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, and to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Because we were blind and deaf and so he came “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.” Luke 19:10. The God man come to us, to save you and me for we were lost.
- Man had not hope In [Psalms 51:11-12 RSV](#) David writes Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me. **(12)** Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.
- c. Sometimes we loose that Joy, as we walk away from God or from his precepts, then like David we need a Cleansing of the soul.
- d. David continues [Psa 51:14](#) Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, and God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of thy deliverance. **15** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise.

When we are lost, the first step to take is to come back to God. And receive that Joy, or when we sin or became aware of our sin like the people in Nehemiah's days repent with tear of sin and the promise is found in Psalm 126:5, says, “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

Some Hindrances to Joy:

let me mention some hindrances to this great joy;

a. Sin in general:

John the apostle said that “the whole world is under the control of the evil one”(1 John 5:19). The prophet Isaiah said, “we are all as an unclean thing”(Isaiah 64:6), the Apostle Paul said, “there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”(Rom. 3:22,23).

[discuss]

- **Doubt** – John 20: 24-27; Thomas; John the Baptist, Matt. 11:3; Notice these two were persons closely associated with Jesus but they became oppressed with doubt. John was in prison, and probably suffering great discomfort and disillusionment. From prison he sent some messengers to Jesus to ask if He really was the Messiah or if they should be looking for somebody else. John, you remember, had baptized Jesus, and had introduced Him to the world with these words: “Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29)

Does it not seem strange that John, who witnessed the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism, should have developed doubts about who He was and the validity of His mission? Someone sitting here this morning can fully identify with Thomas and John. The circumstances around you have denied you the joy of the Lord and of His Salvation. The illness you are going through or in your family seem to have dried up your bowels of joy. Life is presently suffering to you. Listen, suffering can be transformed when God is once again invited into it.

Notice in Matthew how John the Baptist sent messengers to Yeshua the Messiah to inquire of Him if He was indeed the promised Messiah. Yeshua’s send a clear message back, Yes I am, in word and indeed, and he is the answer to life’s problems. When in doubt who do you go to? I know some who have gone to the occult, some to pills or alcohol for solutions and have come back disappointed. I know many who have gone to deny God, or some have gone into dubious lifestyle just for solution, but they will tell you that they never found the answer they were looking for.

c. Anxiety – Phil. 4:4-7;

The Apostle Paul said in his letter to the Philippians that we should not be anxious about anything (Phil. 4:6). That is because anxiety denies a child of God the true joy the Bible talks about. Anxiety dries up our joy especially in our day when so many people clamor to climb the ladder of success. As they desperately seek things that will make them happy, they often miss true joy. In the portion I have referred to, Paul pointed to contentment as a secret to gaining true joy. Contentment is simply the ability to be thankful and joyful no matter how much or how little we possess or what mountains or valleys we face. When we realize who has given us what we have, we can walk in contentment and experience true joy. Listen to the words of the Psalmist, “When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul” (Psa. 94:19). He has a living and profound friendly relationship with the God of Israel, and knows Him as the source of true joy. That was his confidence in making such a statement. You can have the same confidence in Yeshua the Messiah just by developing an intimacy with Him.

Cultivate Joy:

“Nothing tones up the system as much as a constant flow of joy.” Joy is more than a feeling, it is an attitude – an attitude characterized by the conviction that nothing can

successfully work against us when we belong to Christ and immersed in His joy. Yeshua the Messiah is the root of joy. Hand over yourself to Him and you will truly experience true joy.

- The Psalmist said, “. . . God has set you above your companions by anointing you with oil of joy – Psa. 45:7

- Nehemiah said, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” Neh 8:10.

- The Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:16; “Be joyful always.

- The angel said, “Good news of great joy that will be for all people. Cultivate that attitude of joy. Begin now for it has been released from heaven for you.

Psalms 16:11. You have shown me the path of life: In your presence is fullness of joy; In your right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Word of Caution

Some have gone overboard and insist you must be joyfull **ALL** the time, these preachers ignore the whole counsel in Ecclesiastes 3:4 Solomon wrote "A time to weep and a time to laugh; A time to mourn and a time to dance."

Story about Eli Wiesel went to Yad V'shem and wept

How do we achieve the Joy of the Lord, lets read Nehemiah 8:10. *Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* Live life and enjoy good things and SHARE with others, TRUST in the Lord and obey His commands and He will give you Joy.

Though sometimes weeping is necessary, it is not the final message God has for us. To show this, Nehemiah and Ezra speak up and correct the people. What a powerful statement of the effect of the Word of God! When people understand it, it brings joy. "The joy of the LORD is your strength." What a great word for grieving people who see the evil in their lives and the lives of those around them and mourn over what it has produced! The word that brings joy is that of forgiveness. God can forgive! He does, and He will restore. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

Prayer: Father help us to bring Joy to others and help us to comford those who are weeping and grieving. Help us to stay close to you and rejoyce may we cry out (2 Samuel 22:47) "The LORD lives; and blessed be my rock, and exalted be my God, the rock of my salvation" may we understand what it cost you to give us salvation and may we cry out for joy, in Yeshua's name.