Good morning, Family. And Happy Fathers’ Day!

 Let’s begin today with another look at Galatians 5:22-23:

 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Remember, the fruit of the Spirit is evidence of the Holy Spirit in work in the life of the believer. Ray Fowler has said, “The fruit of the Sprit is the character of Jesus that God wants to develop in us.” Today, we talk about joy. What a wonderful, available attribute! Jesus is full of joy, and He wants to develop that attribute in us. In his gospel, John writes, “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 remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (15:10-11). Church, listen. Jesus wants you to be joyful, first because He is the source of joy and because your joy speaks of the intimacy of our relationship with Him. But also, our joy represents His will. It is part of His character and should be part of ours as representatives of His Gospel. Just as love comes from the Lord, joy comes from Him as well.

 David writes in Psalm 16:11, “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Joy is in the presence of the Lord. Now, we can understand why the world lacks joy. So many people are unhappy and unsatisfied. Why? Because they keep looking for joy in the wrong places—money, power, sex, drugs. God is the source. If people don’t look to Him to joy, they won’t find it. Now listen: While that is sad, it makes sense. Where it doesn’t make sense is in the church—it doesn’t make sense that any Christians lack joy! Billy Sunday has said, “If there is no joy in the believer, there’s a leak in your Christianity somewhere.” Family, listen. Joy is central to our faith and an attribute that should be on full display. There is joy in the presence of God.

 It is interesting to me that the first three attributes named fruit of the Spirit represent three of the four themes of the advent of Christmas: Love, Joy, Peace, and

Hope. Paul tells believers in Rome, “Be joyful in hope” (Romans 12:12). Family! These attributes are available to us because Christ is available to us. The things that came to us at His coming are things He develops in us in our surrender and sanctification. Our God is the source of joy, full of joy, and the fountain of joy. Nehemiah says unequivocally, “The joy of the Lord is our strength) (8:10). Think about this! God gives us joy because He is joyful. He is the source: Joy is not an emotion to feel but someone to experience. Joy is not dependent upon circumstances. That’s happiness—the fleeting emotion with no depth. The world struggles with joy because it struggles to find hope, looking in all the wrong places! Christ is our hope in life and death. The Apostle Peter tells us, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). Experiencing true joy is a result of having experienced true grace, having been forgiven of our sin, united with Christ. When Christ is experienced, joy is present. From the Magi in Matthew 2:10 to the angels in Luke 2:10, Christian joy is grounded in hope, a hope that does not depend upon our circumstances.

 Joy is the language of the Kingdom. Warren Wiersbe has said, “Christian joy is a deep abiding inner peace and rejoicing and a quality missing in too many Christians.” Joy is closely tied to the Gospel. “Good news of great joy!” the angels say as they announce the birth of God’s son. C. S. Lewis confirms, “Joy is the serious business of Heaven.” Our joy is about His presence. Look again at John 15:11 that records Jesus’ declaration on joy: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” Our God is a God of Joy!!! Glen Packiam has written, “I am not in control, but I am deeply loved by the One who is.” THAT should bring every believer JOY!

 Church, can I give you some encouraging instruction? Learn to consult God’s Word ***before*** you consult your feelings. In life—in marriage, in parenting, in finances, in business dealings—look to the Bible for direction. Zephaniah 3:17 makes clear that God is available to us:

 The Lord your God in your midst,

 The Mighty One, will save;

 He will rejoice over you with gladness,

 He will quiet you with His love,

 He will rejoice over you with singing.”

This passage is one of my absolute favorites. He takes delight in you! And with this joy in the beauty of this relationship comes great peace (a fruit of the Spirit we will explore in detail next week!) Maybe, you find yourself struggling to find joy. You can choose joy—yes, CHOOSE joy because JOY CHOSE YOU! You and I are in the grasp of grace to be people of grace. Our living in joy is living in the awareness of grace and favor in Christ. Remember you salvation!! 1 Peter 1:8-9 tells believers, “Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” Yes, this joy is inexpressible; it is full and available.

 Family, growing in Christ means growing in joy. Maybe, you find yourself here today thinking that joy is far distant from you. Can I just tell you the source of joy? The One who rejoices over you, desires for you to find joy in Him: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). He suffered all, gave all, for us to be joyful in Him. What was the joy set before him? It was the glory of God and the salvation of lost souls—of sinners—who He could give access to the joy of the Father. The story of the Prodigal Son illustrates the joy of the Father when one of His kids returns home. Yes, the younger son went astray. Yes, he squandered his inheritance and sullied his family’s reputation, but when he swallowed his pride, repented, asked for nothing but to be treated as a slave in his home, His loving Father embraced him and threw a party. God is hosting a party for each of us. His joy is available. He awaits you to come home, to surrender your ego, to admit and to repent of your sin, and to find the abundant and perfect joy inherent in doing the will of God.

Passages in Support of this Sermon:

Psalm 16:8-11

I have set the Lord always before me;

Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;

My flesh also will [a]rest in hope.

10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,

Nor will You allow Your Holy One to [c]see corruption.

11 You will show me the path of life;

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

John 15:10-11

10 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.

11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.