

I've got Joy down in my Heart

Good morning church,

God is good...all the time

All the time... God is good

God is love...all the time

All the time...God is Love

I talked to you a little bit last week about what we were going to cover this week. JOY.

I know it's a little bit out of the ordinary from what we normally do, we've been in the book of Matthew for a very long time now. This is not going to be the normal we're going to get right back to the book of Matthew but there's something that's been on my heart I feel like God has been telling me something to talk to you about.

I've talked to 2 pastors, and many other people that have brought their sorrows and their hardships and have wanted some help. My first question back is **how's your joy?**

Unilaterally each one of them said, *I don't even know how to have joy anymore.*

I haven't experienced joy in so long. I don't even know where to begin.

When I hear this time and time again it just breaks my heart. Joy is something that God freely gives believers. Its not something that you have to earn. It is something that you have to be conscious of and pray for. For me I have to actively seek it.

Sometimes I don't even necessarily think that there is an absence of joy in some of us, it might just be something that we don't recognize.

I feel like **we need to understand what JOY really is?** **First off Joy is not Happiness**

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, it's not something that you can posses on your own. Joy is a gift from God and can only come from God.

THE Greek word for Joy is (hah-RAH)chara: it signifies a spiritual reality that persists even amid trials, serving as a response to God's grace rather than a reaction to material gain.

Biblical joy is defined not as a fleeting emotion dependent on circumstances, but as a deep, inner gladness and a state of being rooted in faith in God's promises and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Happiness is influenced by our circumstances. We feel happy when something good happens, when life is comfortable, or when things go our way

I like to use this analogy. WAVES AND CURRENT

I'm going to tell you some truth this morning, can I be heartfelt and sappy this morning?

On Wednesday morning I was in bed with my wife, now that the kids are back in school we have some time to visit. Something that we do occasionally is we ask each other what's your **state of the union**.

This gives us an opportunity to be able to cover and just spill all of the things that are on our mind. We talk about how we're feeling physically, how we're feeling emotionally, how we're feeling spiritually, how are marriage is, how the kids are doing.

As you might know Debbie is fairly broken. She is dealing with a lot. As she was telling me about the things that are difficult for her right now. Church came up, As you look around you'll see that our congregation is a little smaller, and some of the people that have left breaks our heart.

We know that God Has this all under control. We know that God works all things for good. We know that this church is and is working toward what He wants it to be.

But that doesn't mean that it's not sad. We and I'm sure you really truly love some of the people that have left

This is what I told her, and this is not for me because I'm not that smart. I feel like God helped me with my words.

I told her that when I was young probably around 18, so about 30 years ago I started to lose my faith in humanity.

As the years went by I feel like it just got worse, now to be fair I've had some jobs that have helped form that opinion.

There's certain things that stick out in my mind that we're kind of breaking points for that feeling. One time in Sandpoint I was stuck at a traffic light and just beyond the intersection I saw a woman that had a flat tire pulled off to the side of the road, I saw at least 20 cars drive past her and no one stopped to see if she was OK.

I've seen people need medical help and instead of someone helping they get their phones out and record it.

The list goes on.

As of the last over 2 years and especially in the last months I have my faith in humanity restored because God has shown me YOU.

As I talked to her about this both of our eyes welled up with tears as we discussed many of you.

As I look out over this congregation I see wonderful, giving, genuine, loving, God seeking people.

I see a family. And not only do I see a family that is stable but I also see a family that is willing to adopt anyone new.

I have never in my life been in a place that I can say everyone here is good until now. I'm not saying that you're perfect, but I do see a lot of people that would help someone change a flat tire or help someone that is struggling.

What I am saying is that anybody that walks down the sidewalk and sees you on the other side **Will** know that you are a son or daughter of God.

Here's the part that is sad.

I see all of you, all you wonderful God loving people. My family.

And a lot of you are broken, a lot of you are weary, a lot of you are sad.

A lot of you are holding on by a thread, but I'm here to tell you today **that Jesus is holding on to the other end of that thread.**

One of satan's favorite things to do to us as believers is to steal our joy.

If you're taking notes write this down, **one of satan's favorite things to do to harm a believer is to steal their joy.**

1st Peter 5:8

⁸ Be of sober *spirit*, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

How does he do that?

He does that by making you feel like you're not good enough, by putting people in your path that devalue you, By placing doubts in your mind that you have to work for God's approval. By Putting struggles and hard things in your life and then convincing you that you're all alone in them. Social media and the way that people talk to each other and to you.

In just 26 years the suicide rate in the United states has jumped up by 30%.

Satan is wreaking havoc on peoples joy.

Like I said, one of the things that Satan does to steal your joy is to devalue you! He uses guilt and shame to bring you down.

He makes you feel like you are alone! He makes you feel like you don't matter!

You are not alone.

Joy is something that I struggle with sometimes, I think normally I have joy. But it's something that I pick up and put down more often than I would want to admit.

What are some things that I remember that help me maintain my joy.

I remember that It is impossible for me to lose my joy if I remember whose I am. It is impossible for me to lose my joy if I know who my ABBA is. It is impossible for me to lose my joy if I remember how He feels about me. It is impossible for me to lose my joy if I believe in His promises. It is impossible for me to lose my joy if I hold on to what my goal is from Him and my destination is in Him.

Isaiah 12:2-3

²Behold, God is my salvation,
I will trust and not be afraid;
For the Lord God is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation.”
³Therefore you will joyously draw water
From the springs of salvation.

I know where I'm going.

I think most of you know that God loves you, but did you know that God likes you? If you know that God likes you, if you know that God is proud of you, if you know that God smiles when he sees your face, or He has conversation with you when you're praying, that can change your whole perception on JOY.

If you type **like** into the websters thesaurus words like : desire, delight, adore, yearn, and relish populate.

Psalms 147:11

the Lord delights in those who fear him,
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Zephaniah 3:17

¹⁷The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in His love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”

I’m going to give you something tangible, that makes sense, and I want you to pay attention to faces and demeanors.

Bring Henry or Mae up (I didn’t tell him/her about this)...Love / Like [God]

Then certain congregants.

I don’t even come close to having the amount of love that God has for my these people. He loves them more than I ever could. He loves them with a passion and a compassion that I could never even understand.

But here's the amazing thing... He likes them. He enjoys them. He cherishes and adores them.

Notice the difference in their faces between when I said that I love them and when I said that I like them.

When I say that I love them they have this calm, comforted, accepted, demeanor.

But did you notice how it changed when I said that I like them?

Pure joy, pride (the good kind), heads lifted, eyes smiled.

Tell your spouse, your friend, your family that you like them and see what happens.

I think that there's at least a basic understanding in all of us that God loves us. Sometimes I think we kind of just skim over that part though.

That makes sense in today's day and age with the way that love is misconstrued

It is a choice that almost seems like an obligation. Everyone has heard the phrase, I love you but I don't like you. Even family members say this to each other. The meaning of love in the way that God designed and intended it to be, has been lost.

God's love for us is beyond our mere human comprehension.

As humans we try to make God make sense to us,
we humanize God to fit into our understanding.

Part of the joy of being a Christian is enjoying the mystery of God. Is understanding that God is God and we are not. We don't have to always know the when, where, what, why, and how...but resting in our God that does know those things.

There are so many scripture references in the Bible that talk about God's love for us, and we are going to go over a few of those today. **John 3:16 for God so Loved the world that he gave his only son**

Sometimes I think that we feel like God **HAS** to love us, that it's just something that He automatically does. Thinking that way takes away some of the special.

I'm here to tell you that God loves loving you.

Something else that I want to talk to you about this morning, is that God likes you, He enjoys you, He cherishes and adores you.

People love each other in spite of who they are, PEOPLE LIKE SOMEONE BECAUSE OF WHO THEY ARE.

Zephaniah 3:17

**¹⁷The Lord your God is in your midst,
A victorious warrior.
He will rejoice over you with joy,
He will be quiet in His love,
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.**

If God loves perfectly, then it would make sense that He likes perfectly.

What does that mean? It means no matter what you do no matter how you act no matter where you go in your walk with Him ... He looks forward to you. He looks forward to hearing from you, He looks forward to seeing you grow, to seeing your faith build and so on.

Imagine for a moment that God was talking to you the way that I talked to Henry / Mae, He told you how much that He loves you, and then looked you in the eye and told you how much He likes you.

What would that feel like?

It would be impossible for you to lose your joy.

He already does!!!

He enjoys you!!!

He smiles when He sees your face. We are His children and He skillfully and lovingly formed each one of us.

He loved you before their was YOU

Psalm 139:13-18

For You created my innermost parts;

You wove me in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I will give thanks to You, because I am awesomely and wonderfully *made*;

Wonderful are Your works,

And my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from You

When I was made in secret,

And skillfully formed in the depths of the earth;

¹⁶ Your eyes have seen my formless substance;

And in Your book were written

All the days that were ordained *for me*,

When as yet there was not one of them.

¹⁷ How precious also are Your thoughts for me, God!

How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the sand.

When I awake, I am still with You.

I want you to pay close attention to Verse 17. How precious also are your thoughts for me,! How vast is the sum of them!

God thinks about you all the time. He knows you, inside and out. Every hair on your head.

For some of us that seems like that might be a little bit scary, a little bit intimidating. HE KNOWS US.

Sometimes I wish that He could only see part of me, just the parts I wanted Him to see. Some of those things that He knows about me I wish He didn't know about me.

I'd like Him to see when I'm studying or when I'm preaching, but I really don't want to have Him see me when I stub my toe or when someone cuts me off in traffic on Monday.

What if what I have done is much worse than that? Maybe I don't feel good enough for God. Maybe I feel like asking the question I have heard from more people than any other question. How could God ever forgive me?

Guilt and Shame are the biggest weapon that the devil uses to attack your JOY, Don't let him. TRUST IN GOD AND HIS WORD.

God knows everything about you, and yet He still wants you. He knows your failures, your fears, your weaknesses, and your struggles. And through Jesus Christ, He has made a way for you to become His child.

John 10:14

¹⁴I am the good shepherd, and I know My own, and My own know Me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

But here's the amazing part He knows you but He doesn't know you how you know you does that make sense?

After you become a believer He sees you as righteous

2nd Corinthians 5:20

²¹ He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Many many years ago I had a pastor that explained it like this,

THE RAG EXAMPLE...

God doesn't see you how you see you, God doesn't see you how the people that degrade you see you, God doesn't see you how social media sees you.

God sees the blood of Jesus Christ when he sees you. He is proud of you. He is pleased with you. He likes you.

If we only knew how God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit saw each of us. We might have a little more JOY.

Some of us don't have an issue with knowing that God likes us and knowing that God loves us. Maybe that's not what causes you to lose your joy.

Maybe it's fear, maybe it's anxiety, maybe it's feeling alone in the battle.

But here's the thing you are not alone.

Hebrews 13:5b-6

... for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever abandon you,”
⁶so that we confidently say,

“The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid.
What will man do to me?”

Now if you combine that verse with

Romans 8:28

²⁸And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

What do you have to fear, you are not alone and you can know that in whatever you go through and whatever you have to face not only is God with you but He is also working it all for good.

That is a promise...God doesn't break promises...say that with me...God doesn't break promises...that would be out of His character.

Maybe some of you don't know what God's character is. So many churches just study the New Testament. That's not a bad thing the New Testament is the new covenant, Jesus is our savior. And Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit are one so in that sense we do know who God is, above all God is love.

What are some other characteristics of God?

I'm so glad you asked because I love talking about this.

God is,

Omnipotent: All Powerful and mighty

Omniscient: All Knowing, past present and future

Omnipresent: He is not limited by time and space, He is everywhere all the time.

This next passage is a small snippet of how mighty God is...

Job:38:34-37

“Can you raise your voice to the clouds,

So that an abundance of water will cover you?

³⁵ Can you send flashes of lightning, so that they may go

And say to you, ‘Here we are’?

³⁶ Who has put wisdom in the innermost being,

Or given understanding to the mind?

³⁷ Who can count the clouds by wisdom,

And pour out the water jars of the heavens,

This is the God we serve, He laid the foundations of the Earth. He has storerooms of snow and hail. He and He alone is the Author of all creation,

He will give His angels orders concerning you, To protect you in all your ways

Psalm 91:11

AND HE NAMED YOU HIS SON AND DAUGHTER

Some people reel back at the thought of a father because sometimes earthly fathers are a poor example of what a father should be.

That's not the case with God. He is perfection.

In Medieval times a nobleman would introduce himself by his name, then his fathers name, then his grandfathers name.

It would sound something like this...Hello my name is Samson, son of Richard, grandson of James from the house of Kelley

That was great if your father and grandfather were Upright, Good, and Just

What if they weren't?

You would spend a lifetime trying to overcome a reputation of whatever their mistakes and sins might have been.

You would have been marked!

Who is your father?

My father is God! The maker of Heaven and Earth.

Romans 8:14-16

¹⁴For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons *and daughters* of God. ¹⁵For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons *and daughters* by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

Now I can say My name is Samson, son of God the most high.

I want you to put your name into that and say it yourself.

If I know who I am but more importantly **Who's I am**, if I know how God sees me, that He enjoys me, that the sins that caused my shame and guilt are forgiven and that His eternal unconditional love covers me then the Joy that can only be from the Holy Spirit Himself will remain. No matter the struggle, no matter the trial, no matter the persecution.

1st Peter 1:8-9

⁸Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

To concrete this all in, think on this.

Now that we understand the difference between love and like

And the difference between happiness and joy

I want to end with this,

We as believers can have joy in the FACT that we know our destination. We know that what we may see as worst case scenario is in fact best case scenario. Jesus has assured us of everlasting life through His death and resurrection. There is certainty in death here on earth as believers. (to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord). Where as before there was no hope now we have hope, and faith. Our joy is made complete. **IN HIM, THROUGH HIM, AND ONLY BY HIM.**

Revelation 21:5-7

⁵And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He *said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” ⁶Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give *water* to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life, without cost. ⁷The one who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

If you accepted Him then you are His by adoption.

You belong to THE FATHER.

He loves you

He delights in you

He enjoys you

The next time you LOSE your joy remember who you belong to and what your destination is through Him that bore it all.

I’m going to have the worship team come back up and sing one more song and then we will pray.