

Advent 2017: Joy

John 3:14-16

I. Introduction

- A. **Joy** — the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires
- B. **Where do you find your joy?** What makes you feel successful? Where do you find your sense of well-being?
- C. **Christmas is a great test of our answers. Is our joy in the party or the reason for the party? Is it in the things we receive or in the One whom we receive?**
- D. **I am going to challenge you today with this simple idea... your joy is found in what you believe.**
- E. **Believe** — To accept something to be true and entrust one's well being to such truth...Jesus is talking about faith...a belief that changes us.
- F. **We see that word a lot this time of year.** There are banners, ornaments, Christmas cards and even cookies with the word plastered upon them. We understand its power and ability to change our life.
- G. **Jesus says when we believe in Him and His sacrifice we receive...**

- H. **Eternal life** —A new quality and quantity of life...it is infinitely good and lasts forever
- I. **What we are really talking about is how your level of belief in Jesus affects your quality of life here on earth.**
- J. **C H Spurgeon — I would recommend you either believe God up to the hilt, or else not to believe at all. Believe this book of God, every letter of it, or else reject it. There is no logical standing place between the two. Be satisfied with nothing less than a faith that swims in the deeps of divine revelation; a faith that paddles about the edge of the water is poor faith at best. It is little better than a dry-land faith, and is not good for much.**
- K. Spurgeon understood the power of belief...small, weak and anemic belief brings little joy...little sense of well being... little hope. The greater our belief the greater the potential for it to impact us.

I. Right Belief

- A. Would you like to experience great joy today? If so you must first believe greatly...but that belief must be rightly placed.**
- B. There are men who believe they can fly. They sincerely believe they can step off the edge of a building, flap their arms and glide through the sky like a bird. Such men, provided we identify and catch them before they leap from the building, are housed in homes for the mentally ill. Such misplaced belief might illicit a sense of well being while walking to the ledge but soon disappoints when one's foot steps into thin air.**
- C. Belief in what is true is the only kind of belief which can produce the kind of results for which we hope...genuine joy...a sense of well being which stays with us through every circumstance, feeling of success, to be confident of obtaining that which we hope.**
- D. Jesus points us to the right kind of belief in our passage today...Whoever believes that God sent His Son, Jesus, to die on a cross for his or her sins, will not perish but have everlasting life.**

- E. Do you believe Jesus died on the Cross for your sins so you might have eternal life?**
- F. There is no greater sense of well being than to believe you are forgiven for your sins and have eternal life. To know God considers you clean, new and spotless in His sight.
- G. The question for some this morning is “Do you believe this?” For others the question is, “How strong is your belief in this?”**
- H. C. H. Spurgeon claimed that 98 percent of the people he met-- including the criminals he visited in England's prisons--told him that they believed the Bible to be true. But the vast majority had never made a personal, life-changing commitment to Jesus Christ. For them, "believe" was not an active verb.**
- I. Is your belief an active verb? Have you ever genuinely placed faith in Jesus for your salvation?**
- J. For those who have an active kind of faith...Do you believe a little bit or a lot? Is your belief a life consuming kind of belief or a weak belief occasionally considered when life gets tough?**
- K. Even small belief brings infinitely great change. The faith of a mustard seed moves mountains. Such small belief can**

result in one's soul being saved. But what could stronger belief produce? How could your quality of life be changed by a stronger belief in what Jesus did for you on the cross?

- L. There are people around us all the time who struggle to believe all that Jesus promised. They are saved...but like the man who brought His son to Jesus in order to be healed... they could say, "I believe, help my unbelief." We all find ourselves in such a place at one time or another.**
- M. Sometimes we struggle to believe God has forgiven us of the bigger sins of our life. We struggle to see ourselves as clean, spotless and new.**
- N. We struggle to believe Jesus has done everything to make us acceptable in God's sight. We struggle to believe we are saved by grace through faith alone...that God loves and accepts us on our bad days as well as our good ones.**
- O. Such struggles to believe rob us of our joy...the joy that is rightfully ours in Christ.**

I. How to Believe

- A. The story of the man who brought his son to Jesus is found in Mark 9. He was one of the most honest men in all of scripture...and one I identify with often. I do believe but **sometimes I struggle with unbelief...**
- B. I lean on my own understanding of things...take my eyes off of Jesus and put them on the wind and waves of life... see the 5000 and wonder where in the world we are going to find bread for all of these people.**
- C. **Pray for it — It is in these moments I cry out, “Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.”** Because it is in the moments I struggle to believe that my joy is sunk...I get depressed...feel defeated...feel like I am going to drown in the sorrows of this life.
- D. So I cry out like the boy’s father...I believe, help my unbelief...I cry out like Peter when he sank beneath the waves...Lord save me!
- E. **If you want a greater faith in Christ...pray for it. Faith itself is a gift from God and a greater faith is as well. Ask God to help you more fully, completely believe...**

- F. Ask that your mustard seed faith might grow into a tree in which birds will make a nest! That's what a mustard seed does and it is what our faith should do as well!**
- G. **Reject the lie — Believing what is true means rejecting all that is a lie.** Remember when Satan tempted Jesus he did so by putting half truths and lies before Him...Jesus rejected each lie with the truth...and that truth was God's Word
- H. **Know the Truth —** Know and meditate upon the truth found in God's Word. "Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Romans 10:17).
- I. Read, know, meditate upon and agree with God's word!
When we know the truth we can readily identify the lie!
- J. The devil says your are guilty...filthy...condemned...
destined for death, unloved and worthless
- K. God and His Word says...I am forgiven...clean, pure, holy,
clothed in the righteousness of Christ...I am a child of the
King...destined for eternal life...victory is mine in my Christ
- L. Know the truth, reject the lie...pray for God to help your
unbelief.

I. Conclusion

- A. **Eternal life** — Quantity and quality of life. Jesus came to give this to us...abundant life in Him...but it is only received by belief in Him and His cross.
- B. **He came to give us joy...and that is what the manger is all about...**the coming of the One who would be lifted up on the Cross, to pay for our sins, so we might be saved.
- C. Does this give you a sense of well being? Does it give you hope for what is to come?
- D. **Have you had an active belief in Jesus? Not just a belief in His existence but a belief in who He is and what He came to do for you personally?**
- E. **Are you a believer who has been robbed of some of the joy of your salvation?** It could be sin that has caused this or a weak belief in all that Jesus has come to do for you.
- F. **Some in this room need to pray with David in Psalm 51, “Restore unto me the joy of your salvation.”** You need to meditate upon your salvation...consider all that Jesus has done for you and believe. Is that you? Would you commit yourself anew and experience a renewed or greater joy than you have known?

- G. As a third-century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: "It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians--and I am one of them."**
- H. Are you one of us? Would you have the joy which overcomes the world?**