

Achieving Joy

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Preacher: Graeme Shanks

[0 : 00] Thanks, Samuel. Let's pray together, will we, as we come to God's living word this morning. Heavenly Father, we pray that you would help us, Lord, from time in your living word, to leave here with a bigger appreciation of who you are and what you've done for us, Lord.

Father, we recognize that we come in here today distracted and burdened by many things. And so we come to the one who said, come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened.

And I will give you rest. So Lord, we come to you this morning desperate for that soul rest. Lord, lift our eyes to the greatness of Jesus, we pray.

In his precious name we ask. Amen. The older I get, the more sure I am that the real world is even more magical than those imaginary ones.

It's one of the reasons I believe in Jesus. The voice inside me sings a different song. And I hope just the journey that we take today maybe helps us understand what Rebecca McLaughlin is talking about when she says the song inside her that sings a different song.

[1 : 18] You see, here's what I love about Jesus. Jesus helps me understand the difference between joy and happiness.

Happiness, that feeling that's based on my circumstances. Happiness, that feeling that will go up and down with the changing sands of my life. And yet joy, joy is something completely different. Joy is a state of contentment that's not based on my circumstances. That's based on something completely outside of me that gives me life and joy.

And it's something that will be permanently in place in my heart. Something that no one can take away. And I wonder if you pine for joy this morning in your life.

Let me just give you a wee example of what I mean by that. We go chasing joy in all sorts of places and yet it seems to elude us. Here is arguably the most celebrated and successful Olympic swimmer that the UK has ever produced.

[2 : 22] His name is Adam Peaty. He won gold for Team GB at Rio 2016. He went one better at Tokyo 2020. He won two gold medals.

And in a recent interview where he went really heart on sleeve about both his success and the struggles and the price that he paid to get it since then.

This is what he said. And I find this incredible. He said an Olympic gold medal is the coldest thing you will ever wear. Take that in. The coldest thing you will ever wear.

It feels so warm because you've achieved your goal. But at what cost? Do you hear what he's saying? He spent his whole life living for that moment.

And when he finally got the thing that he wanted that his heart was pursuing. And he reflected in the days after about everything that he sacrificed in order to get it. And the elusive feeling that it brought him.

[3 : 24] He concludes that it wasn't worth it. It's amazing that Adam Peaty, if you've been keeping up with the swimming news recently, you know he's back in the pool after a bit of absence. And he's doing his thing again.

What's amazing is that this search led him to God. It's led him to church. Which is incredible when you think about it. But what he's saying, it's a real stone in the shoe of the message that the world gives to us every single day.

Doesn't it? You think about the army. What's the army's motto? Be the best. Be the best you. Let nothing hold you back. You can do anything when you put your mind to it. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

And that's a crushing pressure that we can live with day after day. Because we know that so many of the reasons that we don't achieve what we want to achieve, so many of them are out with our

control.

And yet if we live with this pressure on our shoulders, it's crushing when we don't achieve the things that we want to achieve. Here's a guy who lived the dream, who conquered the mountain, who got to the top and he said there ain't no gold at the end of the rainbow.

[4 : 26] And so the question is, where can we find joy in this life? We chase joy in all sorts of places and yet it seems to elude us.

What if there was a place where we could get deep joy that would both last and that whatever our life circumstances could never be snatched away from us?

And that's what makes what Jesus is talking about in this passage today so brilliant. He's talking about something deep. He's talking about something viscous.

He's talking about something in thick. He's talking about something permanent. He's telling his disciples about a moment when, in verse 20 if you've got it there, their sorrow will be turned to joy. And the thing about the kind of joy that Jesus is talking about that the moment that he's talking about will usher in, verse 21, is that it's of the kind that will never, ever be taken away from him, them.

[5 : 32] No circumstance is going to rob them of it. No person is going to steal it from them. The joy that he is speaking about here is going to have a force field around it in their hearts.

In fact, I find it really interesting that the only metaphor that Jesus thinks will work on us to try and get us to grasp it is that of childbirth.

What a morning to have picked for that metaphor. Now, I know nothing of that pain. Husbands, if you get there, be sure to emphasize that point. But I have witnessed the experience of the pain and the agony being almost in a moment swallowed up by and eclipsed by the joy of the arrival.

Jesus is talking about a timeline here when their sorrow will give way to permanent joy. He's talking about a timeline, but he's also talking about a process.

There's a reason he's picked that metaphor. Because the way that he wins this joy for his people is going to be through pain and suffering. And I love that when you think about what Jesus is about to go through on the cross.

[6 : 43] I will come to this in a few moments time. When you read it through this lens, that he goes there to glorify the Father. That he goes to the cross to accomplish the mission since before the foundation of the earth.

To rescue sinners from their sin and from death and from hell and give them to the Father. And he also goes there, if you think about it like this.

He goes there, he battles. He does an arm wrestle with death and sin so that what? So that I can know this joy.

And that you can know this joy. And that this joy will never be taken away from us. The joy that is knowing the wondrous relationship that is the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

He goes there for our joy. And this moment that Jesus is talking about here will usher in three words for the Christian. And just take them in and let these be a salve for your soul today.

[7 : 45] Verse 27, he's talking about joy. Verse 33, he's talking about love. And he's talking about peace.

Now in our world where we face a hopelessness epidemic, I can't think of three words that our souls need to hear more than the three words that Jesus talks about here.

So what is this moment that he's talking about that will usher in this kind of lasting joy? And it's really important that we get this right because I think for years I read this passage really wrong.

Because I assumed that the moment that Jesus is talking about here was the day when he returns at the end of the age. So these things would be mine, but not now, but then.

And that changes how you view this life, doesn't it? And the journey that is the Christian life. And you can understand how you can so easily slip into a stoic-shaped Christian life.

[8 : 48] That it's really just about gritting your teeth and bearing in the moment until you get to the end. Or as you've maybe heard it put, suffering now, glory later.

And of course there's truth to that. And we want to guard against the other extreme that says follow Jesus and everything will be great for you in this life. Everything's going to go marvelously, wonderfully.

That is known as the prosperity gospel. No, health and wealth isn't the gospel. But neither is pie in the sky when you die.

Understanding the moment that Jesus is talking about here is crucial. And the context is the clue to what's going on here. Here is Jesus speaking to his disciples.

Remember the timeline. He's speaking to them on the Thursday. And he's been telling his disciples that he's about to leave them. If you want to glance your eye to verse 16.

[9 : 45] He's saying to them a little while and you will see me no longer. But after a little while you will see me again. Because Thursday will soon turn into Friday.

When things will escalate very, very quickly. Jesus will be arrested. He will be tried. He will be condemned. He will be crucified. And he will have his body laid in a tomb.

And on the Friday the disciples having scattered. Will find themselves in utter emotional turmoil. Because as the world rejoices.

As you see it there. The world as they know it. Will have spun completely out of control. They will think to themselves. Has God let go of the steering wheel?

They will think to themselves. All hope is gone. They will think to themselves. We are now the laughing stock of the world. Because we pinned our hopes on this man. And what he said was true.

[10 : 46] And Friday will soon turn to Saturday. They will be bleak. They will be utterly disillusioned. I just don't think we can get our heads around. The depths to which the disciples must have sunk.

On those few days. Can we trust anything? Can we trust anyone anymore? What are we going to do? But Saturday will soon turn to Sunday.

The day of Jesus' resurrection. The day when he walks out of the tomb. In his glorious new resurrection body. And he will greet his disciples again.

On the other side of the grave. That's the day that Jesus is talking about here. When the light will dawn on a new day.

And not just on a new day. But when the light will dawn on an entire new possibility. And that's the day when their sorrow will turn to joy.

[11 : 48] Now before we get to the how. We need to understand the why. You know I remember. I remember somebody telling me this years ago. And I just found it so helpful for understanding the resurrection.

Jesus walking out of the tomb. Is just like the receipt that you'd get. Having paid by card for something at a card machine. Right? You go to a restaurant. You pay at the end.

You scan your card. You wait for five seconds. And then you get the receipt. And what does the receipt tell you? The receipt tells you. That the price has been paid.

That's what Sunday is. The price has been paid. Because Jesus' life really was the perfect one of worship to God.

The Bible's word for that is righteousness. The one that we should have lived. The one that we should have lived. But the one that we couldn't live. And Jesus' death really was the perfect one.

[12 : 46] That we deserve to die. But we didn't. So the act of him walking out of that tomb. Is not some kind of neat trick. It is one that says that your life is totally secured.

And your future is completely sealed. Because it finds its home in the heart of this conquering Christ. And that means that as hard as it gets.

And he's talking in the context here, isn't he? About suffering and persecution that will come our way. Because we follow this man. As hard as it gets. The risen Jesus is the untouchable source of the Christian's joy.

Remember we talked about the twin tracks of the Christian life. That we will experience here and now. We will experience suffering for Jesus. The stick that we will take for associating us with him. But running alongside that. Right alongside it. Is the joy that comes with knowing Jesus. Suffering and joy. And if that's the why.

[13 : 58] Here's the how. You see Sunday is the day that says to the believer. Right now you can come to this God. Not in fear. Not casually.

But boy can you now come confidently. Because of what I've done. Because of Sunday. The God of the universe. You will be able to address him. And both know him.

And be known by him. In the most intimate of ways. That were just not possible before. And that's what Jesus means. When he speaks about the father. At verse 23.

Do you see it? You see at the heart of the Christian faith. Is a relationship with the triune God who made us. Life with the father.

The son. And the spirit. And so here's two wonderful things. About this father. Really quickly. Here's the first one.

[14:55] That we will have his ear. Do you see that? Verse 23. We will have his ear. This will not be like the experience. Of ringing a call center.

And of being told that you're back of the queue. They put you on. The backing track. With the noise. There. And the voice that says. Your call is really important to us.

And you think really? Jesus is saying. Because of my work. Because of what I've done. You have now got the father on speed dial. You have got his ear.

Isn't it just amazing? If you think about what prayer is. That we now have as children of God. We now have an audience with the king of kings. That's what prayer is.

It is a new privilege that the disciples have never known before. That they can address this God as father. And when we pray. And I take it that's what Jesus is talking about here.

[15:53] We can trust that our father. He wants us to come to him with all our burdens and worries and requests. He wants us to come to him with the people on his heart. On our heart.

He wants us to come to him with all the things that are bothering us. And trust that he will answer us in his perfect knowledge. According to what he knows we perfectly need.

And that's why if you're wondering. This is why we say in Jesus name at the end of our prayer. It's taken straight from here. The Christian can pray at the end of our prayers.

In Jesus name. When we say that. It is not some spiritual abracadabra. That is not the divine way of saying open sesame.

Heavenly father. I approach you reverently. Yet confidently. Because I pray in and through the name of Jesus. You will have his ear.

[16:52] And secondly real quick. You'll know his love. Verse 27. The father. Loves us. We have this father.

Full heart. Why? Because of our love for his son. Our desire to want to obey him. Draws out. The father's heart.

So Jesus walking out of that tomb on this day. As he tells his disciples it on the Thursday. And it's always wonderful isn't it? When people tell us what's going to happen before it happens.

And I take it it means that in the days to come. As the world gets turned upside down. That they will understand when they come to the other side of it. What Jesus is talking about.

Here is one who is in complete control. But before the event happens. Here he is saying. That me walking out of that tomb. Is going to be your untouchable source.

[17:50] Of joy. You know just as we work to a close. Maybe try and bring this home a little bit. And to draw attention to the very last words of chapter 16.

If you have them there. Can I just tell you about the football team I support? So we were on telly a few weeks ago. In the semi-final of the cup.

On BBC Alba. It's when you know you've made it. Isn't it? In a foreign tongue. And after 10 years of dross. Watching our football team.

All of a sudden we make it to the final. And here is. The words that went around our family WhatsApp group. Really simply. Two words. We won.

We won. Which is the strangest phrase when you think about it. Because here's a question for you. What did I contribute to that victory?

[18:50] Didn't even go. I sat there. From the comfort of my living room on. A cup of decaf coffee in my hand. And a warm fire on the go. And yet.

We won. Their victory is my victory. I did nothing. I did absolutely nothing. To contribute to that win. And yet.

That win is my win. And so when Jesus says. The very last words of chapter 16. Take heart. You think to yourself. Why? Why should I take heart in this world that seems so scary and the future so unknown?

Why should I take heart? Because I have overcome the world, Jesus says. Notice he doesn't say two things. Notice he doesn't say I've overcome the world. So now it's over to you. To do your bit. Because you could easily read that and think. Well that's great for you, Jesus. That you've overcome the world. I couldn't even overcome yesterday. Let alone today. Let alone the future. He doesn't say it's over to you now.

[19 : 53] Neither does he say you've overcome the world. Because I know my life. I know the unimpressive nature of it. I've overcome nothing. He says. I have overcome the world.

And that's exactly what he means. This victory that I'm going to win. Is your victory. Is your victory. And so here's the invitation this passage makes to us.

Is to come and see the source of the Christian's joy. Two things just as we close really quickly. One was a confession of mine. And one is that I was greatly convicted in studying this passage.

That I so often let my circumstances. Cloud my understanding of joy. And this is an invitation. To come and see and remind ourselves.

Where true joy is to be found. And it's to be found in this man. Jesus. And in light of that. Here's the second word. It's journey.

[20 : 52] Just as we work our way up to Easter. The invitation is to come. And this is. Presumably this is why John tells us this. So that we can journey over the next couple of chapters.

To Easter Sunday. And understand what Jesus is talking about here. What are you doing to prepare your heart. As we build up to Easter. Can I just.

Just flag another book that we've got going at the minute. This is a great way to do this. This is just a set of devotions that will take you up to Easter Sunday. Through this gospel of John. And it's a wonderful way of reminding yourself.

Who this Jesus is. And what he's done for us. So please grab that if you go. Remember it's just. It's a. Free to take. A pound it cost us to buy it. If you can give more than that.

You can donate the car machine. And give one away. But why don't as a church. We just enter this story again. And bring us to that place of understanding. Where true joy.

[21 : 50] Is to be found. Here's Glenn Scrivener. Just as we close. There is a hero who redeems through sacrifice. Who trades it all for love.

Who slays the dragon of death. Who turns all things to happily ever after. For Christians. These things are not merely matters of hope. They are matters of history.

So why don't we pray. And. I'm just going to pray. That we would understand. Who this Jesus is more this morning.

The words of Isaiah 25. On this mountain.

The Lord of hosts. Will make for all peoples. A feast of rich food. A feast of well aged wine. A rich food. Full of marrow. Of aged wine.

[22 : 45] Well refined. He will swallow up on this mountain. The covering that is cast over all peoples. The veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever.

And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people. He will take away from all the earth. For the Lord.

Has spoken. And so Lord. It's our prayer as we think about those words of Isaiah. As he looked forward. In his generation. To the day.

When death and sin would be reversed. Father I pray that you would help us to be those who wait for you. That you would help us to be those who are glad.

And rejoice. In the salvation that you've won for us. So Lord I just pray particularly for those who are here this morning. Who maybe don't know this Jesus for themselves. Lord I pray that your spirit.

[23 : 44] As we thought about last week. Would convict us. Of sin and of righteousness. Lord that we would see. And have our eyes open to see. That there's no one who compares with him.

And so Father I pray that as we continue to journey towards Easter as a church. Lord that you would fire our hearts. You would stoke the fires of the affections.

And Lord that we would leave with a greater love for Jesus. That that would grow inside of us. And so Father be with us. As we finish our time together.

Help fix the eyes of our hearts as we were singing earlier. On him. And it's in his name that we pray. Amen.