

***“The Joy Of Easter * April 4, 2010 *
Matthew 28:1-7 * Phil.4:4-8***

I. The women were “afraid, but filled with joy”.

A. What does the word ‘afraid’ represent?

B. ‘...but filled with joy’ – what does this tell us?

II. How do we know that joy is the Christian’s birthright?

A. Because _____ said so. (John 15:10-11)

B. Because joy is one of the _____ of the _____.

1. How many of the virtues listed in Galatians 5:22-23 am I meant to have?

2. Can a person actually grow in the experience of joy?

Romans 14:17 – “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

C. Joy is at the very heart of _____ nature and we are created _____.

Zephaniah 3:17 – “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

1. If you could lock eyes with Jesus, how do you imagine him looking at you?

2. What’s the truth?

3. Wrath and anger sent Jesus to the cross. What else? (Hebrews 12:2)

III. So how is a Christian to find joy for his or her life? (Phil.4:4-8)

A. We are to have joy _____ the Lord.

1. What else can we find joy in besides the Lord?

2. What’s true about each of these things? And why is Easter important in this regard?

3. I am to guard the ‘joy of my salvation’. What parts of my salvation should bring joy?

B. We are to have joy _____ the Lord.

1. What did Jesus promise us? And what does this have to do with Easter?

2. How would you like it if reality were as the Greeks described it (ala ‘The Clash of the Titans’?)

C. We are to experience the joy _____ the Lord.

1. What do we mean by this?

2. Is joy by itself a good and godly emotion? Why or why not?

3. What does Easter have to do with experiencing this type of joy?

4. Besides forgiveness, what else does Jesus offer us?

Your final instructions for this Easter day:

***“The Joy Of Easter * April 4, 2010 *
Matthew 28:1-7 * Phil.4:4-8***

I. The women were “afraid, but filled with joy”.

A. What does the word ‘afraid’ represent?

The word ‘afraid’ represents any of the negative, dark emotions we have on this side of heaven. The word reminds us that Jesus knows how hard this life is. How brutal it is. He experienced it for himself.

B. ‘...but filled with joy’ – what does this tell us?

There is something else that you ought to be experiencing today if you are Jesus’ disciple. Joy. “Afraid, yet filled with joy.” “Sad, but filled with joy.” “Struggling but filled with joy.” One of the birthrights of a Christian in this life is to be filled with joy.

II. How do we know that joy is the Christian’s birthright?

*A. Because **Jesus** said so. (John 15:10-11)*

*B. Because joy is one of the **fruit** of the **Spirit**.*

1. How many of the virtues listed in Galatians 5:22-23 am I meant to have?

All of them.

2. Can a person actually grow in the experience of joy?

Scientists have been aggressively studying human happiness now for the past decade. One study recently determined that 50% of a person’s basic happiness set-point is essentially wired at birth. Some babies are born more happy, some are born more grumpy. It’s part of the packaging God gives you. 10% of a person’s happiness set-point is impacted by circumstances around you. You’d think that winning the lottery would leave you giddy for life, but that’s now how it works out. And you’ll never see a lottery campaign that’s called “Giddy For Life”. Because once the original excitement of it all dies down, you pretty much default back to the type of person you were before, whether it was cranky or goofy or depressed. The only difference is that you are now a

wealthy cranky person, as opposed to a poor cranky person. 10% of your happiness is attributable to outside circumstance. Leaving 40% of your happiness set-point largely adaptable and moldable to choices you make. And all of this aligns perfectly with the good news of Christianity that in Christ, a person can become a ‘new creation’. Genetics is not destiny. Your past is not your destiny.

Romans 14:17 – “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

*C. Joy is at the very heart of **God’s** nature and we are created **in His image**.*

Zephaniah 3:17 – “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

1. If you could lock eyes with Jesus, how do you imagine him looking at you?

Sadly, for most Christians, if they were to honestly answer that question, they would imagine God frowning at them, or worse shaking his head in disgust, or worst of all, angry on the verge of banishing them from his sight.

2. What’s the truth?

God knows that the infection of sin is in us, and he knows that getting it out is going to be a long, hard struggle. What do you think the Cross of Jesus Christ is all about anyway? What was Good Friday all about. *It’s God being angry at me.* No – it’s God being angry at sin, at Satan, not you. “For God so loved the world that he gave his son” – not “For God was so angry at the world...” Let your mind chew on this one – God is glad you’re here.

3. Wrath and anger sent Jesus to the cross. What else? (Hebrews 12:2)

It wasn’t just God’s wrath and anger at sin that sent Jesus to the cross, it was love *and* it was joy for you.

III. So how is a Christian to find joy for his or her life? (Phil.4:4-8)

A. We are to have joy in the Lord.

1. What else can we find joy in besides the Lord?

A person can get joy *in* a lot of things. This weather – how can this not lighten your heart and put a smile on your face? Do you know what a privilege it is to be able to watch another spring come in? Don't take it for granted. The first pitch of major league baseball's regular season, Red Sox and Yankees no less. Had my first taste of strawberry shortcake last week, with fresh whipped cream mind you. I get joy out of walking barefoot again on the lawn. Joy watching my cats. Going for a run.

2. What's true about each of these things? And why is Easter important in this regard?

The thing about life's pleasures that you and I must recognize is that we have to lay them all down. Not one of them lasts. And if you try and put all your eggs in one of these baskets, try to build your life on any of these things, well your world is going to fall apart in the end. If you're going to truly live a meaningful life, a successful life, a joyful life, you better decide right now to build your life on a foundation that is going to last, and there's only one thing that isn't going to fail you, only one thing that will last all life long and then outlast death. Does Easter remind us of anyone who outlasted death? Of anyone who overcame the grave? A Christian in a relationship with Jesus Christ is hooked up to a reservoir of joy that will never run dry or ever be taken from you.

3. I am to guard the 'joy of my salvation'. What parts of my salvation should bring joy?

There should always be joy in your heart if you are a Christian that you are saved, that your sins are forgiven, and your names are written in heaven; joy in your heart that you are being saved, that through the power of the Spirit in your life you can unlearn your sinful ways and live differently than before; there should be joy in your heart that one day you will be saved, entirely, completely. Can you imagine what that will be like, my friends? Living in a body, with a mind and spirit that will not sin, can not be tempted to sin, will not be attracted to sin, where every thought will be pure, every motive undefiled, every act holy and good. A body that

cannot get sick. Cannot be broken down. Cannot die. Will never again doubt, or fear, or hate or envy, or weep.

B. We are to have joy with the Lord.

1. What did Jesus promise us? And what does this have to do with Easter?

This Christian thing is not just to be taken all "on faith". Jesus promised us, "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to him. This precious promise from Revelation 3:20 – "Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." The Lord is alive, my friend, and the Lord is so very near to you. In him, you live and move and have your being. And you are just a prayer away from connecting with him.

2. How would you like it if reality were as the Greeks described it (ala 'The Clash of the Titans'?)

The way the Greeks saw it, the gods running the show had little time for us puny little humans, and what's more, the gods were really little different from human in terms of moral character – they were just as selfish and lustful and angry as us, the main difference being they were just were a lot more powerful than us. I'd fight the gods too if that were the way reality was. Instead, reality is that we can have a real relationship with our Lord.

C. We are to experience the joy of the Lord.

1. What do we mean by this?

It means you learn to take joy in the things that bring God joy.

2. Is joy by itself a good and godly emotion? Why or why not?

It's just an emotion, pure and simple. Joy is the raw sensation of something giving us pleasure. God gave us the bodies and minds for feeling pleasure, but that's not to say that every pleasure our bodies and minds feel is from God. There are some people who experience joy when they look at the images of unclothed children on the Internet. It's pleasure that they feel. The real surge of endorphins firing in the brain. Serotonin levels rising. Does that mean it's good and godly? Not on your life. There are some people

who experience joy when they put the competition out of business, or when they climb the corporate ladder on the top of the heads of someone else, or when they say to someone, “You’re fired.” Gives them pleasure to do such things.

3. What does Easter have to do with experiencing this type of joy?

Paul said in 1 Corinthians, if Christ has not been raised then you are still in your sins (1 Cor.15:17). But if Jesus is alive, everything changes for you. You can receive forgiveness for everything you have ever done wrong. You can have peace with God. You can have the assurance of knowing that when you die, that very day you close your eyes on this earth you will open them in paradise. But Jesus promises you more than forgiveness. Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me and you will find rest for your souls.”

4. Besides forgiveness, what else does Jesus offer us?

Jesus promises to forgive you, and what’s more, promises to come into your life and teach you a new way to live. Teach you how to take joy in the right things, in things true, noble, right, pure and lovely. Don’t you hunger for that?

Your final instructions for this Easter day:

As you eat your Easter dinner this afternoon, enjoy it. Smile as the sun splashes warmly on your face. Celebrate the first pitch of baseball tonight. But above it all, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.