

BETWEEN THE DREAMING AND THE COMING TRUE

Joyful Expectations

Joyful Expectations!

Psalm 126

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.

² Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.

Then it was said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”

³ The LORD has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.

⁴ Restore our fortunes, LORD,
like streams in the Negev.

⁵ Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.

⁶ Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.

The young people put their dreams up on the tree last week, but I wonder what are we dreaming for, what are we waiting for in joyful expectation?

Will our answered dreams in the long term make us truly complete? Make us a joyful people?

There are many things in life that can make us dream or make us happy; from a parking space when we are in a hurry; to going on holiday for the first time in many years; to seeing a smile on our children's or grandchildren's face. But I don't think you can top a proposal for marriage!

I always remember walking across London bridge and saw a homeless person who had a sign in front of them; 'Smile, it costs you nothing.'

But I wonder, do we forget to be joyful as Christians? Do we ever think about what it means to be joyful, or has joy been robbed from us?

Dr Martin Lloyd Jones said that: 'The devil can't steal our salvation, but he can steal our joy.' We are in a constant battle of - living in the freedom of grace and joy - and the constant reminder of our past, our living with guilt and shame, or simply make wrong choices that draw us away from God.

Or we may think, how can we be joyful when there is so much suffering in the world?

However, God calls us all to be joyful people. If we are to love without limits, I would also suggest we should be joyful without limits, and for me that is a real challenge.

Spurgeon was quoted to say: "A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or dawn without light."

Mother Theresa said: "Joy is the net of love by which you can catch souls." A joyful heart is the inevitable result of a heart burning with love.

I would describe my joy as a quiet joy, on my good days I have an inner peace and joy. People don't necessarily want to hear the truth about God today, but they look to see what difference it has made to our lives, and the joy and hope we have within.

True Christian joy is unique, as it comes from knowing we are loved, forgiven from all sins past present, and a future through God's grace. We can know God's presence and joy here and now. A gift from God.

I am not talking about happiness which can be short lived, but living in the truth that one day the Bible will come true and our joy will be complete.

Jesus reminds us of the joy that is ours in the Lord

John 15 v 9 - 11 says

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

As we love and are loved Jesus joy will grow in us.

Hebrews 12:2

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For

the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We live between the now and then, between the dreaming and coming true!
But we don't wait alone, God walks with us and understands everything we are going through, and we can know God's love and joy here and now.

When the Lord brought back the captives to Zion we were like men who dreamed.

The Jewish people must have dreamt of all they had left behind when they were exiled in Babylon, and dreamed of going back. How long have you waited for your dreams to come true?

I wonder have the waiting times in our life strengthened us, or left us joyless?

Some people may say that by nature I am not a joyful person, but that would be like saying I am not a loving person, as God's creation as his children we are designed to love and be in community, but we are also created to be joyful people and reflect God's glory.

Sometimes we can borrow joy from past events, when we are not feeling joyful.

The Psalmist had the benefit of hindsight and could rejoice in all that God had done in the past, last week Graham Poole at our prayer meeting, shared the joy which he had to keep quiet when we received planning permission for this Church. He had to keep quiet in the church meeting until right moment. Even though full of joyful expectation.

We often talk about the journey of the redevelopment project, which at times was difficult, but we can look back with joy and see how much God did and is still doing. If we tried to do it again it would still feel beyond us, even though we have done it once already.

Perhaps we stand at the brink of another challenge with Greenfields, and I wonder in 10 years time how we will look back and rejoice again in all that God did, in the coming true.

V 4 says restore our fortunes, O Lord

God had clearly done some amazing things for the Jewish people, and they could sing with great joy about this on the way to Jerusalem.

However, this is a request for today to restore their fortunes again, they sing and raise their voices in joyful anticipation that the Lord would bless them again, and again and again.

I wonder do we stop short of the true joy God wants to bless us with. I am still wrestling with this, I have many blessings in my life, but does God really love me that much that he wants to keep blessing me with more? Sometimes I think I don't deserve the blessings God provides, but he is a God who loves without limits. I am not talking so much about material blessings, and these may well come by God's grace.

What I am really talking about is our Abba Father relationship, we all simply have the opportunity to spend time with God, read his word, be quiet before him. Worship God at the top of our voices at the Big Church day out with thousands worshipping God, or sit quietly on our own homes listening to a song.

There is no limit to the time God wants to spend with us, and as we spend time with God, so we can know the fullness of Gods joy. No other faith offers the opportunity to be joyful in the knowledge we are loved and forgiven beyond our understanding.

If we are to love without limits then surely, we must receive the fruits of the spirit without limit; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. As we exercise these fruits, we will overflow with the joy of the Lord.

But it is a choice. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

Life, as we know, is not always easy, many of us have been through difficult times over the last couple of years, but our tears will be turned to joy one day.

Habakkuk 3

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines

Though the olive crop fails, and the fields produce no food,

And no cattle are in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord

I will be joyful in God my Saviour

The Sovereign Lord is my strength, he makes my feet like feet of the deer and enable me to go to the heights.

Paul though chained up, and in very harsh conditions waiting to die, penned the words of Philippians: 'Finally my brothers rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again and it's a safeguard for you.'

Philippians 4 v 4-7 Pauls exaltation to us to rejoice in the Lord always

Rejoice – be glad and take delight

The key to this passage is “In the Lord” not in our circumstance – as we focus on God and his promises to us, that we need to rest and be joyful in his daily provision

Joy is a precious gift from God. Laughter can be a by-product of joy; it's said that children laugh up to 400 times a day; it's said that us adults do it 20 times a day. As we were reminded last week, do we need to discover our childlike faith, and in that joy and laughter?

When Jesus says we need to be childlike in our faith, maybe he is reminding us to be joyful. I expect they sang this psalm with full gusto and joy on the way to Jerusalem! Admittedly you would not want to hear my singing, but I wonder do I need to be more joyful in my walk with God?

Romans 14v17

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

We need ask the Holy spirit to lead into a place of joy when we don't feel like it.

Finally

1 Peter v 6

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though 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, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

I pray that God will bless us with an inexpressible joy, and we wait in joyful expectation 'Between the dreaming and coming true.'

Preached and Live streamed in Crawley Baptist Church, on Sunday 27th March 2022, by Ian Larkham.