

12-13-09 – 3rd Sunday of Advent
Christmas Presence: JOY!
Psalm 16

“Joy in Christ requires a commitment to working at the Christian lifestyle. Salvation comes as a gift, but the joy of salvation demands disciplined action. Most Christians I know have just enough of the Gospel to make them miserable, but not enough to make them joyful. They know enough about the biblical message to keep them from doing the things which the world tempts them to do; but they do not have enough of a commitment to God to do those things through which they might experience the fullness of his joy.”

(Tony Campolo. Seven Deadly Sins. p. 21)

I felt like doing things a little differently than you might expect for an advent passage. I would like to look at Psalm 16 in its entirety for our main text today. Please turn to Psalm 16, and as you do, I'll give you a little background on this passage. This is titled a psalm or song of David – so we know the author. We also know about David's life at this time. He was on the run from King Saul who wanted to kill David. He hid himself and his band of men in caves and foreign lands to stay alive, but he determined not to harm Saul even when he had the opportunity to do so because he considered him the Lord's anointed. David was a man of integrity before God. That's why God testified through prophecy that David was a man after God's own heart.

READ – Psalm 16 – (NLT) – a psalm of confidence...

v. 1 – “Keep me safe O God...” – The psalmist is making a plea to God for protection. Considering David's situation this is very reasonable – don't you think? However, he not only makes a request of God, he is completely expecting God to protect him. He says, **“I have come to You for refuge.”** As we look at this psalm, we see that David is at rest in God's care. I'm sure he did whatever he needed to for his own protection, but ultimately he put his life completely in God's care – expecting Him to come through – and He did. David had a confidence in God that gave him inner strength, stamina, peace, and joy. He cried out to the Lord in his distress, and God protected him. We should call out to God in our distress. As we experience God's sovereign hand of protection in our life situations, we will gain more confidence in God that brings true joy within.

There's something missing in the church today. There's something missing, and I wonder if we can find it, because it's something we need on this journey called the Christian life. There's something missing in the lives of so many of God's people, and it's called JOY. It's God's desire that we would have not just a little bit of joy, but fullness of joy, and the pleasure of being with God forever.

READ: v. 2-4 – Carnal Christianity – How do those who only appear to be Christian act? It appears that these three verses are talking about those who appear to worship God and yet follow after the idols of the world. They are enticed by those around them and the things offered by the world, but do not have a personal relationship with God who IS spirit and truth. They say to God – You are great and awesome – they sing and praise in church on Sunday – But they also worship other gods – desires, lusts, popular views and bandwagons. What does the psalmist say about these?

The author, David is a true worshipper of God, but there was a group in this day called “syncretists” who worshipped the God of Israel, but also participated in the feasts and worship of the pagan gods of their cultures. They were trying to live in both worlds at the same time – like PJ says often... with one foot in the street and one foot on the curb. It’s not really possible to do this.

This is a real temptation for us today. Do we trust in God or follow the more tangible solutions to our issues? David has refused, in his heart, to trust anyone or anything but God alone. Is the Lord our “all in all” or are we split in our allegiance between God and worldly ways? How do we get so easily torn? We know the truth – don’t we? We know that God is our only true sense of inner joy! Paganism is completely inconsistent with trust in God – then and now – We can’t have it both ways!

Obviously, David experienced God’s protection and is joyous and confident in Him. David is in complete submission to God as Master and Ruler. This is opposite of those who run after other gods. David’s confidence is in God’s care for Him. It is this relationship that is the source of all his benefits. This is the reason for his existence and joy!

We are chosen for joy... *A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms, and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more harm than its connection with black clothes and long faces.* (William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 2)

C.S. Lewis wrote, *"It is not so much the joy of the Lord we are seeking as the Lord of joy Himself."* (From a sermon by Dave Kinney, "The Presence of Joy" 1/24/2009)

READ: v. 5-6 – God’s Goodness: The psalmist stands strongly against this double-mindedness and begins to describe how good the Lord is to His people (to those who truly know Him). Loyalty to the Lord is in response to all He has done for us. It was true in the O.T. – how much more true now in light of Jesus. God bestows on all His people the covenant blessings and promises. The psalm tells us that our inheritance is pleasant and delightful, but the psalmist goes beyond rejoicing in the benefits he receives as a child of God. His joy is in the Lord Himself and being in His presence.

READ: v. 7-8 – David’s Confidence: The psalmist’s main goal in life is to love God and live for Him. This is shown by his unyielding obedience and praise. David is so sold-out to God that he praises Him continually. His joy is in the Lord, and he knows God is there beside him always. Verse eight states that **“he shall not be shaken because God is at his right side.”** That is confidence, and that is a source of inner joy. He is not easily moved by the idolaters and their temptations and enticements. God guides him by day so he can live wisely through the Scriptures. At night He instructs him in the meditation of the heart. His confidence is a result of his experiencing God’s goodness and grace as he spends time with the Lord **in His presence.**

READ: v. 9-11 – David’s JOY:

First – God is the sovereign master that he has fled to for protection (v. 1-2).

Second – The Lord has been good to him (v. 5-8).

v. 9 – begins – “No wonder” or “Therefore” – a conclusion in light of all the above. He has joy because God cares for him in life and in death. In life he has security, provision, protection and relationship. In death he is not abandoned to the grave, but remains in God’s presence even there. Paul said – **“to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”** (2 Cor. 5:8 NKJV). The Lord will not let his “holy one” see decay or the pit. Peter and Paul both refer this verse to Jesus’ resurrection. While this fits and is true looking back, it was not the original intent. Jesus, the Son of David, brought a new reality to this verse in Ps. 16. We now have this same promise in our death. We will not be abandoned to the grave. We will continue our relationship with God beyond the grave **if** we establish it before the grave. That’s our hope! That’s a true source of joy that Jesus came to give us. The Father will crown his followers – His beloved – with Life Eternal.

Our goal is to be in the presence of God forever. This is our source of Joy! God’s presence brings joy and deep eternal pleasure. David says that God, **“makes known to me the path of life.”** That is the Way that leads to true life, eternal life. Life to the psalmist and to us is life in fellowship with God both in this world and in hope of everlasting fellowship with God forever.

Let’s look at Jesus’ words in the NT about the joy He desires for us...

John 17:13-19 – Jesus’ famous prayer to the Father before His crucifixion:
13 “And now I am coming to you. I have told them many things while I was with them so they would be filled with my joy. 14 I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. 15 I’m not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. 16 They are not part of this world any more than I am. 17 Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. 19 And I give myself entirely to you so they also might be entirely yours. NLT

What is God's will concerning your joy? Jesus prayed for us to be filled with His joy. He knows we'll be hated by the world if we follow Him. He prayed for our protection from the evil one in the world. He instructed us in God's Word so we would know the truth. He desires us to be pure and holy by learning and applying the Word to our lives – a work of the Holy Spirit in us. He said in v. 13, *"I have told them many things while I was with them so they would be filled with My joy."* So we KNOW that this is God's will for you and me. Jesus desires us to be filled with His joy. Wow – you don't have to think about it – figure it out – pray if it is God's will – it's black and white – definite. We should be filled with His joy.

Look at v. 19 – I believe this is the key to the whole thing... **"And I give myself entirely to you so they also might be entirely yours."** Have you given yourself entirely to God the way Jesus did as our example? JOY comes when we are entirely sanctified or set apart to God – yielded and in constant relationship with Him – not half-hearted – but entirely His. Most people – most Christians we know come to church and worship God on Sunday, but then follow after other gods the rest of the week or even by Sunday afternoon. We have all fallen victim to this on occasion. How quickly we can go from completely committed to God one minute to leaving Him in church to run after another lust, desire, whim, activity, or interest. Is that the way Jesus gave Himself entirely to God? How do you stack up to His example of being sanctified?

Acts 13:52 – **"...the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."**

The Holy Spirit is the presence of God imparted to believers, and He resides within you and me. God Himself, by His Spirit, comes to dwell within the heart – the core of our being – in every believer in Christ. Christmas is the celebration of the great joy that God's presence is with us and made possible by the birth of the Christ one night in a town called Bethlehem. By His Spirit we have His presence with us always.

Luke 2:8-11

8 That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, 10 but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! 11 The Savior-- yes, the Messiah, the Lord--has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! NLT

An angel of God came to them to proclaim the Good News – God's Messiah – the fulfillment of OT prophecy – the promised One - was born to us. God became human and His presence came to earth. He is Emmanuel – God with us. As Jesus grew and matured He proved who He was by many signs and wonders – God's presence was really with us. The holy and anointed One came to die for us for the forgiveness of sin and restore our relationship with God once

and for all – the perfect atoning sacrifice. A new covenant was established in His blood. But He didn't just die – He was raised from the dead being present again with us and establishing a new hope and eternal joy by conquering death.

That first Christmas, the angel came to bring us all a message of good news and great joy – The Christ, the Messiah, Jesus, the Lord – God Himself was born as a human so we could experience His presence.

What is the source of your joy today? Do you have an inner joy? The angel proclaimed, "I bring you good news of great joy." Jesus was born – he died for us – he was raised from the dead – then he ascended back into Heaven – and he sent His Holy Spirit to indwell all believers – so we could experience God's presence continually.

The OT spoke of the fullness of joy that is found in God's presence. The prophets predicted this to be fulfilled by God's Messiah – the Christ. The NT confirms that this was satisfied in the birth of Jesus. Our good news of great joy is found in the presence of God through Jesus – the Christmas Presence. He sent His Spirit so His presence is with us – forever – and ***"in His presence is fullness of JOY."*** (Ps. 16:11)

There is a direct link between Joy and the Presence of God. Do you have that inner Joy that only Jesus can bring to your life? There are so many forces that are trying to draw us away from a true and total commitment to God. We need to recognize this. The only way we can stand a chance is to commit ourselves completely to Jesus and study the Word of God constantly to recognize the attacks and ploys of the enemy. He will use friends, family, piers, co-workers, activities and any other means possible to make you doubt, or question God's plan for your life. Your only defense is a strong offense – **The Word of God!**

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas this year, you may see areas where you have been tempted to compromise the holiness of God in your life. Now is the time to re-commit or re-dedicate yourself to Jesus. **Heb. 12:2 – *"Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish. He was willing to die a shameful death on a cross because of the JOY he knew would be his afterward."*** NLT I pray you experience Christmas Presence this year as we once again focus on the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. His birth was God's plan to bring us into his presence. That plan has been fulfilled and by His Spirit, God's presence is available to everyone who believes. **In His presence is fullness of Joy.** You can be filled with His joy today - Joy that will last forever – Joy you must receive by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ whose birth we celebrate every Christmas.

C.S. Lewis told me, there is too much solemnity and intensity in dealing with sacred matters, too much speaking in holy tones. The tragic loss in all this pious gamesmanship is to the individual in the pew, who begins to feel that in the midst of the religious razzle-dazzle he cannot get through to the Lord Himself.

We have learned that joy is more than a sense of the comic, more than earthly pleasure, and to a believer even more than what we call happiness. Joy is the enjoyment of God and the good things that come from the hand of God. If our new freedom in Christ is a piece of angel food cake, joy is the frosting. If the Bible gives us the wonderful words of life, joy supplies the music. If the way to heaven turns out to be an arduous steep climb, joy sets up the chair lift. (Sherwood Wirt, *Jesus, Man of Joy*).

Do you have that kind of JOY in your life? Can you say with the prophet Nehemiah, ***“the Joy of the Lord is my strength?”*** This is an inner joy from God and our relationship with God that will take us through anything life throws at us. It is a confident joy because the Holy Spirit is within us so we experience God’s presence every moment. ***In His presence is fullness of Joy.*** Are you willing to give Him your life today in exchange for His Joy – the joy of the presence of Almighty God within you – the joy of being forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness before Him – the joy of eternal life?? It’s yours for the asking – It’s a gift – God has **Christmas Presence** for each of us.