

# Joy for the Journey (6): Complete Joy

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(John 16:20-24)

## I. Introduction

A. OK, so these days isn't the best time to be emulating David Letterman!

1. But I ran across this "*Top Ten List*" of things that you hear in church
  - "Hey, it's my turn to sit on the front row!"
  - "It can't be over already; it's only been an hour and a half!"
  - "What this church really needs is more announcements!"
  - "Personally, I find witnessing more enjoyable than golf."
  - "Nothing inspires me more than another sermon on giving!"
  - "Hey, we're all here early; let's go ahead and start!"
  - "I volunteer to be permanent teacher for Middle School class."
  - "I love it when we sing those new songs I've never heard before."
  - "You know, nothing is more fun and enjoyable than church"
2. Surely we've heard SOME of in church (*maybe we'll go over hour and half...*)
3. I want expand on last bullet, "*Nothing is more fun and enjoyable than church*"
  - a. Here are two ways I've heard people describe church... and were serious
    - 1) "*Church is like medicine*" (To be good for you it has to taste bad)
    - 2) "*Church is like a diet*" (If it's too good, spit it out—it's bad for you"
  - b. There are Christians who take that approach to their whole Christian life
    - 1) Many Christians look like they were weaned on a sour pickle.
    - 2) They are joyless pessimists who see life as a glass a half-empty.
    - 3) They are constantly critical of everything-- others, job, and church
  - c. Have we done a very good job presenting Christian life as a life of JOY?

B. Our sermon series is entitled "*Joy for Journey.*" Bible talks a lot about joy

1. The noun "joy" (**χαρά**) used 59x; the verb "*rejoice*" (**χαίρω**) is used 72x
  - a. The standard first century Greek greeting was **χαρεῖν**, "*Joy be with you.*"
  - b. Paul uses the greeting (combined w/ Hebrew "*shalom*") to begin epistles
2. This greeting "*joy be with you*" was used in two other important occasions.
  - a. The angel who appeared to tell Mary that she was with child (**Luke 1:28**)
  - b. When Jesus met Mary and Mary Magdalene after Resurrection (**Mt 28:9**)
3. So literally, the gospel begins (*birth*) and ends (*resurrection*) with joy!

- C. When I was about eleven or so, our family went to the state fair in Richmond
1. What I remember was Dad dragging us to “*The History of Coffee*” exhibit
    - a. This was why I made my kids occasionally go to boring stuff—**revenge!**
      - 1) I griped and complained long enough (for Dad, that was about 3 sec)
      - 2) Finally he said, “*Listen friend, you will go and you will enjoy it*”
    - b. Can you really do that? Can you command one to have a good time?
    - c. He did that a lot, “*You will go and you will enjoy it!*” Well, I went...
  2. That story came to my mind as I was looking over some texts on joy
    - a. We’ll look more closely at Philippians next week, but notice these texts  
*So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (Philippians 2:18, NIV)*  
*Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. (Phil 3:1, NLT)*  
*Be full of joy in the Lord always. I will say again, be full of joy. (Phil 4:4, NCV)*
    - b. These are hortatory or command statements— the Bible commands joy
      - 1) So is this like Dad telling me, “*You will do it and you will like it?*”
      - 2) Paul commands joy just like He commands prayer (**1 Th 5:16-18**)  
<sup>16</sup> *Be joyful always;* <sup>17</sup> *pray continually;* <sup>18</sup> *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.*
    - c. You might be thinking, “*But I’m just not by nature a very joyful person*”
    - d. Well, Paul says, “*That’s OK... REPENT and then go get some joy!*”
  3. If we miss “*joy in the journey,*” we miss something of kingdom (**Rom 14**)
    - a. The folks at Rome were locked into issues—like holy days, meats & wine
      - 1) OK, these are trivial, not **real** issues like versions and praise teams!
      - 2) Rome fought over precisely the things we fuss and feud over today!
    - b. **Paul:** These aren’t kingdom issues, but there are kingdom issues (**14:17**)  
*In the kingdom of God, eating and drinking are not important. The important things are living right with God, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. (NCV)*
      - 1) Kingdom isn’t about right views on issues, but **RIGHTEOUSNESS**
      - 2) Kingdom isn’t constant theological in-fighting, but about **PEACE**
      - 3) It not about stressing over theological minutia, but about **JOY**
    - c. **Paul:** If we miss out on joy, we miss the very essence of God’s kingdom
  4. Our unlikely “joy text” is one Jesus spoke to prepare apostles for His death

## II. Complete Joy (Read [John 16:20-24](#))

A. **First**, Jesus reminds us joy isn't tied to circumstance (“*grief will turn to joy*” [v 20](#))

1. Time leading up to crucifixion was not happy time for Jesus or the apostles
  - a. Times would be hard; He is preparing them for much pain and grief.
  - b. But even in the shadow of the cross, Jesus points them to a complete joy
2. We've been suggesting that we naturally tie happiness to what's happening
  - a. If we are unhappy, the way to get happy is to change what is happening.
  - b. Happiness is in something different— different person, place or thing
  - c. **Old Joke:** The Englishman, Frenchman and Russian discussing happiness
    - **Englishman:** “*Happiness is coming home after work to slippers and pipe*”
    - **Frenchman:** “*Happiness is a wonderful dinner with a beautiful woman*”
    - **Russian:** “*Happiness is the KGB knocking down your door and saying ‘Ivanovitch, you are under arrest’ and Ivanovitch lives next door!*”
  - d. We may have different thresholds, but it depends on what is happening
3. The joy Jesus discusses is more than emotional response to happenstance
  - a. Joy is an inward satisfaction that comes from secure relationship w/ God.
    - 1) Pain and difficulty are inevitable, but misery is always optional.
    - 2) Joy is the ability to be secure in what we have in God despite all else
  - b. The joy that Jesus promises is independent of life circumstance
  - c. In fact, Paul saw this joy as being highlighted by struggle ([2 Cor 6:10](#))  
“*sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.*”

B. **Second**, this joy arises from a relationship with Christ ([16:22](#))

*Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.*

1. This was a time for grief because Jesus was being taken away from them.
  - a. But they would be reunited, and the result would be unending joy.
  - b. Jesus compares it to the experience of childbirth— *the process is agony*
    - 1) The result is such overwhelming joy that the agony is forgotten
    - 2) Ladies, you may be thinking, “*Easy for you to say!*” What Jesus said
  - c. Jesus says that joy comes when we can be united with Him.
  - d. The reason that he was going to the cross was so that we can have joy

2. That's precisely the joy Paul assumes the Philippians understood (**Phil 2:1**)  
*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,*
    - a. The language here is relational—encouraged, comforted, fellowship
    - b. His point is that united with Christ means getting along with others
    - c. But joy comes when we realize that we are united with Jesus Himself
  3. Peter stresses this joy than comes in relationship with Christ (**1 Peter 1:8**)  
*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,*
    - a. That kind of joy doesn't come through dabbling around the edges of faith
    - b. That joy comes when we make Christian focus of our life now and forever
- C. **Third**, this joy is made complete when we join God in ministry (**John 16:24**).  
*"Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."*
1. The roles of the apostles would completely change after Jesus left them.
    - a. They had been learners; after the ascension they would become teachers.
    - b. Jesus tells them that in God and through prayer, they could do anything.
  2. Their joy would be made complete in partnering with God in service
    - a. OK, serving God can be difficult—Jesus says this right before the cross
    - b. If we allow God to work through us, then there is great joy in service
      - 1) When 70 returned from commission, work produced joy (**Lk 10:7**)
      - 2) Barnabas had joy because of his work in Antioch (**Acts 11:23**)
      - 3) When the apostles suffered because of their work—joy (**Acts 5:41**)
  3. There is a joy in service because we partner with God— we do God's work

### III. Conclusion

- A. If led by the Spirit, we will be led into life of joy—not captive to circumstance
  1. We don't pursue an ever-fickle, ever-changing happiness of happening
  2. We transcend circumstance because Christ is with us despite circumstance
- B. There is one joy text that tells us that we don't need to be joyful (**Jam 4:8-10**)

<sup>8</sup> *Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.* <sup>9</sup> *Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.* <sup>10</sup> *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*