

Luke 6:17-26

I'd like to begin today by telling you a story about two men. The **first** man is driving home from work in a 2022 **Corvette** Convertible. Earlier that day he learned that he had received a big job **promotion**, and along **with** it, a sizable salary **increase**. He's driving to his large house in the **suburbs**, where he lives with his **wife**, his two **children**, and his faithful dog, **Scout**. The **second** man is driving home in a 15-year old Dodge **minivan**. His wife had passed away very **unexpectedly** just a few days earlier. Now he's returning from his wife's **funeral** to his 2-bedroom **rambler** in town, where he now lives all **alone**. So, here's a **question** for you. Which of these two men do you think is **happier**? ... **Happiness** or **joy** is the basis for our sermon thoughts this morning, and specifically, we're going to look at the question: **Where Is Your Joy?** The words of Jesus to His disciples in today's text will show us where we, as Christians, can find **real** and **lasting** joy.

Today's sermon text comes shortly after **last** week's sermon text, where Jesus called the first **four** of His **full-time** disciples - Peter, Andrew, James and John. And today we hear about **another** amazing event which these men were privileged to witness when they were with Jesus. We read, "*(Jesus) went down with them and stood on a level place with a large crowd of his disciples and a large number of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, as well as from the coastal area of Tyre and Sidon. These people came to **listen** to him and to be **healed** of their diseases. Those who were troubled by **unclean spirits** were **also** cured. The whole crowd kept trying to **touch** him, because **power** was going out from him and **healing** them all.*" What a great experience for these disciples. They were able to witness the great **need** which people had for **Jesus**, and the miraculous way in which He took **care** of their needs. At this point in time they were probably thinking that being with Jesus would **always** involve **happy events** - seeing Jesus **heal** people of their diseases, and then seeing them **praising** God out of **gratitude**.

However, it didn't take very long after these miraculous healings took place, before Jesus gave His disciples a more **realistic** picture of what it would actually **mean** for them to follow Him, and He did it by telling them about **blessings** and **woes**. The **blessings** would involve **joy** and **happiness**, while the **woes** would involve **pain** and **sorrow**. In a sense Jesus was telling His disciples, which people would find **joy**, and which ones would find **pain**. His words are quite the **opposite** of what many people would **think**.

First let's take a look at the **woes** which Jesus spoke about. He said, "*Woe to you who are **rich**, because you are receiving your comfort **now**. Woe to you who are **well fed** now, because you will be **hungry**. Woe to you who **laugh** now, because you will be **mourning and weeping**. Woe to you when all people speak **well** of you, because that is how their fathers constantly treated the **false prophets**.*" Jesus spoke **warnings** or **woes** to those who were **rich** and **well fed**, to those who **laughed** and were **well-spoken of**. At first, that seems **strange** to us. But we need to understand the **context** of Jesus' words. Jesus was speaking about those who looked to wealth for their **fulfillment** in life. He was speaking about those who thought that being **well-fed** was living the **good** life. When He speaks about those who are **well-spoken of** He means those who are highly esteemed in this **world**, with all of its **misplaced** priorities, and rampant **unbelief**. In summary, Jesus speaks woe to those whose main focus of life is the **here** and **now** - those who are looking for happiness in the **things** and **people** of **this** world. Jesus was speaking **woes** to them, because He knew that these people were headed for **pain** and **sorrow** if their joy was only found in the **here** and **now**.

As **followers** of Jesus, **we** know that what He says is the **truth**. We know that **things** of this world, and the **praise** of this world will **not** bring us true and lasting **happiness**. And yet, all too often, we find ourselves thinking and acting just the **opposite**. It's so easy to fall into the trap of looking for **joy** in **material** things. It's hard not to **daydream** about all the nice things we could **have** and **do** if we just had a little more **money**. Unfortunately when we **think** that way, it doesn't take very long before we actually end up thinking that we **need** all those things in order to be truly **happy**.

It's **also** just as much of a **temptation** to try to find our joy in the **praise** of this world. Which of these things would you say is **easier** - to **stand up** for the truth of God's Word in the face of **scorn** and **opposition**, or to **give in** to the philosophies of this **world**, and be accepted and **praised** for your **understanding** and **tolerance**? It's good for us to hear the **warnings** of Jesus in our text, and to know that if our joy is all wrapped up in the **things** and the **people** of **this** world, then we're only going to wind up with **pain** and **sorrow** in the end.

So, **Where Is Your Joy?** Listen to the words of our **Savior**. Jesus said, "*Blessed are you who are **poor**, because yours is the kingdom of **God**. Blessed are you who **hunger** now, because you will be **satisfied**. Blessed are you who **weep** now, because you will **laugh**. Blessed are you whenever people **hate** you, and whenever they **exclude** and **insult** you and reject your name as **evil** because of the*

Son of Man.” Jesus said that those who are **poor** and **hungry** - those who **weep**, and are **hated**, and **excluded**, and **insulted** - they are the people who are **blessed** or **happy**. But that doesn’t really sound **right**, **does** it? How can that really be **true**? Well, Jesus went on to say, “**Rejoice** in that day and leap for **joy** because of **this**: *Your reward is great in **heaven!***” These people can have **joy** because they **aren’t** focused on the **things** of this world, or the **praise** of this world. They know that **true** joy can only be found in a **heavenly** reward - a reward which has been **given** to them out of God’s boundless **grace**. That’s why they can have **joy** even when they’re going through circumstances which many **others** would see as **hopeless**. They have **joy** because they know they have a loving **Father** - a Father who will **take care** of them in **this** life, and who **one day** will take care of them **forever** in heaven.

This is the same joy which **we** have, because of the **Gospel**. In the Gospel, Jesus gives us **hope**. He allows us to see that even in the most **severe** circumstances on this earth, we have reason to **smile** and be **happy**, because we have the **forgiveness of sins**, and the promise of **eternal life**. Think about it. What’s better **news**: hearing that you won the **lottery**, or hearing that your **sins** have been **forgiven**. If we’re looking at things from the proper **perspective**, we’re going to realize that there’s no **better** news than the announcement of God’s **forgiveness**. That’s where **true** joy is found. It doesn’t really **matter** if we have **millions** of dollars in the bank, or very **few**. It doesn’t really **matter** what other people **think** about us. All that really **matters** is what **God** has given us, and what **He** thinks about us. We know that when God the Father sees **us**, He sees the perfection of His **Son**, Jesus - and that brings us true **joy** no matter what **else** happens - even if we’re **poor** and **hungry**, or **hated** and **persecuted**.

Of course, that **doesn’t** mean that we **have** to be poor to be **happy**, or that we **have** to be starving to find **joy**. It simply means that we have a proper **understanding** of what **joy** really **is**, where it really **comes from** - the Word of **God**. When we rely on God’s Word **alone** for our joy, we will **never** be disappointed, because we know that we have a **Savior** in **Jesus** - and we know that **Jesus** will **never** let us down.

In conclusion, I’d like to go back to the two men I spoke about at the **beginning** of today’s sermon. As Paul Harvey used to say: here’s the **rest** of the story. The man driving that new **Corvette** was really **happy** - for a **while**. He **loved** his car, and all of his neighbors were very **impressed**. But his joy **faded** when the woman across the street from him bought a new **Porsche**. He was also very

relieved that he had finally received that big **promotion**. Unfortunately, in order to **get** it, he had to put in so much of his **time** and **effort**, that he frequently neglected his **wife** and **family**, and his marriage was close to ending in **divorce**. Maybe he wasn't so **happy** after all.

The **second** man, who was driving home from his wife's **funeral**, was **mourning** his **loss**, but he was also **comforted** - knowing that his wife was now at home with the LORD in **heaven**, and that in God's good time, he would see her **again**. It's true, his minivan had a lot of **miles** on it, but he really didn't **mind** that, because it also held a lot of wonderful **memories** of the trips which he and his wife had taken **together**. Even with so many things seemingly going **against** him, he still had **joy**, because he was **focused** on the **right** things. It's my prayer that we will **all** focus our attention on the joy which **Jesus** brings into our life. The more we see and appreciate the **eternal** blessings **He** has given us out of His **love**, the more we realize we don't need **anything** else. Amen.