



“ADVENT SERIES WEEK 3 JOY!” 12-11-16

So today is my day to bring the sermon... Talk about my Birthday and why I'm preaching...and that I'm really only 1 day older than I was yesterday. And the Wii usually says I'm in my 30's.. So it's all good.

Today is Week 3 of our Advent Series: We Believe.... And we need to PROTECT the things we believe in....

Week 1 Nick shared with us about PROTECT YOUR HOPE! Keeping that ember safe from all harm...holding it carefully, not flippantly: Drawing near to God, Like Zechariah and Elizabeth...choosing to believe that what God says He will do.

2nd week of Advent, PR talked about PROTECT YOUR PEACE...the WHOLENESS of God. We meet Elizabeth's cousin, Mary, who is also visited by an angel, and told she was pregnant. Mary was at first afraid but trusted God, she didn't know all the details, but she surrendered to God's plan for her life and accepted SHALOM: THE WHOLENESS OF GOD

If you missed either of these sermons you can watch them at www.ENJOYLWC.com

Today I want to talk to you about **Joy**: “**Protect Your Joy**”

Understand that the enemy isn't really after your dreams, your health or your finances....he is after your JOY.

The Bible says that “**the JOY of the LORD is our strength**” (Nehemiah 8:10) And the enemy knows that if he can rob you of your JOY and make you live a grumpy complaining lifestyle then you will have no strength (physically or spiritually) to fight off his attacks. And we won't have the strength to do the good things God is calling us to do.

Devotional from Joel Osteen “Your Best Life Begins Each Morning” December 1st Devotional. Page 334

We need to PROTECT OUR JOY. What is JOY?



We found JOY this week at Lowes in Hornell.... For only \$750 you can have JOY.

Seriously I keep seeing the word JOY on peoples lawns, on ornaments and decorations, Christmas Cards.... Do we even know what it means?

CS Lewis defines Joy as a desire is that not yet satisfied.... [We picture...that perfect Christmas gift, the fantastic recipe, the festive party] **a deep longing for God...a hungry pursuit of God that lasts a lifetime and is more satisfying than anything this world has to offer.**

Found in C.S. Lewis' autobiography, Surprised by Joy.

Placing expectations on temporary things WILL DISAPPOINT US.

Joy is more than a happy feeling...Happy feelings are temporary....Joy is eternal

Earlier this week I was a GCC working while Ezra was taking a class...A woman that works at the college walked into the room I was in and I commented to her on the decorations, complimented the "Christmassy feel". She sighed and said something about having a hard day...and we spoke of how this season can be difficult. She said "So many people try to recreate that perfect Christmas....the one we remember as a child...the one we've seen in the Hallmark movies. But that is not often reality and will leave us disappointed." There was a silent gap as I prayed "Lord....how do I respond to this??" And I said "I guess that's why we need to have something bigger to place our HOPE in....like God...and remembering the real reason we even have Christmas" It's the only way we can experience REAL JOY.

We won't have JOY...if we leave Jesus out of our lives. There will be temporary happy moments...but you CANNOT HAVE JOY when there is no JESUS.

There are going to be moments in our lives when we are not happy...Some of us when we first wake up in the morning... We had a sweet reminder a couple of weeks ago we stayed at a hotel for our anniversary. We were half asleep... on our way to breakfast at the hotel....the elevator stops at the floor below us...little girls comes onto the elevator singing....

"If your happy and you know it do all three"

We might not always feel like singing that song....but we can still have JOY...

Let's look at our scripture... Luke 1:39-55 (TEACH HOW TO FIND)

Elizabeth is about 6 months pregnant....Mary is just finding out she is pregnant.

³⁹ At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "**Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!**" ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. ⁴⁵ **Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"** Luke 1:39-45

That's quite a greeting!

What's Mary feeling through all of this?

- Mary - Shock
 - Around 13 years old.
 - More property than person
 - Just been visited by an angel!!!
 - Just found out she is pregnant without being married - no protection/dignity
 - **SHOCK: You want what for Christmas?? Do you know how much that costs? "Sticker Shock"**
- Mary - Strain
 - Just traveled over 80 miles - not in a car
 - Pregnant - could have felt sick and I'm sure was weary
 - **STRAIN: Exhausted....shopped till you drop...made way too many Christmas cookies...ate too many cookies**
- Mary – Stress
 - Scared to tell her story - unbelievable....opening herself up for rumors...I'm sure she was praying during her journey on how she would tell Elizabeth about this pregnancy....would she believe her?
 - **STRESS: what to get someone? Who is coming....how to juggle all the family parties that are overlapping**
 - ... (but notice she didn't have to tell Elizabeth...the Holy Spirit told Elizabeth for her)
 - **God is already working on the situations that situation you are stressing about....**

Mary lived at a time of great darkness:

- the word of God had not been heard for four centuries. (400 years)
- the people of God were under the oppressive rule of Rome.
- the nation of Israel was divided.
- Mary lived in poverty – not a wealthy family
- Already mentioned all the birth stuff...

She had a lot to grumble about...

Kind of like living in 2016 Sometimes we feel JUSTIFIED in our grumbling... there was a lot to grumble about ...And it doesn't seem like a lot to be JOYFUL about.

That's why the angel said to the shepherds **"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."** Luke 2:10 When they were announcing the birth of Jesus...

In the original language ***the word for JOY IS closely related to the word for GRACE and it literally means: JOY BECAUSE OF GRACE***

Joy because we have received something you didn't deserve....

Jesus is the EMBODIMENT...something we don't deserve, we deserve punishment for our sins, but God sent Jesus, the Messiah to die for our sins. That's GRACE. That's why we can have JOY.

YOU CAN'T HAVE JOY IF YOU'RE NOT RECEIVING GRACE.

Mary had favor with God (the angel said), the word for FAVOR is the same word for GRACE. Mary received Grace and therefore she had JOY.

If we are holding onto sin, we can't RECEIVE GRACE and therefore we CAN'T HAVE JOY.

If you have asked Jesus to forgive you but you can't forgive yourself... you AREN'T allowing yourself to RECEIVE GRACE and therefore you CAN'T HAVE JOY.

Some of us can only focus on the negative...

- I'm no good
- I'll always mess things up
- Look at my life....there's nothing to be joyful about

If that's you...it's Time to Change your perspective HOW??

Let's look back at our scripture: (Luke 1:46-49)

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

Mary sang... "My soul glorifies [MAGNIFIES] the Lord" - not "my soul magnifies this problem before me..." "...my soul magnifies my unworthiness" ... "My soul glorifies [MAGNIFIES] the Lord"

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

She was not only focusing on God, but she was acknowledging that He is the ONLY One who brings salvation from all the darkness she has been living in.....that's why she has JOY..

God is the ONLY ONE who can save you from the darkness you experience. But you have to **CHOOSE TO PROTECT YOUR JOY, BY MAGNIFYING HIM AND RECEIVING HIS GRACE...**

Just as YOU CAN'T HAVE JOY IF YOU'RE NOT RECEIVING GRACE...

YOU CAN'T HAVE JOY IF YOU'RE NOT EXTENDING GRACE.

- Is it a joyful experience to hold a grudge?
- Does it make you feel good to constantly look for someone to blame?
- How about when we nit-pick every little thing about someone/a situation?

When we are doing that we are not PROTECTING OUR JOY...and we're not PROTECTING THE JOY of anyone around us.

How do we change this habit?

1. Get rid of Prideful thoughts:

- a. In Mary's song she sings "[God] has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts". (vs 51)
 - i. That means...When we are arrogant, we cannot think clearly, there is no reasoning. The part of us that can reason that God is God and in control cannot work properly...so our thoughts are scattered...we aren't receiving Grace because we aren't extending Grace and we HAVE NO JOY.
- b. She goes on to sing "[that God] has lifted up the humble." (vs 52)
 - i. meaning those who depend on God rather than self for their self worth. Your self worth does not depend on anyone else...
 1. What someone says about you does not determine your self-worth
 2. Your achievements don't determine your goodness
 3. What choices your kids make does not determine your value as a parent.
 4. What Christmas presents you do or don't get do not determine the amount of love you are worthy of receiving.
 - ii. Depend on God for your self worth and stop worrying about everyone around you and how they make you FEEL.... And God will RAISE UP YOUR SPIRIT BY THE BLESSING OF SALVATION....AND YOU WILL HAVE JOY

That's what Mary is singing about. .

Another way to PROTECT YOUR JOY

2. investment in others – Something supernatural happens when we share with others.
 - a. Mary invested in Elizabeth.
 - i. Elizabeth was 6 months pregnant when Mary got there.
 - ii. ⁵⁶ Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home. Luke 1:56
 - b. Instead of sitting at home in fear over her situation, she magnified the Lord and looked for ways to help someone else.
 - c. It's important to always be ready because you never know when God is planning on using you to bless someone.

Ezra and I had stopped at a local restaurant last week for lunch and the girl serving us was having a rough day. She kept apologizing because she couldn't keep her thoughts together...We kept smiling and reassuring her that it was ok, and then God spoke to me and told me very specifically to tell her something.

I went to her and said "I don't know if you believe in God, but I do. And when I'm having a rough day, God is the only way I make it through, the only thing that keeps me stable." She teared up, grabbed my arm and thanked me. We connected on FB and we have chatted some since then. She told me that that morning she had wished that she had something like Faith, but she didn't know how to do that.

- What if I had spent my day, looking inward and feeling sorry for myself?
- What if I had been too nervous to speak to her?
- What if I had been critical of the way she was serving us?

RECEIVING AND EXTENDING GRACE IS THE ONLY WAY TO KNOW AND EXPERIENCE JOY not just at Christmas...but all year long.

If you have never received God's grace...or you are at a place in your life where you need God's grace confirmed in your life...I'd like to give you an opportunity to receive that right now.

Let's all pray this out loud together repeat after me "*Lord Jesus* (repeat), *forgive me of my sins* (repeat), *come into my heart* (repeat), *I receive your grace right now* (repeat), *I make you my Lord and Savior* (repeat)."

Romans 10:9 "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

Guided Prayer:

Thank the Lord for speaking to you today...and providing Jesus as your Savior so you can have JOY.

Ask Him to show you something new about Joy this week as you seek Him.

Ask the Lord if there is anyone in your life that He wants you to have more grace with...

Extra thoughts:

"Well it was easy for Mary...she saw the angel...she was told the promises..."

We have promises too...but you won't know them if you don't read them in the Bible....

The rest of Mary's song...

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.” Luke 1:46-55