

Joy

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[0 : 00] And there, I hear my voice now. Cool. I'm going to scoot back just so there's no feedback here. Good morning, everybody. How y'all doing? Good to see you. And good morning to all you who are new.

I met some new people here today, which is always amazing that going to a church for the first time is never an easy thing to do. Doing it during a time where you have to wear a mask and all that. There's just a lot of obstacles, so I really appreciate people showing up and making an effort to be here.

And those who are listening to this later online as a recording, I think of some guys that are kind of either sick or out somewhere doing training or deployed or whatever.

Glad that you're able to tap in and still remain a part of what we're doing here on a Sunday morning and feeling connected in some way. It's hard to feel connected during this season.

And so whatever we can do to help with that, we're glad that you can take advantage of. Seeing some faces of guys that were out doing some training. Some of the Marines, it's good to have you guys back.

[1 : 04] And yeah, you were definitely missed. Before we jump into the sermon, just a really quick announcement so you're not surprised at it at the end of service. We are going to go back to dismissing by row when we end the service.

And so you will just be on alert. So you will have one of these guys in the welcome shirts come and say, you know, kind of lead you out. And then it'll be row by row. So just wait for that person to escort you out when the service ends.

And okay. All right. So we're going to jump into our Galatians series. And we're looking specifically at one particular passage. It's Galatians 5.22 and 5.23.

It's looking at the different fruits of the Spirit. We've been through a few already. But let's read what the verse says. In Galatians 5.22 it says, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. And so the particular fruit of the Spirit we're looking at today is joy. And let me just push pause before we just run into it.

[2 : 13] Let me briefly explain the term fruit of the Spirit. I think we can just like grow up in church and just assume we know what that means. Maybe you're new and you're checking out Christianity and this like, this sounds a little weird.

What's going on? It's okay. Hopefully this is a helpful metaphor for you. If you're a lamp, right, if you and I are a lamp, we have no ability to produce light until we are plugged into an electrical outlet, right?

And just like a lamp, that plugging in for us happens when God saves us. So we're kind of lamps. We're just not plugged into anything. But when God saves us, what he does, he plugs us into his power.

But still, like a lamp, you don't know it's plugged in until you see that light bulb shine, right? The shining, that shining bulb, that illuminated bulb kind of points to the fact that there's power happening.

And in the same way, the Holy Spirit's power is seen by his fruit coming out of our lives. You know, a lot of times when we're saved, that power is hidden. That work of the Holy Spirit is hidden.

[3 : 17] And it might be even hidden to us and hidden to others. But eventually, that fruit comes out, and it makes it undeniable that the Holy Spirit is there, and he is at work.

And he will produce fruit in our lives, and this fruit can't be hidden. So we're looking at the fruit of joy. Consider that. If you have joy, others are going to know it. And it's not because you're joyful,

like, 100% of the time.

It's not because you're walking around with permagrunt on your face. It's a disposition change that happens in you. You become just more joyful. There's a brightening of countenance.

There's a lightness about you. But people can tell a joyful person versus a non-joyful person. Now, it's worth noting that there are a lot of people, there are a lot of joyful people who aren't Christians, right?

And I wouldn't argue with that. But I do wonder what they are happy about or what they're joyful about because joy is always tied to something. Our joy as people is always tied to something.

[4 : 20] Now, I can still remember my sixth birthday because I got the gift. It's the gift that I wanted or the gift I didn't even know that I wanted, the gift that I was hoping for.

And it was a \$10 Lone Ranger mask, pistol, and holster set. But I'm that old. I'm that old. And, you know, I was so happy when I saw that.

I remember my response. I jumped up and down, running around yelling and telling my parents and my grandparents who knew that I was getting this set, like, I got a Lone Ranger set.

Oh, my gosh. And that happened probably for way too long. It was super irritating. But, see, I had a lot of joy in that moment. But my joy, it was tied to that gift.

But as you can guess, I'm not getting joy out of that gift anymore, right? And you should expect me not to be getting joy out of that gift anymore. But that's life on planet Earth, isn't it?

[5 : 21] It's scattered with joyous moments that come and go. So new toys, new cars, new homes, vacations, weddings, births, all those things bring joy in those moments.

And those are great moments. And they're so great, we would love for them to last forever, which is why we have photo albums and flash drives and Instagram and Facebook full of pictures and videos.

So what does it do? Man, we get to go back to those things. We get to relive those moments of joy. And we get to experience a bit of that joy again. And, you know, that is the beauty of being able to remember these things.

Remembering our blessings brings joy to our hearts. You know, remembering doesn't just look backward to what was. That's amazing.

We get to do that. We get to remember all those amazing moments. But, man, we get to remember and recall the blessings that we have now. It's not just remembering those things that aren't ours anymore, but it's remembering the things and recalling the things that we have right now.

[6 : 30] I have this little routine when I take Rory and Sierra to school in the morning. And we always start in the car with, hey, what are you thankful for today? And they get to look forward to the day and they get to recount some of the things that they're thankful for.

They'll name some friends and teachers and some of the games that they're going to play are a part of the school time that they're really excited about, which is usually like PE and art and things like that.

They're thankful for family and all those things. And then what we do is we pray and we give thanks to God for who he is and all the ways that he's blessed us. And here's the thing, guys.

Being grateful or giving thanks is meant to be a regular rhythm of life for us as Christians. And many of the songs in Scripture, when you read the book of Psalms, they're giving thanks to God for who he is and also counting all the ways he's blessed us.

Psalms 100, 4 to 5, here's just two little verses. It says this, Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him.

[7 : 40] Bless his name. Why? Well, let's count the reasons why. For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever.

And his faithfulness to all generations. And that's just two verses out of a songbook that is filled with these things of giving thanks and considering how amazing God is in all his mighty acts and wondrous works.

See, praise is the practice of gratitude. It names the goodness of God and his many blessings. And this is pivotal because a joyful heart sees and receives God's gifts in all circumstances.

There's a story a pastor tells that really illustrates this point well. And it happened while he was volunteering at a hospital during his time in seminary.

He says this, One night, a man was moved to his ward, this pastor's ward, from the emergency room. And he was in such pain. This man was in such pain that he was groaning all night.

[8 : 46] And then every once in a while, the nurse assigned to him would come in to check on him, to change his bandages, to give him medication and so on. And despite that man's severe, very severe pain, every time the nurse would walk out of the room, he managed to thank her.

And at one point, the nurse stopped and turned and said, you don't need to thank me. This is my job. And the man replied quickly, it's nobody's job to take care of me.

Nobody owes me that. I want to thank you. See, this thing draws, it gives us an idea, an understanding of what it means and how to approach different situations in life.

This man, despite his circumstances, could see the gift he was receiving of this nurse caring for him. He could see that man, her tending to his wounds and his pain.

Man, this wasn't something that he was entitled to. He could have seen it that way. He could have looked at it and say, you know what, this is your job. I don't need to be thankful. But you know what he would have missed out on is the beauty of receiving that as a gift and receiving the thankfulness that somebody would take their time and give their energy and their life to caring for people just like him in those same circumstances.

[10 : 11] You know, it's easy for us to become entitled as human beings. You know, we live at a time where we count our rights more than our blessings. Now, while progress isn't a bad thing, we are plagued by blindness to all the blessings around us, right?

Along with all the advancements and growth that we experience in medicine and technology and just the general standard of living in our nation, it's amazing to see that along with that rising tide, there's been a rising tide of depression and anxiety.

It really doesn't make sense. You would think the wealthier we've become, man, the more settled in that peace we've become. So what's happening here? This seems counterintuitive.

But there's a very real reason for this. Entitlement blocks gratitude and kills joy. See, whenever we believe, whenever you and I believe we deserve something, that's a spirit of entitlement.

And make no mistake, guys, entitlement is part and parcel of the original sin. When you consider what Adam and Eve did, the motivation of Adam and Eve taking that fruit is that they felt entitled to more than what God had provided for them.

[11 : 29] God gave Adam and Eve everything they needed in that garden. Everything except one tree. That was it. Everything else, boom, go for it.

Just don't eat the fruit of that one tree. Isn't it amazing? With all that wealth, that perfect environment, that entitlement could still creep into their hearts.

Now, if we're honest, we don't separate and detach ourselves from that story and think we're different. Now, that story exposes our hearts. That story reads our mail and who we are.

We all have this same sense of entitlement. And because of this, we fight to find joy. The things that we don't have often overshadow all the blessings we currently possess.

And here's the kicker. Even when we get what we want, our joy in it doesn't last very long, right? You have joy in your kids. Well, they grow up and they leave you going off to college and get married.

[12 : 35] Your new iPad becomes the old model in 2.1 seconds. The new car smell doesn't last long. Beauty and strength, they fade.

I was just running around with some kids a lot younger than me playing soccer yesterday. Strength fades. I'm very sore today. The honeymoon phase.

It doesn't last forever. It goes. Here's my point. Life on earth is ever-changing and ever-shifting. And because joy is attached to these things, it stands to reason why our joy ebbs and flows like the tide. Right? But what if there was something that didn't change? What if there was something that was unchangeable? Well, if that were true, then we can conclude that joy in the unchangeable means you can have unchangeable joy.

Imagine this. Imagine you receive a letter that states that an uncle you didn't know, that you didn't know he was alive, you didn't know he had existed.

[13 : 49] All of a sudden, he writes you this letter, and it says in it he's leaving you his vast estate. Tomorrow, you have to go to the estate lawyer, sign some documents so that everything in your uncle's will can be executed.

And sure enough, you go to the lawyer's office, and you find out that everything that that letter said was true. You're getting hundreds of millions of dollars, but it's not going to be released to you until a year later.

Right? So now you have this amazing promise of all this wealth, of all this inheritance that you're going to step into one day. But you have to wait a year.

Now, imagine in that year, between that point and the year, that the following happens to you. You wreck your car, all your stocks tank, you get the flu, you stub your toe once or twice, you have to social distance and wear a mask, none of your candidates got elected.

Now, any of those scenarios in the moment might bum you out, right? But still, you would have this unshakable joy.

[15:00] Why? Because there is a greater, unchanging set of circumstances that overshadows all these other ones. And that's the good news of the gospel. We have a greater, unchanging set of circumstances that we live under.

Our sins are forgiven. God's wrath against our sin is satisfied. And we have the unchanging promise of eternal life. And that's good news, but the gospel gets even better.

While we wait for our future in heaven, you know what? We get to live in a preview of it now. The Christian life today is a foretaste of what awaits us in eternity.

Think of it like this, right? When you make a cake, you start out with the cake batter, you put the stuff in the pans, you put the cake in the oven.

And what do we all love to do? We love to lick that bowl clean, right? All the cake batter that's left over on the stirring spoon in the bowl. It's like, yes. It's delicious.

[16:06] But none of us say like, oh, man, that cake batter was delicious. Who cares about the cake now? No. And in tasting that cake batter, you get a preview of how good the cake's going to be, right? And what that does, it actually makes you more excited about the cake.

You get a foretaste of it. The cake batter is what we experience today as life in the Spirit, in the community of God's people, which is why church and the Holy Spirit are such an integral part of what it means to follow Jesus and be a disciple of Jesus.

It's by these things that we experience the future gift of eternal life now. This, what we do, is the preview of heaven.

And if you're a Christian, I want to encourage you, be a cake batter-licking Christian, all right?

That's the best thing you can do. The Bible says, taste and see that the Lord is good. Not wait and see that the Lord is good.

Taste and see that the Lord is good. Now, here's the question. How do you taste the cake batter of Christianity? Well, we're called into following Jesus, right?

[17:18] This walk with Jesus. I want to give us two legs that we walk on. There is public worship and private worship. So what do we do? What do we do in private and public worship?

Well, we taste and see the goodness of God. We taste and see the goodness of Jesus through prayer, through his word, the Bible. Through praise and through serving others.

In private worship, we do this throughout the week. We do this by ourselves. And then there's public worship where we do this together. We do this in community like what we're doing right now.

Like what happens in the week as we get together as community groups and in other ways. It could be during family devotions, around the dining room table, in the evening.

But public and private worship, that's what we do to taste and see that the Lord is good. And as we press into these things, we press into life in the Holy Spirit, which is pressing into the Spirit's fruit of unchangeable joy.

[18:22] Now, here's the thing. If that's true, then the reverse is also true. The less we do these things, the less we do public and private worship, the less unchangeable joy we experience.

So what keeps us from doing that? What's the great obstacle? Man, is it the devil and his demons? They're just at me again. I don't think so, guys. Now, I'm not saying that can't happen.

But to be honest, most often it's just our busyness. Our busyness keeps us from doing those things. We don't press in because we don't have time. Or if we're even more honest with ourselves, we just don't make time.

Why are we so busy? Why are we so busy? Because we work harder to make more money, to buy more stuff and more experiences because those are the things we attach our joy to.

That's the stuff that keeps us so busy. Maybe you don't do it for yourself, but you do it for your kids if you're a parent. It's very tempting.

[19:30] And we think that, man, if we just give our kids more stuff and more experiences and more things and more opportunities, they're going to be happier. Guess what, guys? We're doing a

lot more stuff for our kids these days.

But you know what? Childhood anxiety and depression are on the rise too. I was just talking with some Christian counselors in the area, and their fastest-growing clientele are kids between the age of 3 and 18.

I was like, wait, did I just hear you right? They're like, yeah. More kids today are experiencing depression and anxiety than ever before.

But we're told, man, if we're just these good parents, we're going to give them everything they want. We're going to give them every opportunity they could ever possibly have. We're going to run them around all over the place to everything that makes them happy. And if I do that, man, I'm a good parent.

My kids will somehow find joy in their life. But what we do is, man, we not only end up chasing the wrong sources of joy, we disciple our kids into chasing the wrong sources of joy.

[20 : 43] Here's the reality. Reality check. You can't pursue a life of wealth and pleasure and life in the Spirit at the same time.

These are two diverging paths, which is why unchangeable joy only comes through living in surrender to God. And this is the testimony of church history.

This is the testimony of all the saints of all time. Those who lived surrendered lives had joy despite their circumstances.

Paul, in a Philippian jail, chained up, darkness all around him. What is he doing? Singing worship songs to God, praising him.

Many Christian men and women over the centuries have been imprisoned, tortured, stoned, burned at the stake, fed to wild animals, killed for their faith. Still, they could praise and pray and forgive until they passed on to eternal life with Jesus.

[21 : 47] I mean, this is what you do. When you look over church history at the many who lived in the gospel, who lived out the gospel, lived in surrender, you find this amazing legacy of unchangeable joy.

And it all begins with our Savior Jesus when we look to him. Hebrews 12, 2 says, Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame of the cross.

Now he's seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Jesus surrendered to the cross for the joy that awaited him on the other side.

If I could have the band come up so we think about how to respond. If you're here and you wouldn't consider yourself a Christian, I just want to say to you, you can't have unchangeable joy without faith in Jesus.

Jesus, you may have experience of joy. You may have moments of joy as you attach to things in this earth, but those things are always going to end up disappointing you.

[22 : 59] That joy is always going to fade. There's only one source of unshakable, unchanging joy, and that's Jesus. And you have to receive this joy.

You have to receive salvation, the joy of salvation as a free gift. You cannot earn it. But you also have to surrender to Jesus as Lord.

But guys, in that surrender, you will find unchangeable joy. So I want to invite you today, man, put your faith in Jesus Christ. Surrender to him.

Confess that you need him. Christians, this is a great reminder for us. Joy comes through surrender for us too, right? We start in surrender, we continue in surrender all our lives.

And we're going to take communion. And when we take communion, what we're doing is we're remembering that. We're remembering Jesus' surrender, right? He surrendered to the will of the Father, going to the cross, despising the shame, despising the pain.

[24 : 00] And he did that for us. So take out your communion cup that you were given. And I've learned through this, you've got to start working on it now so those things aren't easy to get to, you know?

The best things in life aren't easy to get to. It's like apparently these communion cups are just a good reminder of that. But as we take communion today, as believers in Jesus, as disciples of Jesus, we don't take this because we're entitled to it.

Communion is received as a gift of grace. It's received as a moment of thanksgiving in what Jesus has done for us.

