



Prayer Diary

Following Jesus. The Reward, My joy in you

The reward of following Jesus is joy. It is part of being in love. We have to claim joy because that is the great gift Jesus came to bring us.

It would seem that one of the most controversial subjects to talk about in church is Joy. The problem is that for the most part people see Christianity and discipleship as a serious matter. We are so serious about a lot of things; poverty, injustice, morality. The Bible is full of stories of individuals and communities who fought injustice, experienced adversity and suffering greatly for their faith but the one consistent thread in all they encountered was joy. I am convinced that one of the most underestimated attributes of God's nature and gift given to His church is joy.

Joy is not an optional extra to our spiritual life it is an essential aspect of what it means to be a follower of Jesus and He has promised it to us. In fact without it we won't live in fullness of life Jesus promised. John 10v10. The very announcement of the Saviour coming to earth speaks of the nature of Salvation and the happy heart of God; *But the angels said to them Do not be afraid I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.* Luke 2v10. The word used for great is the word from which we get another word, Mega. Mega joy, God brings mega joy to the world through Jesus. The declaration to "Fear Not" has taken most of our attention because as those who have been separated from God we have much to fear. Fear has consumed us and Joy has eluded us, but The God of "Mega joy" has restored us.

"Don't be afraid": Two things can happen when we are afraid. One is that we stick to the familiar way of doing things, the other is we panic and are running all over the place. The first is called routine behaviour the second is rootless behaviour. Both involve fear.

Routine Behaviour.

When we are afraid we cling to familiar things, patterns and behaviours. But the root of such behaviour is fear. Just holding on brings a form of security because its familiar. Security causes us to live without joy. When we choose to make security our primary concern the harder it becomes to be joyful. It's a constant discipline to move away from fear and choose joy. Joy is usually associated with something new or

fresh, out of the ordinary. We have to constantly choose between security and freedom. Between safety and joy.

Rootless Behaviour

Another response to fear is rootlessness which is the inability to settle because we are constantly looking for the next thing. A rootlessness may bring the unexpected and many believe the next experience will take them out of the ordinary into the extraordinary. This is not freedom and it doesn't bring joy. Jesus identifies this when He declares that we need to be rooted and established in love (John 15v11). Neither way of living is joy as Jesus describes it, so what is Joy?

Joy and Jesus.

I'm not sure if Jesus was funny, not sure if Jesus was happy but He was filled with Joy. That Joy was born out of intimacy with His Father. Jesus shows us that real joy flows from communion with God. Joy springs up as a result of our connection with the Lord. It comes from a deep sense of belonging. Jesus lived connected always to the source of Joy, His Father. He lived inside and moved outside of that relationship but he never felt disconnected from His Father. Even in the most difficult situations imaginable He remained rooted in joy (Heb12v2). His rootedness in God caused him to challenge the Pharisees and Scribes for holding onto routines that are rigid and no longer serve God and He doesn't need to hang onto the familiar routines He is consistently connected to the reality of the Father's love.

Joy as a stronghold.

The Joy Jesus gives is not happiness or circumstantial joy, it's rooted in love. He has a stronghold of Joy it's neither given by the world or taken away by circumstances, it's consistent because He is living consistently attached to the Father in intimacy. His Joy isn't escapism, it's not just emotional, it's not circumstantial, it's a joy that stands and flourishes even in the most difficult situations it's a stronghold of joy. A joy that has a stronghold on Him and promises it to us through relationship; John 15v11: *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

We are called to consistent and persistent celebration

We can only truly become connected with the Joy of the Lord when we stay in celebration. We practice joy by celebrating. We have to learn to celebrate life because everything is a gift from God. We are invited into a consistent awareness of the Goodness of God and we align our hearts to His goodness through celebration. To celebrate is to live in the moment and lift up the moment and say this is a God moment, this is a holy moment because it is God's gift to me right now. Psalm 118v24 This is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it. If Heaven had a language, it would be praise and we can experience heaven through praise on earth. He inhabits our praises, He comes into the very centre of life and bring His life to fill us. To praise is so much more than to sing, it is to live consistently gratefully before the Lord with celebration. Celebration is the key that unlocks manifestation

and welcomes us into the very heart of God, into His joyous glorious heart where we can have communion with the God of Joy, the God of Mega joy.

Monday; Celebrate the Lord in all things looking for any or every way to do so and remembering communion with God is accessed through celebration.

Tuesday; Ask the Holy Spirit to deliver you from any fear whether it is rootless or routine. Fear is never from God and our freedom has been provided. Fear will hinder us experiencing the joy of the Lord and keep us rooted in the familiar or rootless. Meditate on 2 Tim 1v7.

Wednesday; Jesus shows us that real joy flows from communion with God and springs up as a result of our connection with the Lord. Joy comes from a deep sense of belonging. Begin today to remind yourself either through reading His word or praying your prophecies that You are accepted in the beloved. He is a good, good Father and you are loved by Him. Speak out over your life the truth that you are rooted and established in love.

Thursday; Jesus lived inside and moved outside of His relationship with His Father but he never felt disconnected from Him. Even in the most difficult situations imaginable He remained rooted in joy (Heb12v2). God wants to establish the same reality in your life. He wants to give you a stronghold of Joy. Ask the Lord for your inheritance of Joy.

Friday; We practice joy by celebrating. We are learning to celebrate life because everything is a gift from God. Learning to speak the language of Heaven (praise) requires intentionality. The enemy has taught us well to complain but the Spirit brings life when we praise. Psalm 118v24 This is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it. Praise Him, give yourself to praise Him. Praise Praise Praise.