Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning - December 16, 2018

Advent:

The Church Welcomes Christ

JOY: Delighting in All the Right Things

Because God is happy, you can be, too!

 Like hope and love, “joy” has a variety of meanings and expressions. Words like “joy, rejoice, rejoiced, and rejoicing” occur about four hundred times in our Bible, and translate eight different Hebrew words and six Greek words. So when we consider joy, rather than define it, it’s much more helpful to discover its subject. In many ways, it’s the key to knowing ourselves and one another. We can say that what delights us is what defines us, and that is true of God as well. He delights in certain things, and wants those things to make us happy as well. How do God’s joys intersect with our own?

**God rejoices in being God.** Psalm 104:31

 Our capacity for joy comes from our being human, but made in God’s image. When we boast, it is an emptiness-driven act of attention, but God’s demand for worship comes from His desire to share Himself and His righteousness and joy with others. God’s joy, like His love, is transformational, and when His joys become ours, we are being transformed into His likeness. Galatians 5:16-26

**God rejoices in His people.** Isaiah 62:5; 65:19; Zephaniah 3:17; Rev. 21:1-4

One of the greatest of gospel truths is that God delights in us and plans good for us. So when we have “hard thoughts about God,” we are believing lies about Him. Imagine a child whom you desperately love telling you that he thinks you hate him. He assumes that you don’t delight in him, that he no longer brings you joy. He looks upon every discipline as a symptom of your displeasure. Likewise, we insult God when we don’t believe the joy He has in His people.

**God rejoices in sinners returning to Himself.** Luke 15

One sure way we know how He feels about us is the joy He has when we return to Him. There is great joy in the heart of our Heavenly Father when any of His wayward children come home.

**The fountain of joy is to be happy in God Himself.**

 Rejoicing in the Lord is invited or commanded at least sixty times in Scripture.

 Rejoicing before the Lord is one definition and aspect of worship. Exodus 23:17

 Rejoicing as God’s people is depicted as extravagant celebration. Deut. 14:22-26; 16:13-15

 Rejoicing as a part of God’s creation fulfills the “cosmic destiny.” Romans 8:18-23

**The reasons for joy are related to His joy in us.**

 We can rejoice in any and every circumstance. Habakkuk 3:17-19; Jeremiah 29:8-14

 We can rejoice in trials. Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4

 We can rejoice in suffering. Romans 5:1-5; 1 Peter 4:12-19

 We can rejoice in the many blessings of the gospel in Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:3-9

 We will rejoice in the final destruction of evil and evil ones. Jeremiah 51:48; 18:20

**The nature of joy is revealed in the rejoicing!**

 Joy is to be an ongoing, active passion. Psalm 5:11; 34:1;

Psalm 118:24; 146:2; Phil. 4:4

 Joy is not dependent upon outward, “positive” circumstances. Hebrews 12:1-3

 Joy is not dependent upon the love and approval of others. Matthew 5:11, 12

 Joy is a (the most important?) source of spiritual strength. Nehemiah 8:10; Ps. 28:7, 8

 Joy will be the eternal condition of God’s people. Isaiah 35:10; Isaiah 51:11; Rev. 21:4

  **That God desires and decrees our joy means that our life’s quest must be to be happy by delighting in all of the right things. God’s holy will and your desire to be happy are not at odds with one another.**

***We enter into and practice joy as we. . .***

1. Meditate upon the reality that God wants me to be happy. John 15:9-11; 1 John 1:4

2. Learn to delight in the right things, those things which delight God. Gal. 5:16-26; Jas. 1:12-18

3. Discover that joy is possible at all times and in all circumstances because the God of joy is present.

4. Believe that suffering and trials are proofs, harbingers, and transformers of God’s grace and love.