

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 17:13

"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves."

We've been talking about how we, as believers, glorify Christ. Here is one of the ways that we can bring glory to Christ - "That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves..." Joy expressed in a Christian's life shows the glory of Christ to the unbelieving world.

We need to be clear about the kind of joy that we are looking at. Jesus calls it "My joy". But we might ask, how can Jesus speak of "My joy" at this time when the cross looms before Him? The first answer to that is because He has finished the work of the Father - "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do..." (verse 4). In Hebrews 12:2 we read "For the joy that was set before Him, [He] endured the cross..." The second answer is because He is not alone in this work - "You will be scattered... Yet I am not alone..." (16:32). Third, because He is going to the Father - "But now I come to You..." (17:3). This is how we too can possess the joy of Christ - to be in the will of God, to have the assurance of God's presence in our work and to know that we are making our way to the Father.

But there is more for the believer. Jesus says "These things I speak in the world [so] that they may have My joy..." The "these things" Jesus has just been speaking about is the teaching of His Father's keeping and protecting the disciples - "Keep through Your name those whom You have given Me..." It is a knowledge of God's intimate concern for us. This joy is not a joy based on circumstances. The world knows nothing of this kind of joy. The only joy the world knows about is the joy of when things are going in their favour. And even this joy does not fully satisfy. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again..." (John

4:13). It was a metaphor of the world's pleasures, the world's enjoyments and offerings. It may satisfy for a moment but the "thirst" returns.

But a Christian is someone different. Our joy is His joy. Our joy is on the inside. It is His joy that comes from His Spirit that lives within. Jesus says again to the woman at the well, "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst..." (4:14). Why? "But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life..."

Our joy is based upon certain truths, truths of God's care for us in a personal way. It is knowing these truths, truly, really knowing them that is the fountain of our joy. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes "God so loved the world' ... Does it not thrill you that the everlasting God whom we have so insulted should be doing this for us?... You say, 'But I've always known that. I've known it since I was a child... and yet you are miserable. How do you reconcile these two things? Can you know all that and what it really means and be miserable or selfish or wounded or slighted and all the rest of the things that get us down and make us so wretched? There is something wrong somewhere, is there not?'"¹

We're also talking about a joy that is in full measure - "That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves..." When we fail to live in the fullness of the joy of Christ we are saying to the world that we doubt the truth of Jesus' words. We are saying that His joy is not a full joy - that it comes and goes just as the world's joy. Jesus says in John 16:33, "Be of good cheer..." We need therefore to pursue joyfulness for in doing so we bring glory to our Lord.

TableTalk

Read Ecclesiastes 2:10,11. What is Solomon's conclusion about the endurance of the world's joy?

¹ Living Water, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, pg. 428