

SERMON: JOY

The word “joy” can mean:

Happiness

Extreme gladness

Success

Elation

Delight

Bliss

And the list goes on...

All words relate to positive acts or thoughts. I have felt almost depressed lately. I'm usually a very positive person, so this is not a feeling I'm used to having. I tried to analyze my reactions. I decided part of it is my sister's demise – she has dementia and is going downhill quite suddenly. It has changed in just one month. Many of you have approached me with stories of family members reacting the same in their later years. In a few weeks, she will be 87. And a day after her birthday I celebrate number 80. I plan on going to the Dells and riding on a zipline. I have been wanting to do that for a number of years, and I may not have another chance!?

My parents died when I was just 27. 1972. My father died the 17th of November, and my mother died the 15th of December. We were stationed in far northern Minnesota at that time. I had no church family to turn to, and Howard had to work a 12-hour shift from 7 am to 7 pm on Christmas Day. I wondered if I had ever really mourned them properly. But how do you do something like that? We got the kids up at 6:30 that morning to open presents from Santa Claus so Howard could see their reactions and then he left for work. That afternoon, the

kids took a nap, and I was left alone. I recall taking my Bible, thinking I could magically open it to a passage that would bring me some peace. That didn't work very well. We used to have a Bishop here and I can't recall his name, but he called this Bible Bingo. I have since learned a much better way of reading the Bible.

I used to get home sick every few months in our Air Force days. I think all our neighbors did the same. But now, we have been home for 40 years.

I decided to switch to thinking of positive things. I like that much better.

I thought of our first date, July 25, 1963. We went to the Washington County Fair; in those days it was in Slinger. I knew after that first date that we would be married. Those were happy days.

September 9, 1964, Howard enlisted in the Air Force. I didn't see him again until March of 1965. We had a strange courtship. We finally got married April 22, 1967. Thus began our Air Force life together. September 9, 1970, he left for a full year on a mountaintop in Thailand. I dreaded every passing minute before he left. And when he walked away at the airport to board his plane, I felt such relief because I could then start counting the days until he came home.

I thought of lots of happy memories with new friends we acquired in all the different places that we lived. In Montana, we lived in a log cabin on Glacier Lake. It was beautiful. We lived for two years in Denver. It was fun. Every place we lived had its own beauty.

So, I decided to look in the Bible for things that brought joy to people. I was taught to read between the lines when reading the Bible.

In Mathew 5:3 are the Beatitudes. Read them for yourselves. You cannot read them and not feel joy.

In Luke 5:12 where Jesus healed a Leper, I imagined the joy that man felt. He was considered “unclean” for many years and suddenly, he was healed by the touch of Jesus. What joy!

I imagined the joy Noah felt when he was finally able to release those animals, two-by-two, onto dry land. It doesn’t talk about who cleaned out the ark.

And, finally, I read to be joyful in spiritual things, not from materials things. After all the Bible Studies I have taken, and years of prayers, I finally got it! I was going about it all wrong.

I have always gone to Psalm 139, which states that God had my life path all written in his book. I was thinking of things in MY WAY, not HIS way! Of course, my days will be filled with good times and also sad or bad times.

There’s this line in a song – for if I never had a problem how would I know that God would solve it.

We’ve had a tumultuous week. Painters have been here to paint all the trim on our house, plus the front and back steps. They’re doing a great job. I told them I was bothered about the birds nest filled with baby finches that has nested on one of the pillars of our front porch. They told me they would just paint around the nest. Problem solved! They are coming back to happily feed their babies. I had missed hearing their little song in the morning. Being involved once again in our daily life, I feel God is a part of it all. I’m glad we have a forgiving God.