

Words of Joy

In Your presence is fullness of joy...Psalm 16:11

Blessed are the poor in spirit...

Blessed are those who mourn...

Blessed are the meek...

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...

Blessed are the merciful...

Blessed are the pure in heart...

Blessed are the peacemakers...

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness... Matthew 5:1-9

These are some of the most famous teachings in the world. Their poetic structure and seemingly simple concepts have made them easy to remember. Yet, within the simplicity of these words are teachings that are foundational to Christianity. While the ideas may be easy to understand on the surface level, the truths within them have incredible depth of meaning. Depth that takes a lifetime to learn and live.

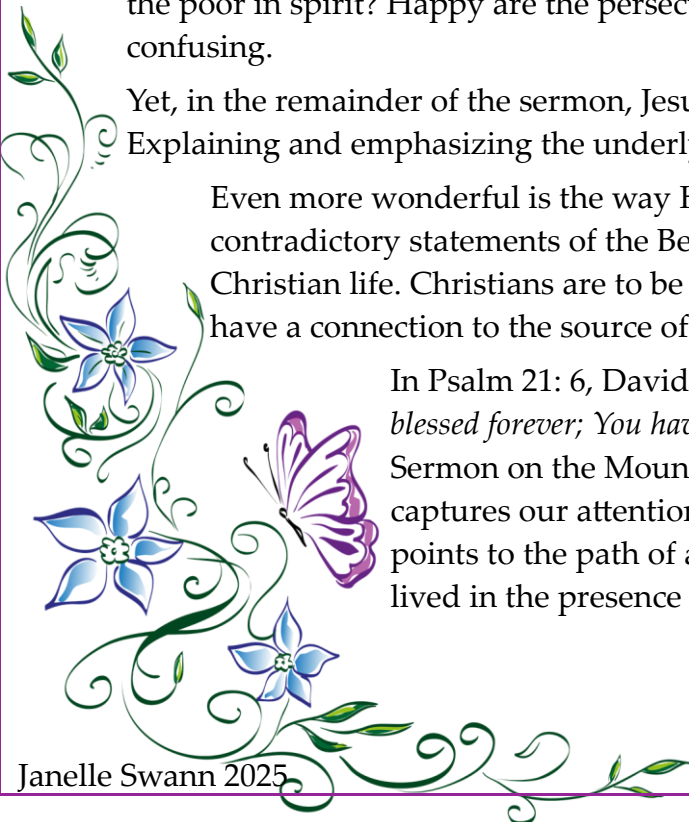
The Beatitudes are the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus preached to His disciples and the crowd that followed Him. The impact of it on the listeners is seen at the end in Matthew 7:28-29, *“the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”* And this sermon has continued to have this kind of effect upon people up to the present time. In large part because of the topic of the sermon—joy.

Each of the Beatitude’s begins with the phrase “blessed are.” The word *blessed* means happy. In a series of statements, Jesus places together ideas that are seemingly contradictory. Happy are the poor in spirit? Happy are the persecuted? These are immediately attention grabbing and confusing.

Yet, in the remainder of the sermon, Jesus makes his case for the truth of these statements. Explaining and emphasizing the underlying spiritual concepts upon which they are built.

Even more wonderful is the way He helps us understand the nature of joy. In the contradictory statements of the Beatitudes are the truths of the joyful hope of the Christian life. Christians are to be the happiest people in the world because Christians have a connection to the source of joy—God.

In Psalm 21: 6, David said of himself to God, *“For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.”* In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus showed the way to live a life like this. He captures our attention by promising us the joy we each desire and then points to the path of achieving it. To live a blessed life is to live a life that is lived in the presence of God.



The Joy of the Lord

The story of Job is a story of triumph and joy. Does this surprise you? If so, it is because we often focus upon the human perspective shown in the book of Job. We watch poor Job lose all his children, his possessions, his health, the support of his wife, and the comfort of friendship. We empathize, making the suffering he endured personal. We struggle with the seeming injustice of it all.

But by placing ourselves in the suffering of Job, we miss the larger context of the story and miss the truths that are presented regarding the nature of God. First let's look at the introduction of the three main characters in this story. How is each presented to us and how do they view each other?

| Job | Satan | God |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Job 1:1 | Job 1:6-7, 1 Peter 5:8 | Job 1:8 |
| | | |
| Point of View about God | Point of View about God | Point of View about Job |
| Job 1:20-22 | Job 1:9-11 | Job 1:12 |
| | | |
| | Point of View about Job | Point of View about Job |
| | Job 2:4-5 | Job 2:3,6 |
| | | |

How does **Zephaniah 3:17**, give us insight into God's point of view of Job?



Why do you think we are more prone to adopt Satan's view of God rather than the reality of who God is?

The Holy Spirit – God's Joy

One of the interesting observations about the Holy Spirit is His connection to joy. Jon Bloom of Desiring God notes, "the New Testament pairs joy with the Holy Spirit in a way it doesn't with other affections. For instance, we don't read of people experiencing the 'sorrow of the Holy Spirit' or the 'anger of the Holy Spirit...'"¹

Theologians have often spoken of the Holy Spirit as the personification of God's joy based upon verses such as **Luke 10:21**. Notice where Jesus' joy comes from:

In **1 John 4:11-13** we see this concept of personification described. How do we personify God's love according to **verse 12**?

What is our proof of the connection we have with God as believers? (**verse 13**)

We are proof of the existence of the Holy Spirit because He lives in us. Just as we are proof of God's love to the world around us when they experience that love through us. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is the living being who embodies the reality of God's love and joy. Peter further clarifies this in **1 Peter 1:6**. What sign are we given as proof that we have believed in Jesus?

Receiving the Holy Spirit

As Jesus taught Nicodemus in **John 3:5-8**, there are only 2 ways to be born:

Of water: _____

Of spirit: _____

What illustration does He use to describe spiritual birth? _____

How do we know someone is born again?

When do we receive the Holy Spirit?

In **Romans 8:9 & 16**; Paul reiterates how we can know we are saved. What do we have to have?

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-joy-of-god-in-us>



The Evidence of the Holy Spirit

As Jesus pointed out in John 3:8, the presence of the Holy Spirit shows in the life of believers. In **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7**, what do you notice about the signs of the salvation of the believers?

What signs do we see in **Romans 14:17**?

What are some of the signs we should see according to **Galatians 5:22-23**?

Notice that all of these have joy in common. Joy is a natural Christian trait because joy comes through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Just as we should be known as people of love, we should also be known as people of joy. Perhaps this more than anything else sets us apart in our world today. Think of any recent story you've heard about a noteworthy event in our country. What often typifies the reaction of those who reject God?

Obviously, our own reactions to tragedy and suffering are going to be watched by those around us. How do we handle this kind of scrutiny transparently without appearing non-genuine?

Consider that the Thessalonians, who were severely persecuted for their faith, still were filled with such joy that they became examples to all the believers in Macedonia. We too can be incredible testimonies to the power of God to change lives through our joy. What are some ways we can use stories from our lives to share our joy with others?

Maintaining Joy

In **John 14:15-17**, what promises does Jesus make about the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

- He is our _____
- He is _____
- He will guide us into the knowledge of the _____

The Holy Spirit does not come and go in our lives. Once He arrives during salvation, He never leaves. This is why we are assured of salvation—we cannot lose the Holy Spirit, nor can we ask Him to leave. However, what does **Ephesians 4:30** say we can do?

What kind of behavior does it indicate causes this?



Grieving the Holy Spirit through sin reduces His ability to work in our lives. It doesn't mean He's not there, it just means we aren't giving Him access. It's like giving the Holy Spirit the silent treatment. Rather than opening ourselves up to His conviction and repenting, we ignore His presence. This squashes our ability to live in the power of the Holy Spirit and reduces our joy.

Jesus used the analogy of a vine in **John 15:1-11** to help His disciples understand how to maintain joy. What is necessary in order to bear fruit as a Christian?

What happens to Christians who fall out of fellowship with God? (v. 6)

Does this mean we lose our salvation? (v. 4)

Two ways God deals with consistently disobedient Christians:

1. 1 Corinthians 5:11-13: _____
2. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30: _____

What reason does **John 15:8** give for why we are to bear much fruit?

What is necessary in order for us to remain in fellowship with God? (**John 15:10**)

What happens in our life when we remain in close fellowship with God? (**John 15:11**)

Conclusion

The key to a life of joy is the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The most consistently joyful people are those who prioritize their relationship with God above all other things. They show their love for God through their obedience to His commands. They confess and repent when they fail God. They ask God regularly to search their hearts and show them any hidden sin. Their lives are founded upon the truth of God. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, they not only find victory over sin, but also limitless, unending joy.

It's a truth that is so obvious once you begin to look for it in Scripture. And yet, it's something we hear so little of in Christian circles. It's almost like we're afraid to lay claim to this kind of joy in our lives.



It's also a truth that will forever change the way you live your life if you embrace it fully. Consider the story of Job and the joy that God exhibited in him. Recognize that God views you with the same pride and love.

Just as with Job, He points us out to Satan and asks, have you seen her? What do you think about her life? When we find ourselves in the midst of trials, we need to remember this scene. God isn't hoping we fail, He's in heaven cheering us on. He knows we can make it, if we just hold on to His hand and the truth. This is why we can have joy in the midst of suffering—God is walking with us through it, cheering us on, ensuring that we make it through.

But what if you aren't experiencing joy in your life? Perhaps you should ask yourself if you really know the truth of God. For joy can only be found in truth. A mark of true faith is the presence of joy because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In his book, *Champagne for the Soul*, Mike Mason notes the connection between truth and joy:

If you don't have joy, however religious you may be, you need to wonder whether you've really got hold of God. Joy, besides being desirable in itself, is a litmus test of the truth....

Where joy is absent, we're right to be suspicious, because joy is a characteristic of the truth. (Mason, p. 93)

If you struggle to find joy in life, start looking for God's truth. The world offers its counterfeit forms of joy, but they never last and end in emptiness and destruction. The joy of the Lord is pure and never harmful. It offers us unending happiness as we walk in the light of God's truth. When you find the truth, you find joy.

Homework

To prepare for our study next week, take some time to read the *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew chapters 5-7. Seeing the whole passage in context will help you understand the Beatitudes as we begin to study each one individually.

