

# Advent 2017 JOY

## Isaiah 9.1-7

How do you know a Christian? Love and JOY

- Today: who you're voting for rather than whom you're living for

We have JOY because God is who He says He is

What does JOY look like?

### Reckless praise

- Gratitude and gladness of a week-long party (cf. Lev. 23.33ff.; Psalm 4.7)
- Shows up in sacrifices made and enjoyment of one another
- Modern-day examples might include a wedding reception or an athletic victory
- Inherent in both is a target – something is in focus
  - Here, God is both author and object of our joy
- Question: how would you describe your praise of God?
  - Joy isn't frivolous (could come in the middle of It is Well) and it's not blind to circumstances
  - Joy knows God is who He says He is even when my circumstances are what they are

### Selfless Sacrifice

- Fight the mindset of scarcity (because under that is a lack of trust in God)
  - Yes, this has to do with money (2 Cor 9) but even more than that – a worldview of obedience
  - Hebrews 12 – we cast off sin (which promises joy but can't deliver) and lay aside (good things that keep us from greater joy)
    - Ultimately we follow Jesus just like He went to the cross
- Question: how would you describe your level of selfless sacrifice?
  - Better – what would someone who knows you well say your level of selfless sacrifice was?

Those who experience this JOY are those who experience His GRACE

- You don't typically have a joy problem but a grace problem

Experiencing Grace

- He SPEAKS – experience the grace of God in His Word to you (ch.8.11-20)
- He SEEKS – experience the grace of God in His pursuit of you (9.2)
- He BATTLES – experience the grace of God in His fight for you (9.4-5)
- He LEADS – experience the grace of God through His rule over you (9.6-7)

## Questions for Discussion

1. In light of the cultural moment in which we find ourselves, how do you think the world understands and identifies Christianity? Contrast that with the biblical identifying marks (love – John 13.35; joy – Phil. 4.4, 1 Thes 5.18). Why the disparity? How do you see this at play in your own life?
2. Reread the sermon passage (Isaiah 9.1-3). What is a point in your life when you enjoyed a party immensely? What were the circumstances? What was the occasion? How do you relate this to you the joy described in the passage?
3. In the sermon, we argued that there were two identifying marks of joy from this passage. The first was *reckless praise*. When you hear that phrase, what comes to mind? How does your private and public worship of God reflect *reckless praise*? How does your body reflect this idea of *reckless praise* (knowing that our bodies and our worship are interconnected – Romans 12.1)?
4. The second identifying mark of joy from the text was *selfless sacrifice*. Reread Hebrews 12.1-3. How did joy motivate Jesus' obedience? What do you learn from that regarding your obedience?
5. People who struggle with joy often misdiagnose the issue. The text (v.4 – “For...”) and many other texts point to the issue of joy being an issue of grace. In the sermon, we said that those who experience joy are those who experience grace on an ongoing basis. Trent then listed four areas of experiencing grace – God's kind of help – from the text. By which of those do you find easiest to experience grace? By which do you find it most difficult? What is one step you can take to move forward in experiencing His grace?