

Common Reactions to an Uncommon Christ

Joy – Acts 3:1-10

Intro

Continuing on in our series . . .

One of those common reactions when we encounter Christ is *joy*

It's not all negative – disbelief, denial, confusion

Many of you are living examples of joy, a very positive reaction, that is also common

But joy doesn't just happen

You don't commit your life to Christ, rub your nose, blink your eyes, and automatically bubble over for the rest of your life

We have to be intentional in our walk with Christ, or our initial joy will fade

You'll wake up one day asking – What ever happened to all my joy?

You can't manufacture it

It's something that overflows as a *result* of . . .

Cultivating the characteristics of Christ in your life; Prerequisites of joy

If don't have these things going, never experience joy in your life like God intends

Read Acts 3:1-10 (911)

Luke just gave us a summary of the early church; now begins to illustrate it

The first prerequisite of joy is prayer . . .

No prayer, no joy (v1)

They were disciplined to pray

Continued to live as obedient Jews in some respects – prayer was one of them

1 – *the hour of prayer*

2 main times of prayer each day, based on the sacrifices – early a.m. and 3 p.m.

Had they not been disciplined in prayer, this opportunity wouldn't have happened

- *Discipline in prayer* often results in opportunities to minister

It's a no-brainer – God sees one of his children praying and the other not . . .

Who's he going to use? The one praying! The one who has his heart

They are the ones who he will put in “the right place at the right time”

Little prayer, little ministry, little joy – No prayer, no ministry, no joy

- 4 reasons we're not disciplined to pray

1. We're lazy – it's hard work

2. We don't prioritize our time – the tyranny of the urgent takes precedence

3. We value other things more – sleep, friends, newspaper, book, work

4. We don't really believe it does any good

The true measure of our faith and trust in God; of our view of him; of our relationship with Jesus is . . .

The desire we have to pray and the time we spend doing so

We have more and more people walking in our doors . . .

That's an indicator that we are praying

Also an indicator that we need to pray more

I'm convinced that God will *bless us with joy* to the extent that we seek him in prayer

That's why I want to be a praying church

Another prerequisite for joy is humility

Especially when you're on the receiving end of God's work . . .

No humility, no joy (v2-3)

2 – *Beautiful Gate* – one of the entrances whose gate was overlaid with Corinthian bronze

Quite the contrast between the need of the beggar and the extravagance of the gate

3 – *he asked to receive alms*

Giving alms was considered a meritorious act (if I give, I earn God's favor)

So the crippled beggar was placed at the entrance to the temple when merit would be foremost on the minds of those coming, and the response would be best

- He had the humility to acknowledge his desperate need
 - To accept help from others – willing to be carried around
 - To ask for more help
- That humility led to joy

- It's quite possible that many of you are in the depths of desperation
 - Crippled emotionally from current or past experiences
 - Crippled spiritually from a bad church situation
 - Crippled relationally from a broken marriage or friendship or family
- And you're still trying to hobble around on your own because you're *too proud* to ask for help from the people of God he has put in your life

Often times, the highest joy follows the lowest desperation

But the prerequisite is humility; No humility, no joy

Joy also requires patience

No patience, no joy (v4)

They had come to pray, but were willing to be held up/interrupted by the need of others

They were willing to stop and take the time to focus on the lame man

That's patience

They were patient because . . .

- They were *singular in their focus* to exalt Jesus Christ no matter what the cost –
 - Whether time, inconvenience, or the messiness of getting involved in somebody's life
- They knew Christ would be exalted if people like this beggar experienced His power
- That's why they demanded his attention – *Look at us* (4)

Makes sense – worked in downtown Chicago; saw same people begging every day

They wouldn't look at anybody, and nobody would look at them

They would just stare into the distance as people walked by

And most people would act like they weren't there

Had to be patient and intentional about getting their attention if didn't give money

That's exactly how Peter and John were

They were *patient/intentional* in order to extend the love/power of Christ to this man

That same patience is required of us when we encounter those who need help

We need to be willing to be inconvenienced by the needs of others

So that Christ can be exalted in their lives and all can experience joy

No patience, no joy

No expectation, no joy (v5)

- The crippled beggar didn't expect what he got, but at least he expected *something!*
Many people go through life flat-lined – no expectation of God's work/power at all – that's the epitome of boredom!

We expect so little in our lives when God wants to give us so much

I'm *not* talking about money and possessions . . .

I'm talking about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, contentment, godliness, hope, and faith

That's what God wants to give us so much of . . . and what we expect so little of

If you're in the position of needing help – and we all are in one way or another . . .

- Don't put God in a box by expecting only what you think you need

If you do, you may miss what he gives

If Peter/John had given the beggar only what he expected . . .

He never would have walked and experienced lasting joy

God will give you exactly what you need at exactly the right time . . .

And probably exceed your expectations in the process

Read vs 6-7 – If that's not bold, I don't know what is; and that's the point . . .

No boldness, no joy (v6-7)

In speaking the name of Jesus, Peter was unleashing His power in the beggar's life (6)

If Peter hadn't been bold to do so, nobody would have experienced the joy of the miracle

But he didn't just drum up boldness

Boldness is a Spirit-led, Spirit-enabled conviction to act

- Boldness comes from a firm confidence in the *message* of God and the *power* of God
They were confident in the *message* that Jesus is Lord, because he died and rose again for the sins of the world
They were confident in the *power* of God because they had already seen it at work
That confidence led to boldness, which led to joy
- We can have that same confidence and boldness as the apostles had
We have the same message; We experience the same power
Because we serve the same Jesus with the same Spirit at work within us

Doesn't mean we have the same proportion of apostolic healing that Peter and John had

I believe God poured out his miraculous powers in abundance on the apostles . . .

To authenticate their authority in leading the church and writing the Scriptures

To facilitate the spread of the gospel in its infant stages

But it also doesn't mean that God has ceased to work miracles in our lives for the glory of Christ

He still can and does when his glory will shine, and when he alone will get the credit and honor

The glory is all God's but the joy is all yours – How good is that?

No boldness, no joy

That being said, if there's no joy, there's no praise . . .

No joy, no praise (v8-10)

- Praise to God is the primary reason he enabled the apostles to do this miracle
Didn't do this for the sake of the beggar alone
Didn't do it just to pump the apostles up

He did it so that Jesus would be recognized and exalted and *praised* for who he is . . .

The living Christ, Lord of all

That happened

Acts 4:21 – Their joy for what had happened and what it meant, overflowed in praise

No joy, no praise

- Here's the twist – it's also true that if there's no *praise*, there's no *joy*

No praise, no joy (reverse arrow)

Because praise and worship is what we're made for

Ps 67:5 – *Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!*

God deserves and desires our praise

And we get great joy from giving him more and more of it

If we withhold our praise, we diminish our joy

Think of it this way –

We love to cheer at sports games when we don't know the players

Because great competition and great play bring us great joy – so we cheer/praise them

No joy, no praise

And the more we cheer, the more joyful we are

No praise, no joy

If you don't believe me, try keeping it in sometime

When an awesome play happens, try not to cheer

Not only will you seem ridiculous to others (just like not praising God for what he does), but you'll be *miserable!*

We love to praise what gives us joy, and we get great joy from praising what we love

Summary

Let's be a church who walks and leaps and praises God continually

Go back this week and reflect on your joy or lack thereof

If you're overflowing, praise God for it!

If you're not, consider your discipline in prayer, your humility, your patience, your sense of expectation, your boldness