

Luke 10:17-24

"The Joyful Christian"

Today we start a mini-series on the attributes of a Christian. Today we'll cover the topic of the joyful Christian, and next week we'll cover the Serving Christian, and the week after that the Thankful Christian. These are themes that are important in our lives as Christians and as we prepare ourselves for Advent and the Holiday season they are themes that are pertinent to our current time and place.

I believe that the Christian life is one that is full of joy. We have been blessed with much as Christians and we have been given so much in terms of eternal life and grace that we should be joyful when we discuss or think about our faith. We come here every Sunday not just because we are suppose to, but we come for a deeper reason. We come to honor God first and foremost, but we come because of the joy of the Christian life.

It comes to us at times that sometimes the Christian life can seem to stress us out. We get caught up in meetings or lessons or deadlines or workgroups and we forget why we are doing what we are doing. I come across this myself at times in my life as a pastor. I get caught up in the day to day work and I can forget why I serve as a Pastor.

Why do we do all of the hard work? I believe the answer is very simple. There is great joy in the Christian life. But Christian life is not the day to day or the meetings, or lessons or deadlines and workgroups. The joy of the Christian life is beyond that and rooted in the promises of Jesus Christ and the mission of sharing those promises with the world that we know.

I believe there are two major components to the joy of being a Christian. There are more components to being a joyful Christian but I want to focus on two things. These two are the promises of Jesus Christ and the mission of sharing those promises. These two things are at the

core of Christian joy and can be recognized throughout much of the Christian tradition, so it is nothing that one group has over another.

Christ gave us much in his ministry on this earth. He came to earth so that we might live with life abundant. He came so that we would have a way to live. He came so that we might be pointed towards a relationship with God. And he came so that we might have life eternally, forever with God and free of the sting of death. No more would death have the final say over humankind, but life forever would be possible in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I believe the joy of the Christian life comes from these promises. All of these promises are fulfilled when we choose to live a life in Jesus Christ. By choosing a life in Jesus Christ we are telling the world that we will not be caught up in the pain of the world, we will not let the troubles that come our way, and will not let sin and death have the final say over our lives. We choose life in Jesus Christ.

We receive this life through the cross. On that Friday many years ago Christ was sentenced to death on the cross for no crime that he committed. He went there for us, for those of us who deserve death, and allowed his life to be taken in such a way that we would not have to experience death, death that would silence us forever.

Instead of the story ending there, it continues on. On Sunday following that Friday Jesus Christ rose up from the grave and conquered death. He was resurrected, became the Resurrected Christ that we know. It is through this resurrected Christ that we have the joy of the Christian life.

The joy of the Resurrected Christ is what gives us as Christians the push, motivation, or inspiration to go about our work. It is not contentment in the resurrection, but joy. We have been given the gift of eternal life through Christ and it is completely possible for anyone to receive the

gift of eternal life through the acceptance of Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. By accepting Christ, we take a stand that we will allow joy to dominate our lives, in our work, and in our faith and we will not allow the troubles, sufferings, or the hardships of this world to take hold over us.

The Joyful Christian though does not stop their joy or their work there. Instead, the joyful Christian pushes forward in faith, constantly moving towards a better place in faith and deepening and growing the faith in them. The joyful Christian does another thing though, and that is in the sharing of their faith.

In our reading this morning we come across a story in Luke, where seventy two followers of Christ come back to Christ. They report back that in their work of spreading the good news demons and evil spirit are literally squashed with the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus is quite joyful about this, telling the seventy two that they should be joyful for what they see and understand as the power of faith in Jesus Christ.

It is in the scriptures that Jesus's joy about this flowed from the Holy Spirit. I believe though that we can look at the joy coming from the joy of his followers witnessing to the power of faith. It is through the spreading of this faith, of the seventy two spreading the faith that is in Christ Jesus they recognize the joy that is there in faith. The seventy two were sent out to prepare the way for Jesus Christ and in their preparations for Christ they were sharing the good news, and experiencing the joy that comes from sharing the faith of Jesus Christ.

I believe we are a point in our lives as a congregation, where we are on the edge of truly experiencing that joy. At the last vision meeting I discussed the need for us to be ready to grow our church, but not just through any kind of growth. The growth that we need to do, the growth that is done by Christ and done by the seventy two and the twelve disciples is sharing our faith with the unchurched. We need to prepare ourselves in such a way that we are ready to share our

faith with others so that others can experience the joy of Christ in their lives and become joyful Christians. In our sharing of our joy we become more joyful in our lives as Christians.

But I offer up a word of caution when it comes to joy, it is not the same thing as contentment. Being content to me means that you are happy where you are and have no desire to move forward in your faith. Being content leads to the slow erosion of the Christian life and joy. While being content is comfortable, it does nothing to spread the gospel.

In our mission of sharing the joy of Christ that means that we have to be willing to no longer being content. Being a joyful Christian is not about being comfortable in your faith and doing nothing about it. It is about sharing and pushing forward in faith. The seventy two had to go out and share so that they could experience the power of Christ.

I think some of you may be concerned about change in your life and change within ourselves. I know there is a knee jerk reaction to change, and that many folks don't like it. Some of you might be concerned that accepting Jesus Christ or sharing your faith will bring more pain than joy. But I give you this question, do you think that in the crucifixion of Christ, that it was a comfortable act for him? Do you think Christ was content in his ways and stopped there? Do you think Christ was comfortable with mediocrity and only going half way?

No, Christ went all the way for you. He suffered a horrible death for you. I know that I am unworthy of a person's life, but he did it for me, he did it for us. It is through the pain and suffering, through the hardship of the cross that brought us to the resurrection. We could not have had the joy of the Christian life without Christ making a sacrifice for us. It is through the hardship that we have joy.

The resurrection is the foundation of our faith. It showed that death does not have the final say. We may go through hard times in our lives but they do not have the final say. We

might be uncomfortable with change but without change we cannot have joy. Without the hardship of transition we cannot have joy. Being content where we are will lead us on path that will lead to our destruction. Joy pushes us forward to experiencing eternal life and pushing us forward so that others may have eternal life.

It is the joy of the resurrection is why we are here in this building. Some of you today may be hearing these words of change and wondering where you fit in with all of this. I tell you this today, that all of the work we do, is for you. Jesus came to this earth to change lives and bring us out of contentment and into joy, true joy. You may be comfortable where you are, but the joy of knowing Jesus Christ will push you in ways that you could have never imagined. Today I offer the invitation, that if you have questions about Jesus Christ and the joy that can come in him, then come and talk with us. Today I will stand up here after the service, and if you are in need of prayer, so that you can accept Jesus Christ into your life, then come and talk with me.

God has great things in store for you, for this church, and the community we live in. We must be willing to persevere in joy and push forward so that others may have a joyful life. We will be blessed when we share our joy with others and we share the joy that is found in Jesus Christ. In Jesus name, Amen.