

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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JOY IS CENTRAL TO THE GOSPEL

Various scriptures from the book of Luke

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The title of my sermon today is “Joy is Central to the Gospel”, and I’ll be reading select verses from the book of Luke and a few other scriptures.

I have two points to my message today:

- Luke’s use of joy was intentional
- Luke demonstrated that joy was the result of spiritual freedom

INTRODUCTION: We have two books written by a man named Luke, both the book of Luke and the book of Acts. Joy is a recurring theme in his writings. I went through these two books and selected some scriptures about joy. Going through all the scriptures about joy would take a long time, but it would be a good study project for you.

I’ll read quite a few scriptures about joy from Luke’s writings, and then I’ll draw some applicable truths from them.

In Luke 1, Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were old and wanted to have a son. Zechariah was performing some priestly duties when an angel appeared to him.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:11-15

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

¹³ But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. ¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.

And then Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Zechariah's wife:

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:39-58

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, ⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. ⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! ⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? ⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.

⁵⁷ When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

And then in Luke 2, we have the joy of Christ's birth.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-11

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.

Later in his ministry, in Luke 6, Jesus shared what we call "Beatitudes" where he talked about challenges in life.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 6:23

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.

In Luke 10, Jesus sent 72 people two by two to go out and share his message.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 10:17

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

In Luke 15, we have the well-known Parable of the Shepherd.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 15:3-7

Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Luke 19: A few days before Jesus crucifixion, Jesus’ popularity had reached an all-time high. Some followers of Jesus brought him a colt. As I read, picture a massive crowd on both sides of the street cheering and laying their cloaks on the ground before he passed by.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:35-40

They brought [the colt] to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

³⁷ When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

³⁸ “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

⁴⁰ “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, he appeared to his disciples right after they heard the news about the resurrection.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 24:36-43

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. ³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.”

⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

And in Acts:

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

In the book of Acts, we have a continuation of Luke’s sharing of joy. The early church came together. People from diverse backgrounds who previously hated each other were now worshipping together. The walls came down. Among the Lord’s people, there was no more high class or low class, privileged or underprivileged. For the first time in world history, people from all walks of life came together to enjoy their Savior and fellowship together. There is so much joy in the book of Acts.

EXPLANATION: A few years ago, as we journeyed through Acts together for the first time, I noticed how the word joy was a recurring theme. Yes, there were

challenging times and sad times. There were disagreements. But followers of Jesus pushed through those times and defaulted back to joy.

Listen as I share some truths about this emotion of joy.

LUKE'S USE OF JOY WAS INTENTIONAL

As a reporter, Luke wanted to document for all time that the message of Christ brought joy, the work of Christ brought joy, and the spreading of the Gospel brought joy. Luke even reported the joy found through trials.

We all have different points of view, don't we? Had Luke been a pessimist we might have heard about people who got their feelings hurt, or how awful the difficulties were. Or we might have heard about those who bailed because the going was just too rough.

ILLUSTRATION: As ambassadors for Christ, we must be intentional about how we talk about Christ and his followers. Here's a challenge – let's look for joy in as much as we can and report it like Luke did. Here are some examples:

“We had our men's cake bake and women's ice cream social, and it was so much fun.”

“We witnessed four people baptized last Sunday and it was just great.”

“Many of us have been at this church a long time and we've grieved the loss of many, but we are going to enjoy the days we have left.”

“Our pastor has challenged us to give so we can not only keep the doors open but do more. I have found so much joy in knowing my extra portion is helping ensure a strong future.”

“A woman we've been praying for became a Christian last Sunday. We are just overjoyed.”

Yes, as Luke tells in his books, there were trials – but his reporting didn't stop there. He always landed at the place of joy. And in our Christian experiences, there will be trials, but let's push through to joy.

Not only was Luke's use of joy intentional, but...

LUKE DEMONSTRATED JOY WAS THE RESULT OF SPIRITUAL FREEDOM

APPLICATION: Where are you in your Christian walk today? Are you growing? Are you learning? Are you becoming a more joyful person as you grow deeper in your walk with Christ? When you let go of the stress of trying to earn your salvation and realize it's a free gift of God for those who receive it, then you'll begin to find joy.

I am afraid much of our learning about growing as a Christian has been directly related to lists of rules that grow over time. Maybe we were schooled by someone who meant well, but just hadn't learned to accept grace and mercy and joy in their everyday life. And as a result, their teaching was something like this: A good Christian does this. A good Christian does that. A person who does this must not be a true Christian. A person who does that must not be a true Christian. And with their good intentions to be helpful, they've done nothing more than put a person in bondage and rob them of their joy.

Here's what's happened, and it's unfortunate. Instead of teaching about freedom in Christ and truly trying to understand what that means, many Bible teachers have just taken the Law of Moses and rehashed it for Christians. Jesus fulfilled the Law and laid it to rest. Today is a different day!

ILLUSTRATION: You've heard me say I want to be known as the "grace and freedom" preacher. Time will tell if that will be my legacy. Grace and freedom are not devoid of responsibility. In fact, they are far from it. Joy should lead us to serve. Joy should lead us to give. Joy should lead us to enjoy being around other believers.

I've never heard anyone say, "I wish I'd never been saved! Look what I gave up!"

I've never heard anyone say, "I regret giving that offering to support missions because I really needed a new TV!"

I've never heard anyone say, "I wish we hadn't spent so much time in prayer because I had something else to do!"

Listen to me! Joy is an inherent component of salvation! Let us be glad and rejoice that Jesus has come! Let us be glad and rejoice that we have purpose in this life. Let us be glad and rejoice that Jesus saves us from our sins.

SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 12:1-2

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the **joy** set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

In the end times.... joy! Revelation 19 describes Jesus taking his church like a marriage ceremony.

SCRIPTURE: Revelation 19:7

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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