

Christian Character - Joy

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[0 : 00] Father, we do pray now and ask for your help and your blessing. You're probably tired. No, I am. And Lord, we know we need your help and your strength.

And so we pray, Lord, that you just might speak to us and encourage us. Pray that this might be just a really significant moment in the life of our church, that you might move us to be a more joyful church.

We are thankful for the joy that we have, but we want more of it, Lord. And so we pray that that might be the fruit of our time together in your word this evening. In Jesus' name. Amen. So we've come to think about joy in this series of studies on Christian character.

So we've done humility and we've done love and now we're doing joy. So we're going to think about what is joy? How do I get joy? What does it feel like to be joyful?

And you perhaps don't need me to tell you that joy or happiness is a big deal in the world. In 2011, the then prime minister, who was? David Cameron.

[1 : 08] Well done, Nick. Went on record to say that his government would be measured not by whether or not people were wealthier, but whether people were happier. Do you remember that? His observation was that governments are obsessed with wealth increase, but economic growth has not made people more happy.

In fact, it seems to have made them more miserable. What's the point? He said, if your bank account is full and your wages are going up and your savings are doing well, but you are miserable. Now, slightly cynically, what followed was austerity, right?

And so trying to fill the financial gap following the 2008 financial crash, everyone was getting poorer. So perhaps David Cameron had an ulterior motive.

He then resigned because of Brexit. But David Cameron wasn't alone. In fact, he was following a trend of what was called at the time positive psychology, which thought that you could make yourself happier.

That guy, Jonathan Haidt, wrote a book in 2006 called The Happiness Hypothesis. Has anyone seen that book, read that book? About how you are able to change your mind and make your emotions and thoughts happier.

[2 : 21] He then sort of opened the floodgates of a whole genre of self-help books that thought that they could make people happier. Sadly, though, it doesn't actually seem to have worked.

In March this year, the UK fell to its lowest ever ranking in the world happiness chart. It came in at number 20 in the world rankings below countries like Costa Rica and Belgium and Sweden, but above the United States, which was 23rd in the rankings.

Even Russia, which is still below the UK, it has to be said, is increasing in happiness, despite all the sanctions. Professor John Helliwell, one of the founders of the Happiness Index, said that a key factor in the drop was young people being less happy than they've ever been before.

He said that among the problems that have been especially acute for younger people is the recent housing crisis, the inability to buy a home before their 30th birthday, growing numbers of 20-somethings, having to live at the family home with their parents because of the cost of living, mental health issues such as anxiety are known to have taken their toll on young people in the wake of the COVID pandemic.

Fascinating that the happiest country in the world is, it is, that is right, Finland. Finland. Anderson, how did you know that? Just a random fact.

[3 : 45] Yeah, Finland are preparing for an invasion by Russia, and yet they are the happiest country in the world. Go figure, that. Now, as we said, that when you read those kind of studies and think about that, you realise that there is a kind of difference between what the Bible talks about

being joy and what the world is talking about when it talks about happiness.

In fact, despite trying, I couldn't exactly find out how they come about the happiness index and scoring your country between 1 and 10. One of the factors apparently is whether you eat alone, which apparently has gone up by 53% in the US in the last 15 years.

But however they score it, I don't quite know. But I think we need to understand that the Bible defines joy differently, and we're going to come and see that together in a moment. But the Bible doesn't think joy is any less important than the world does.

The reformers, if they are right, they think joy is the point of life, right? The Westminster Catechism says that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever, right?

So the reformers are big on joy. In fact, down the years, it's been Christian theologians who have thought the most seriously about joy. Augustine is purported to have said something like this.

[5 : 00] The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot. I don't know whether people would describe your life like that. C.S. Lewis said that joy is the serious business of heaven.

And so this pursuit of joy that we find in the world is not the problem. It seems to be that we are built for joy. Instead, the problem in the world is that it's been searched for in all the wrong places and understood in the wrong way.

And the Bible understands it rightly and explains it differently. Now, how do you give a talk on joy? Say, last week, we stuck to 1 John. This week, we're going to zoom in and focus all of our time, effectively, really, on just a few verses from 1 Peter chapter 8.

And we're going to kind of make some observations from those verses, jump around the Bible a little bit, but basically try and stay in 1 Peter. Now, I've printed it out on your handout, but you might also want to open it in your Bibles.

It's on page 1217 if you have a church Bible, and you can follow along there. So let me read it to us. We're effectively looking at verse 8, but I'm going to read from verse 3 to verse 9.

[6 : 07] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

In all this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

Now, with the person next to you, just for a couple of moments, what does verse 8 tell you about joy?

[7 : 42] What does verse 8 tell you about joy? Just talk to the person next to you for a moment, and then we'll go back together. Okay. So I want to shout out anything that was particularly helpful, said by the person sat next to you.

Right. Come through faith. Yeah.

We'll talk about that. Yeah. Anything else? It's all about the person. Yes.

Yes. It's rooted in knowing Jesus. Yeah. Yeah. So you see that the verse kind of works in two pairs. Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him.

The NIV, we'll talk about this in a minute, but the verb to be is not actually in the second part of that sentence. So it's actually the word rejoice again. So really, it's though you have not seen him, you love him.

[8 : 49] And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him, rejoicing with an inexpressible and glorious joy. Yeah.

Just to save you all chipping in your answers, I came up with seven. And what we're going to do is try and work through them together. So if you turn over the page on your handout, you'll see what I thought, which I deliberately didn't tell you so that you wouldn't know.

Okay. The first one is this. It is not dependent on present easy circumstances. So this, just to go to the second one of those pairs, even though you do not see him now.

In other words, the present Christian experience, as Peter understands it, is lived in the physical absence of Jesus. Okay. If you're a Christian, you live with a not yet.

You do not yet see him. You are not, you are, you are living your Christian life with the absence and ache of not yet being present with Jesus. And as you look at the context, you can see that what Peter is saying about joy is that it's not, therefore, a product of an easy life.

[9 : 58] Joy is not having everything that you want now. So notice how he describes his present experience for the Christian in the verses that are before. We're not only living in the absence of the physical presence of Jesus, we're also living in the presence of suffering.

Look at verse six, all kinds of trials. In this, you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

It's hugely significant, isn't it? Because it means, and maybe this is the most profound and revolutionary thing I'm going to say tonight, right? It means that the pursuit of joy is not the same as the pursuit of comfort, right?

That's the mistake our world makes, right? It pursues comfort and thinks it's going to find joy, but it doesn't. It's the mistake of the world, isn't it? So that many people in the world who are very, very comfortable, they have good health, they have plenty of money, they have lots of leisure time, are deeply unhappy.

And that's because joy, the kind of joy that we are made for and is ours in Christ, is not the same as present easy circumstances. John Flavel, the Puritan preacher, points this out when he says that Job was a happier man on the dunghill than Adam was in paradise.

[11 : 17] So Adam is thrown out of paradise and is rebelling against the Lord and is effectively unhappy in paradise. But Job knows his Redeemer and he knows the Lord.

And so he is happier in the midst of his suffering. John Calvin says, there is nothing in our afflictions which ought to disturb our joy. And that's, I seem to think, a pretty good summary of what Peter is saying here.

So here's the conundrum, which I hope we'll unpick over the next few minutes, is that Christian joy is possible in pain. Christian joy is possible in the midst of pain.

That God sends suffering into our lives and into our world, not to rob us of joy, but to refine, test and grow our faith.

That's what verse 7 says. Look down at verse 7. These have come, that's the trials of many kinds, so that the proven genuineness of your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though it's refined by fire, may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus is revealed.

[12 : 23] So Jesus does not send pain to rob you of joy, because the pursuit of joy is not the same as the pursuit of comfort. Secondly, it is not dependent on past euphoric experiences.

So, it's not only that we're to have joy despite the present physical suffering and the absence of Jesus' physical presence with us right now. We also live our Christian lives having never met Jesus. So that's the first part of that sentence. Though you have not seen him. Now, this is obvious, right? But it means that although Christian joy is linked to our conversion, Christian joy is not primarily a look backwards.

Right? It's a look forwards. The joyful Christian is not someone who is looking back all the time, because there was not a time when we met Jesus physically like the Apostle Peter.

So Christian joy is not about looking back, it's about looking forwards. We live our lives without having physically met Christ. It's not for the joy set behind us that we endure, but for the joy set before us.

[13 : 29] The joy is in the future, not so much the past. That means, doesn't it, that the Christian joy is this acknowledgement that the best days are ahead, not behind.

Perhaps I can say this. I don't know. I'm in this dilemma of whether I'm an older or a younger person. I'm kind of somewhere in between. I'm an older, thank you. That's absolutely fine, because then I'm going to talk to us older people in the room, right?

Talking to us older people in the room. Let me tell you, nostalgia is a big joy killer. Nostalgia is a big joy killer. If you keep looking back saying, wasn't it great when?

It will rob you of joy. Because Christian joy is not, wasn't it great then? It's, isn't it going to be great then, right? It is a look forwards, not a look backwards.

And there's more of that to come. But it's, it's interesting, isn't it? That he, he says, though you have not seen him, right? So it's not that our past Christian experience was the high point.

[14 : 32] It is future Christian experience, which is going to be at the high point. Next, thirdly, it defies explanation. This is really just zooming in on that word inexpressible in verse eight.

Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible. In other words, the joy of the Christian is not only something that sort of cannot be described.

It also is something that at some points cannot even be expressed. That's really important, isn't it? Because it means that Christian joy is not a smiley face necessarily, right?

Christian joy is not always expressed in laughter and levity. Christian joy, it's not only that you can't explain it, as in it defies explanation because it's possible in the presence of suffering.

It also means it's not always physically expressed in that way. J.I. Packer puts it like this, which is helpful, I think. Joy is a condition that is experienced, but it's more than a feeling.

[15 : 38] It is primarily a state of mind. That's it here, isn't it? New Bible Dictionary calls joy a quality rather than emotion. And in that sense, joy really is the possession of God, isn't it?

God is eternally joyful. God is a happy God. But that's not his emotions. God doesn't have emotions in the same way that you and I do. Really, when we say God is joyful, we're talking about a quality of who God is and what he's like.

God is a joyful God. He is full of joy. And so joy then is a fruit of the Spirit. It comes from knowing God. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

Psalms 16, verse 11 says, You make known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Joy comes as given by God, the joyful God. Fourthly, it's brilliant. Maybe I didn't need to say this, but in verse 8, joy is glorious.

[16 : 44] It is great. It is brilliant. Do you know what glory means, yeah? Glory is making greatness public. Yet you glorify God by going public on his greatness.

Right, so if I say, God is great. Let me explain to you how amazing God is. Let me tell you what God is like. Let me tell you what God has done. I am glorifying God.

I am going public on his greatness and his bigness. And joy is glorious. It is brilliant. It glorifies God. It is publishing his greatness to the world. The joy of the Christian, not simply because it is like God as we've seen, but it is praiseworthy. You want to go public on it.

You have experienced this, haven't you? When you have met a happy Christian, you may well have had a serious conversation with them, but you are sort of aware and conscious that they have a joy that is oozing out of them, coming out of them that you can't quite explain.

[17 : 46] And that has been one of the most encouraging things about being pastor at West Kilburn Baptist Church, is meeting people who, in great suffering and pain, are mature enough as believers to still be full of joy.

Glorious joy. Public joy. Public joy. Joy that flows out of them. It doesn't mean, does it, that Christians don't get depressed. Christians do get depressed.

The Bible tells us that. One of my friends once did a series of sermons on people in the Bible who wanted to kill themselves. He's trying to just encourage his congregation to realize that actually despair is sometimes where we find ourselves.

So, Elijah, Jonah, for example. Clinical depression sometimes is harder for a Christian because of the spiritual element to it. If you're struggling like that this evening, then my heart goes out to you and do come and speak to me or speak to somebody else and get help.

Fifthly, it is the present possession of the Christian. Now, like I've said, verse 8 is not translated brilliantly by the NIV.

[18 : 57] Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. So, that verb to be is not there in the Greek.

It's really the word rejoice. So, a better or more literal translation would be something like this. This is from the Christian Standard Bible, which, interestingly enough, is the version of the Bible in those Good News for London translations.

So, it's an Anglicized version of the New American Standard. Is that right? Something like that. So, the Christian Standard Bible. It says this. Though you have not seen him, you rejoice.

Though not seeing him now, you believe in him and you rejoice with an inexpressible and glorious joy. In other words, the point is that joy is the present experience of the Christian.

The Christian life is a rejoicing life. Not the Christian life will be a life of joy or the Christian life was a life of joy and then it got really unpleasant.

[20 : 00] But rather, the Christian life is rejoicing. That is what the Christian life is. The Christian life is intended to be a life of rejoicing. Not that we laugh our way all the way through it. It's not an emotion.

It's a status. But the fact is that what the world is looking for in comfort, you and I have found in knowing Christ. Right? It's right to say that the Christian has found in Jesus the life that everyone else has been searching for.

That Christian life is the best way to live in this broken, suffering world. We've got to hold on to this, haven't we? When we're sharing the gospel with our non-Christian friends, you realize, don't you, that for them to become a Christian means a radical change in lifestyle.

But it doesn't rob them of joy. It brings them to the only real source of joy. And at that point, the Christian's joy, our corporate joy, is essentially evangelistic, isn't it?

You can say to your friends and your family that it's not just that you think they need a saviour, but really that in a deep down sense that they're not perhaps aware of and can't really articulate. They want a saviour and the saviour is what they've been looking for in everything else, but haven't found him.

[21 : 07] They are blind to the reality. It means that the sacrifices and losses of the Christian life, you know, leaving behind friends and family, the tears and the sadness, the dying to self, that is not to ruin your life, but is to make your life.

As I was thinking about and researching for tonight's talk, I was listening to some lectures by the psychologist who had been advising David Cameron back in the early noughties.

He's a guy called Martin Seligman. I think Seligman, Seligman, don't quite know how you say his surname. Anyway, one of the things that he was saying was an exciting discovery that he'd made in his research of happiness, which was that the most powerful antidepressant that they discovered was to suggest to the person struggling with depression that they go and do something that costs them for someone else.

He said, I have no idea why this works, but it seems to be that the most helpful thing you can say to a depressed person is to tell them to get out and go and do something for someone else and not themselves, even though that costs them.

That, he said, seems to make people happy in a way I can't explain. Now, you want to say to him, don't you? You want to kind of grab him by the shoulders and go, I know why that's the case, right? I know why that's true, right?

[22 : 28] Who is the happiest and most joyful man to have ever lived? Jesus. Well, what did he do? He gave his life as a ransom for many. He took up his cross for the joy set before him.

And so that's our life, isn't it? Our life is the present possession of joy because of the future that we have in Christ. So that's our sixth thing. It is fueled by future salvation.

Have a look at verse nine. Though you have not seen him, you love him. And even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.

For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Now, the causal link between verses eight and nine, the word for.

I hate doing this, right? Because this I don't want to undermine your confidence in the Bible in your hands. But the word for is not there in the Greek. So you mustn't kind of overplay it. It's not it's not really.

[23 : 32] Because it's more. For first time really starts with receiving or obtaining. OK, so the word for really, I think, in English kind of points the idea that the inexpressible and glorious joy in our present experience is connected with future salvation.

Our present joy comes from this growing value that we attach to future glory. So this is the this is the joy of the Christian life, right? The Christian the joy of the Christian life is really like the joy of a child on the way to Disneyland.

Right. It is the joy of arriving there flooding back into their life in the present. You get the idea. It's like the office worker who is on the way home for the weekend.

Yeah, it's the joy of that is flowing back into their life in the present. It's the student on the way to graduation having passed all their exams.

You know, it's the joy of the future flowing backwards into the present. So perhaps this is worth thinking about some more. Perhaps it is the case that our absence of present joy is because of a lack of future hope.

[24 : 44] Right. I was trying to think about this because I think so. One Peter is not the only place, obviously, that joy is talked about in the Bible. It's talked about all over. But really, I think what Peter is trying to say to us is you don't just find joy by trying to think on and ponder on what you've received today in Christ.

So if I can say it this way, and this is almost heretical. So I'm hesitating to say it like this, but I'll clarify it. Joy doesn't come from justification. It comes from glorification.

Does that make sense? So justification is our present standing in the Lord Jesus, that we know that before God we are not guilty. We have received full forgiveness for all of our sins.

We have nothing to fear. Glorification is this hope that we will be with the Lord. But the gospel is not just about forgiveness and justification.

It's about adoption into the family of God and the promise of glory with him. And joy is found in the future glory flowing back into present experience. And so if we find that our joy in the present is flaky, it's because our hope in the future is insecure.

[25 : 57] Verse seven captures it, doesn't it? Look back at verse seven. These have come, this is the trials, right? Have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

You know, the point is that what we have is truly valuable. Because it lasts into the future. And so that's why trials don't rob you of joy.

Yeah. What do trials do? Trials and suffering build your hope in Christ for the future, which bring you joy and don't rob you of it in a Christian character sense.

So you will cry and weep through the tears of pain and suffering and loss, the absence of friends, whatever it is that you are struggling with. You will weep and feel sadness at that.

But as you bring that to Christ, it pushes you to think more about what is yours in him. So if I can put it this way, the more that your life today makes no sense outside of the return of Christ, the more joyful you will be.

[27 : 07] Does that make sense? Does that kind of scan? So if your life could be fully explained without the future return of Christ, then you'll be miserable.

Right. Because it is as our hope is in Christ that we find joy in the present. Now, that means, doesn't it, which brings us to the last point. And then I'm going to take some questions and we're going to discuss it together a bit.

But we grow in it by cultivating dependence on and confidence in Christ. I think this is probably cheating in that it's not necessarily a direct implication of verse eight.

But I think you could make a pretty good argument that Peter's purpose in writing this section is to increase their joy. Right. So he describes their joy in order to increase their joy.

And so it's consistent, isn't it, with the other parts of the Bible, that it is not just that joy is a status. It is also a command. Right. So it's OK in Philippians four for Paul to write, rejoice in the Lord always.

[28 : 09] And I will say it again, rejoice, not as a sort of suggestion, but as an instruction to you, an imperative, a command. Listen, you are to rejoice. I'm not going to say once I'm going to double down on it.

You really must rejoice. Now, how can he command that? Well, because although joy is flowing back to us from a future event, it is still possible as a Christian to grow our joy in the present by growing our confidence in and our understanding of that future event.

This is how the Christian life works. OK, so we are interested, aren't we, in our emotions and our affections. And we think often as Christians that the way to affect our emotions and our affections to address them directly.

But actually, what you find in the Bible is that your emotions and your affections are instructed by your mind. So it's as you understand and listen and grow in understanding that then your emotions and your affections are changed and transformed.

So it's as I grow in understanding of and clarity on the future coming of the Lord Jesus, I find that my emotions and affections are shaped around the joy of what Christ is doing.

[29 : 19] That's why I don't think really there's any changing topic in 1 Peter chapter 1 when you get to verse 13, when Peter says, Therefore, with minds that are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought you when Jesus Christ is revealed it is coming.

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires that you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do. For it is written, be holy because I am holy.

He's just talked about this inexpressible joy. He's talked about this future coming salvation. He's talked then about the fact that everybody has wanted to know more about this, right?

So the prophets have wanted to know more about this coming of Christ. They have pointed forward it. They long to look into it. And now he says, Therefore, with minds that are fully alert and sorry, are alert and fully sober, set your hope on the grace to be brought to you because he wants them to grow in joy.

See, listen, you grow in joy by getting serious about the Christian life, by setting your minds and hopes on the future, on what Christ will reveal. Know that the more you make your treasure there and not here, the more you will receive joy.

[30 : 35] The more you commit yourself to holiness, because the future is holiness and because God is holy. That way you will be joyful in the present. See, perhaps I can put it this way.

If I said before that for the older Christian like me and Liz, right, nostalgia is the big joy killer. If you're young, you know, like me and Nathan, right, let me tell you that half-heartedness in the Christian life is your big joy killer.

I mean, it kills joy for an older Christian as well, but especially, I think, for a younger person. That desire that you have to have a foot in both camps, yeah, to have everything that the world has to offer and also try and be a serious Christian as much as that kind of scams with everybody around me, that robs you of joy.

If your hopes are divided, your joy will be halved. I'm not actually sure whether the maths of that works, but that's the principle, right? Set your hope on the grace to be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Commit yourself fully to him, being holy because he is holy, and you will receive joy. Let me take questions or comments, observations, and then we'll spend some time praying together.

[31 : 53] We can have a moment to shuffle and to think. Charleston.

Yes. So, amen. So we will, we have joy now, and we will be joyful in the future. Yes, I'm trying to, I'm trying to look down at the verses because I think it picks that up, doesn't it?

In all this you greatly rejoice, say for now, for a little while, you've had to suffer grief in all kinds of times. Where does it say it? Yeah, they result in praise, glory, and honor when Christ is revealed to you.

So that the sense is that the fulfillment will also be joyful. Yes. The joy set before us brings joy into the present. Yeah. Yeah.

Do you want to expand that question? What do you mean? Because, because our hope for future glory is based on justification.

[33 : 07] Yeah. So justification is receiving today the verdict of judgment day, right?

So it'd be like me handing to Anderson, you know, straight nines in GCSEs now, even though he's not yet sat his examines, right? So that's, that's justification, right?

So it's, it's the not guilty as righteous as Jesus verdict today that's in our hands, even though the judgment day is still to come. So that's how it fuels it. But what I'm trying to say, so that's why I think it's slightly dangerous to say that justification doesn't give me joy in it, because that's wrong, isn't it? But there's a, what I'm trying to say is there's a road there, isn't there? So it's as justification gives me a solid hope that that hope for the future brings me joy. Yeah. Yeah.

Any other comments or questions? Yes. Sometimes in our churches, we break the void of the peace. Yes.

[34 : 17] Yes. Yes. I'm just sort of thinking out loud, where is, what is, what is the disconnect?

Yes. And why are, why are we, sing songs without joy? Yeah. The words that we're saying should fill us with.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That is such a great question. I'm going to, why don't you talk to the person next to you about that? No, no, serious, because I think this is really helpful. Why do we find that our church is perhaps not as joyful as it should be?

This is not a criticism of any particular individual or any particular thing, but just how can we be more joyful as church? Talk to the person next to you about it so that you've all had a think about it. Are you talking about joy and being or the expression of joy?

Both. I mean, obviously, you're saying in the church, you're talking about the expression of joy. Yes. So that was David's question. Take the expression. You're saying this really in the roots. Yeah.

[35 : 27] My opinion, and I think the implication is that even if joy is a state of being rather than happiness, if it is such, it should express itself in something that looks such.

Yeah, there should something come out from that. So what should, what would that look like? Just have a think for a moment, because I think it's a really helpful thing for you to ponder. Sorry. What would that look like?

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[37 : 44] Thank you.

Thank you.

Lola, have you found, say, Kate, coming to England, you found us to be really doer, yeah? And like, and depressed and depressing. Repressed.

Repressed. Yes. I didn't see the one that pressed me. You, okay. It's like, it's like a few of us, you can't, those are two. Right. It's opposite. Yeah. Interesting.

I'm trying to approach it. Oh my goodness. Yes. I noticed in the context of Neymar, there was an explanation of the word that brought joy to the people that they understood.

[39 : 28] And I wonder, even in our scene, how do we understand the theology of the covenant of what we see? I wonder how much we relate. Yes. Yes, or, yes, or engaging with it.

Yeah, that's really helpful. Well, I think, see, we were chatting a little bit here. Some expressions of joy are very culturally located, aren't they?

And so, and we are a really mixed bunch of all sorts of different cultures. So, it's, it's unhelpful if it is very repressed in a British way, because that's not reflective of who we are, right?

We're a much broader mix than that. But, the joy of the Lord in, like, Nehemiah, chapter 8, is a serious joy in the sense of it's serious-minded, right?

It's, it's fueled by good, solid theology. So, it's not the absence of content. It is the presence of content, but expressed joyfully.

[40 : 29] Yeah. But, go on, Liz. What is it? Right. I'm not, I'm going to make you look at what you're saying about the culture thing and what you're saying.

But is it not that one of the reasons that we find it difficult to express story is a right of reading knowing about it?

I like to really know you all and wanting to know you more than anything else.

Because I think it's half part of this, that desire to know him and to want more of him and that's not more of him.

So it's, in a way it has to come out. Yeah. You know, it has, it can't. Yes.

[41 : 31] It doesn't mean that your hands are up in the air or anything like that. It could be something. No, don't say but it doesn't. It could be. Yes. Could be but it doesn't have to be. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, so let's, let's press into what we've learned, right?

If we are finding that there's an absence of joy in the church, it's because present circumstances are more real to us than future glory, right? And so somehow, and it's possible, isn't it, even as a, as a church to do this, is to become so obsessed with what our experience is now, that we don't, we fail to look forwards.

And therefore, like, I think if we go back in time to when Christians were really suffering or when life was really short, or, you know, when lots of really heinous and hideous things were happening in the world and Christians were still gathering together to our angles, but there, the amount that they talked about future glory, I think if you weighed that up compared to us, you know, that actually, some of our Christianity has just become like psychotherapy, hasn't it, to try and help us in the present.

When really it's about future glory and that, that throwing back. So if somehow we can make sure that people don't feel repressed in church and feel able to express joy, and then we fuel joy by clarity on future glory, then really the idea is that that should kind of flow out, shouldn't it?

[43 : 03] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And that might look like.

Yeah. Yeah. And it might also look like just being a willingness to express sadness at current circumstances as well. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Go on. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. Yes. Yes. So the amount of times I have spoken to people and visited people who are struggling to come to church, and the reason they give is because I don't feel like I am doing well enough to come to church, which is so sad, isn't it?

Because it's this sense that I have to be able to put the face on in order to come to the gathering of the church, which is the wrong thing, isn't it? Yeah. Anyone else wanted to say something? Go on.

Go on. I think there's like, there's part which seems to be upright and dignity as well. And the reason they give is because I don't feel like I am doing well enough to come to church, which is so sad, isn't it?

[44 : 20] Because it's this sense that I have to be able to put the face on in order to come to the gathering of the church, which is the wrong thing, isn't it? Yeah. Anyone else wanted to say something?

I think there's like, there's part of it which seems to be upright and dignity as well. There's the two Samuel 6 where David's dancing in front of them and leaping for joy in front of them and thinking, so these questions are required to be so undignified.

Because apparently, we're more undignified than David. Because it's in front of them. I wonder if our, I've probably come to every other aspect, what would it be? Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. The debt. I mean, that's really interesting. The David and it's, it's Saul's daughter, isn't it?

Yeah. That is like annoyed with him. I think because, again, it's the loss of her influence and her connection to the throne as well, isn't she?

[45 : 27] Never able to have children after that. Yeah. So there's the thing linking what the New Testament says about doing things in good order and also allowing people to express emotion.

Yeah. It's just really important, isn't it? Yeah. Yeah. And that, that goes for both sadness and happiness, doesn't it? It's the, the feeling that I have to be able to say, yeah, I'm okay.

When anyone asks me, which is helpful. Yeah. I wonder if there's this thing that, joy itself in, what causes us to express it in a way better.

You know the whole idea of something like, for example, when you still, going through this very sad moment, and then at one point went to the beach and this sort of amazing scenery there. And it's not like you made an effort, not to think about anything else and to contemplate it.

It was actually beauty itself and nature that had power. So you can start something. Yeah. I think God is the same way. Sometimes people try to make an effort to think about God and to love God, but it's God that's actually love worthy.

[46 : 32] And then knowing him more will cause us to, and I wonder if it's by being attached to the word of God and preaching and learning more about future warriors, it's self will cause us to, Yeah.

To express it differently. That's really helpful. Thank you. That's very similar to what Liz was saying, isn't it? Yeah. Really helpful. Yeah. Great.

Okay. Why don't you, with the person that you were talking to before, pray that our church would be a church of joy, and that we would feel able to express that together, and that we would be more excited about future glory than we are present comfort, and that would feed our joy.

Go for it. Pray for a few moments and then. Thank you.