

Pinecrest 2022 - Saturday Evening

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Preacher: Dan Greene

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. How's everybody doing?

After all the competition today, there were people who tried to talk me into jumping over to patience. But we're going to follow the scriptural order here of the fruit of the Spirit.

We did love this morning. We're going to do joy tonight. Let me ask you, do your friends see joy in you?

Your family see joy in you? Your co-workers see joy in you? We're going to talk about joy tonight. I'll just tell you where we're going to go.

We're going to talk about some misconceptions of joy. And then some truths about joy. And then I'm going to close by talking about some killjoys.

[1:00] First of all, misconceptions about joy. Let me suggest two. Number one. Number one misconception. Christianity is no laughing matter.

Some of you grew up hearing the words, don't laugh, you're in church. Even though some of the funniest things you ever saw happen in church. I had a friend, Craig Hanson.

He was a new believer and he came to a communion service that was open. And he was really enthusiastic about his faith. And he stood up and he started talking about how much he appreciated what Jesus had done for him.

And he started talking about the cross. And he said they punched him and they beat him with a whip. And he said they probably broke most of the bones in his body. And then he sat down and a man stood up and said, let's turn to him number 258.

No bone of his was broken. Some of us have had it ingrained in us that Christianity is serious.

[2:13] It's somber. It's sober. And probably the most fitting countenance to wear is a frown. The most spiritual looking person kind of has a scowl on their face.

I heard about one guy who went into a bank and the teller said, you look like a pastor. And he said, no, I've just had the flu.

I fear that we give the world the impression sometimes that fun is sin. Did you know that the words joy, joyful, rejoice are used over 450 times in the Bible?

That's a lot. We haven't been given salvation to endure. We've been given salvation to enjoy. We haven't been given salvation to grin and bear it.

We have been given salvation to celebrate. Listen to what it says about the early church in Acts 13, 52. It says, and the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

[3:36] Whenever the Spirit of God gets a hold of you, you overflow with joy. Zephaniah 3, 17 says, the Lord your God is in your midst.

He will exult over you with joy. He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. God is in our midst rejoicing, shouting with joy. And some of us are saying, shh, you're in church.

C.S. Lewis said, joy is the serious business of heaven.

Jesus made this statement in the parable of the talents. You're probably familiar with this phrase, but I don't know if you paid attention to it. But Jesus said, well done, good and faithful servant.

Enter into, you know what he said? What? The joy of the Lord. We expect him to say, enter into heaven, enter into salvation.

[4:44] But he says, enter into the joy of the Lord. Why? Because they're synonymous. In fact, the Greek word for grace is charos.

The Greek word for joy is charos. One letter different in the two. They often got mistaken. And that's okay.

Because grace always produces joy. Grace is kind of the root. And joy is the fruit in salvation. Billy Sunday said, if there's no joy in your religion, there's a leak in your Christianity.

I like what John Powell said. He said, if you say you've received God's grace and God's mercy and God's love, and if you have God's Son and God's Spirit, and you live in His presence, and you know you're going to heaven, please notify your face.

Isn't it God who urges us to make a joyful noise unto the Lord? Now, most of us think that's singing. That's probably because you've heard me. But the most obvious joyful noise on earth is laughter.

[6:17] So I think he's saying, make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Let's laugh and enjoy life and the blessings that God has given us. Second misconception.

We need to dispel the first. Because Christianity is a laughing matter. And the second misconception is this. Joy is dependent upon circumstances.

Most people operate on an if-then plan when it comes to joy. If I win the lottery, then I'll be joyful. If I was more talented, then I'd be joyful. If I could find a more fulfilling job, I'd be joyful. If I could find Mr. Right, I'd be joyful.

That's why we hear the question, what would it take to make you happy? And what's that mean? What circumstances would it take to make you happy?

[7:25] In fact, I looked up the word happy in the dictionary. It comes from an old word. It means hap. Or the word is hap. It means chance or luck. So the definition of happy is favored by circumstances, lucky, fortunate.

We tend to think that being happy is something that just happens. It's happenstance. But if that's the definition of happiness, then I would have to say that joy is different from happiness. Happiness is external. Joy is internal. Happiness depends upon circumstances. Joy depends upon Jesus. Happiness depends on what happens to you.

Joy depends upon who lives in you. Happiness depends on chance. Joy depends on choice.

Happiness is temporary. Joy is permanent.

Happiness is fickle. Joy is settled. Joy is not a person. Joy is not a person. Joy is not a person. Joy is not a person. People who are continually joyful do so in spite of circumstances rather than because of circumstances.

[8:43] That's why Paul could say in Philippians 4.4, rejoice in the Lord always. You know where Paul was when he wrote those words?

He was in prison. Rejoice in the Lord always because it's not about your circumstances. It's about the Lord. That's why Habakkuk could say in Habakkuk 3.17 and 18, Though the fig tree should not blossom and there be no fruit on the vines, though the yield of the olives should fail and the fields produce no food, though the flock should be cut off from the fold and there be no cattle in the stalls, yet I will exult in the Lord.

I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. I'm going to say this and I'll let you process it.

The opposite of joy is not sorrow. The opposite of joy is unbelief. Now let me say this.

This doesn't mean that you should be smiling on every occasion. The Bible doesn't say be happy all the time.

[10:08] That's a children's song. I'm in, what is it? In, right, out, right, up, right, down, right, happy all the time. Somebody who's happy all the time is rather irritating.

In fact, somebody who's happy all the time can be very disrespectful because there are certain occasions when it's not proper to be happy in those settings.

The Bible says we're to weep with those who weep. And that's the difference between happiness and joy because I can weep with somebody and still have an inner joy in that situation.

So that's a misconception as well. Let me turn to the second thing, and that is truths about joy. I'll give you five. Number one, the provision of joy, joy, and that is it comes from God.

It's important for us to understand that joy is not something that we drum up, that we manufacture in our life. It comes from God.

[11:19] In fact, it's not our joy at all. It's God's joy given to us.

Jesus prayed these words to the Father in John 17, 13. He said that they may have my joy made full in them.

Jesus has placed His joy inside of you if you're a believer and you have His Spirit producing that as fruit in your life. Our problem is that most of us don't think God is very joyful.

I fear that a lot of Christians view God as somber, sober, stiff, stoic, and rather boring. How many here have a good sense of humor?

I think I do. Guess where I got it. I was made in the image of God.

So who's got the greatest sense of humor in the universe? It's God. And so, to think that God is not laughing at times and having humor at times is ridiculous.

[12:51] I mean, all you have to do to know He has a sense of humor is to just go to the zoo once in a while. I recently moved to Arizona five years ago and they got some weird creatures out there.

Some of them will kill you. And so, you know, it's different. Someone said, a camel is a horse designed by a committee.

Remember when the prophets of Baal were on Mount Carmel with Elijah and they were dancing around and trying to get the fire to come down from their God out of heaven and nothing happened. And Elijah stepped up and spoke to them rather sarcastically and he said, well, maybe your God is on a journey. Maybe He's on vacation right now.

Or maybe He's sleeping. Maybe He's taking a nap. And then he said, in the Hebrew it says, maybe He's relieving Himself. What he said, well, maybe He's in the bathroom.

[13:58] Now, I think when he said that, God laughed. When the fellow named Eutychus who was listening to Paul preach in Acts 20 nodded off to sleep and fell out of the third floor window, I think God laughed.

Of course, to his credit, Paul preached till midnight. And God, Paul did restore him to life, so it was a good ending. Kevin, you're not the only one who falls asleep in church.

Not the first one, anyway. You say, well, Jesus certainly wasn't joyful. The Bible says He was a man of sorrows.

Well, that passage, Isaiah 53, is talking about Him in the context of the cross. And certainly He was a man of sorrows in that context. But His life was full of joy.

In fact, He had the reputation among the Pharisees of having too much fun. They accused Him in Matthew 11, 19 of being a gluttonous man and a drunkard and a friend of sinners.

[15:10] Now, how would those accusations even stick unless He was a guy who was laughing a lot? In Hebrews 1, 9, you may have overlooked this verse if you read it, but in Hebrews 1, 9, the Father says to Jesus, I have set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.

You're above your companions. You're the most joyful person on the face of the earth. And when Jesus turned to His disciples in John 15, 11 and said, these things I've spoken to you that my joy may be in you, I don't think they said, you're joy.

You're stuffy. You're stoic. You never laugh. No, when He said, I want you to have my joy, they were excited because Jesus was filled with joy.

You see, they had walked around with Him for three and a half years and seen His joy. They had laughed with Him for three and a half years. I love the phrase in Luke 10, 21, you might want to go there and mark it if you never have, but it says of Jesus, He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit.

Wow. He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit. I would love to see that. And that's the joy that's inside of you.

[16:53] Jude 24 says it's exceeding joy. It's beyond anything we could know or imagine.

1 Peter 1.8 says, we greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible. It's indescribable joy. Isaiah 51.11 says it is everlasting joy.

So it is beyond human joy. It can't be described and it lasts forever. That's God's joy in us.

And the first, so the first truth is the provision of joy. It comes from God. Second truth is the priority of joy. And I would say that's relationships.

Remember when the disciples came back in Luke 10 from going out in pairs and they came back and they were all excited about the fact that they could cast out demons. And Jesus said to them, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

[18:02] Now, I don't think there's a sheet of paper in heaven with your name on it. I think when he said your names are written in heaven, he was talking about the fact that your names are written on the palms of his hands.

Your names are written on his heart. It's about relationship. He's saying don't rejoice that you have power over demons. Rejoice that you have a relationship with God in heaven.

Jesus said in John 17, in the beginning of his prayer there, he said, this is eternal life. Remember that? You kind of lean in and go, this is eternal life. I want to hear this.

This is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. What is eternal life? We think of living forever.

Jesus said eternal life is not so much about quantity, it's about quality. Eternal life is knowing God and knowing Jesus. It's all about relationship.

[19:09] It's not about existing forever. It's being with him and knowing him, and that's the key to eternal life. In 1 John 1, 3 and 4, John said this, what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ.

And these things we write so that our joy may be made complete. John says, our joy is made complete when you're in fellowship with the Lord and with one another.

It's about relationships. Paul said it this way in Philippians 2, 2. He said, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Paul's joy was made complete when they were fully in unity and fellowship. I love sitting in the dining hall over there and hear the buzz around the room.

It tells me you guys are enjoying being with each other. That's what he's talking about. Joy comes from relationships. In Luke 15, 10, Jesus said, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

[20:36] One person who comes into relationship with Jesus Christ and all of heaven celebrates. So the priority of joy is relationships. I rejoice in my relationship with God in helping others to walk with Him.

I rejoice in bringing others to know Him. Third truth, the perspective of joy. And this one's important. The perspective of joy is eternal.

Joy is above your circumstances. Joy goes beyond your circumstances. Joy doesn't have to wait around for good circumstances to happen.

Joy happens rain or shine. Joy happens to you. Joy happens to you. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7, for I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.

How does that happen? Listen to Romans 5, verse 3. We also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance and perseverance character.

[21:49] character. James said it in James 1, 2. He said, Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials.

Knowing. Knowing what? Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result that you may be perfect and complete. I can rejoice even going through trials and difficulties because I know that God has an eternal plan.

He's making me more like Jesus. You know, some of us think that if we ever could get rid of all our problems, we'd be happy.

You ever think that way? Let me burst your bubble. Life is one problem after another. It's a series of problem solving.

So if you've decided you're only going to be joyful between problems, you're going to be a grumpy person. You have to figure out how am I going to be joyful in the midst of problems, in the midst of trials, in the midst of disappointments, realizing that God's plan is eternal.

[23:11] It's not this temporary earth alone. And I can rejoice in the Lord in those situations. Fourth truth. The paradox of joy.

And this one is giving. These words of Jesus are recorded in Acts 20, 35. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And that word blessed means happy or joyful. That's the paradox of joy. Joy doesn't come from grabbing. Joy comes from giving.

It doesn't come to those who are selfish. It comes to those who are selfless. I love this promise in Isaiah 58, 10.

It says, If you give yourself to the hungry, and if you satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness, and your gloom will become like midday.

[24:12] If you're down in the dumps, what does the world say? You need to grab for something. Go get something for yourself. God says, If you're down in the dumps, give something to somebody else.

Care for somebody else. And your gloom will rise like midday. And you'll be turned from doom to sunshine and joy.

Paradise of, or the paradox of joy is giving. And then a fifth truth. The presence of joy is wherever God is.

Psalm 1611, and I would suggest memorizing this verse and putting it on your mirror and put it on your, don't put it on your windshield.

I was going to say. If you do, I'm not liable, but here it is. Psalm 1611, says, In your presence is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures forever.

[25:22] Where's the most joyful place in the universe? It's in God's presence. God has brought God has brought God has brought his presence down to earth in the person of Jesus Christ and in his spirit.

And he has set up his kingdom, and you know where his kingdom is set up today? It's set up in our hearts. So God has brought his presence down in the person of Jesus, and now today the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

His kingdom is set up in here. And what's the nature of his kingdom? Listen to this verse. Romans 14, 17. The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

So if you have a lack of joy in your life, it's like a warning light on your dashboard. It's saying, I'm not spending enough time in the presence of God.

I must be stiff-arming God because I'm not experiencing the joy that he has fully in his presence. I need to get into his presence, and I need to let his presence fill me.

[26:38] That brings me to the third point. Kill joys. What is it that keeps you from rejoicing? What is it that withers the fruit of joy in your life?

Let me give you four. Number one, hidden sin. King David committed adultery with Bathsheba and then had her husband killed.

He hid that sin from God. Hid it from everybody else. Looked like he was getting away with it. I imagine, you know, they had the baby and I imagine they were walking around Jerusalem with the baby stroller.

You know, everybody thought, oh, what a lovely couple. And you think, well, David got away with it, but David didn't get away with it because what he tells us was going on inside of him is recorded in Psalm 32.

He says, when I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me.

[27:44] My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. See, David was miserable even though he was putting on a good face.

You know what he says next? I acknowledge my sin to you and my iniquity I did not hide. I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

You know how he finishes that Psalm? Last verse. He says, be glad, rejoice, shout for joy. Why is he rejoicing?

Because he stopped hiding his sin and he brought it into the light before the Lord. First kill joy is hiding your sin.

Second kill joy is counterfeit joy. There's a lot of counterfeit joy in this world. The Bible calls it folly. When you laugh at the wrong reason or the wrong thing, the Bible calls that folly.

[28:55] In fact, the Bible even says that kind of laughter sounds different. Ecclesiastes 7, 6 says, the laughter of the fool is like the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot.

You ever try to cook with a fire with bad wood? It's popping and crackling and sparkling and throwing things out and hurting you and it's got a different sound to it than hard wood when it burns. And so I just thought I would give you a couple of counterfeit joys. One would be the joy of pleasure. The world says the joy comes from fulfilling my pleasure. Solomon was the wealthiest man in the world in his day and he set out to try to use all his resources to find out if he could get joy through pleasure.

He said in Ecclesiastes 2, 1, I said to myself, come now, I will test you with pleasure, so enjoy yourself. And what was his conclusion?

[30:13] After seeking pleasure pleasure or joy through pleasure, he said, and behold, it was futility. I said of laughter it is madness and of pleasure what does it accomplish?

Joy that is based on self-pleasure doesn't satisfy its counterfeit. Second counterfeit would be the joy of perversion. The world says the joy comes through laughing about sin.

90% of the humor in sitcoms today probably are based on laughing at sin. Most stand-up comics are not really funny anymore.

They're like crude and people laugh about that. In Proverbs 15, 21, Solomon said, folly is joy to him who lacks sense.

You may have a great sense of humor, but if you're laughing at the wrong things, that's not real joy. That's folly. I like the story in Matthew 9 where Jesus went to the synagogue official's house whose daughter had died and he cleared the crowd out by saying, depart for the girl is not dead, she's just asleep.

[31:31] Remember what they did? They laughed at him until he raised her from the dead. Let me give you a piece of advice.

Never laugh at Jesus. Always laugh with Jesus. Joy that's based on perversion is counterfeit. Then let me give you a third one.

The joy of preservation. Some people use joy or humor as kind of a defense mechanism. They throw out joy.

I was meeting with a guy in Scottsdale who recognized he was doing that. Very funny guy, but he would always create humor and then kind of hide behind it.

He acknowledged that and he's really made a change in the way he approaches people and how he uses what I think is a gift, the gift of humor, but it can become a defense mechanism, something you use for self preservation so no one sees what's really going on in your life.

[32:39] Proverbs 14 13 says, even in laughter the heart may be in pain and the end of joy may be grief. A plastic smile is counterfeit.

Real joy is not something you hide behind, it's something that fills you up. It's not a mask, it's who you are. So just because you're laughing doesn't mean you've got joy.

You may have counterfeit joy based on pleasure, based on perversion, based on preservation.

That's why in James 4, 9, it says, draw near to God and he will draw near to you.

And then it gives us the recipe for how to do that. It's rather surprising. It says this, be miserable and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.

And I think he's talking to the person who has counterfeit joy. And he's saying you need to take your counterfeit joy and you need to repent in brokenness and then you can enter into the joy of the Lord because you can draw near to him and he will draw near to you.

[34:03] Third kill joy is baggage. I think some of you are probably carrying baggage that prevents you from being filled with joy.

I thought of two kinds of baggage. There's like a past baggage and a future baggage. The past baggage is usually something you've done in the past that you keep going back to and beating yourself up for.

And so that past baggage is guilt. You won't let it go. You won't let God really forgive you for it. You won't accept that God's forgiving you for it.

And so you hang on to that baggage and you never experience the fullness of the joy of the Lord because you're always looking back at that. And then some of you have some future baggage and that is fear.

You're always saying what if this happens? What if that happens? And so you're worrying about the future and not experiencing what God is doing in your life in the present. Joyful people stay riveted

to the present.

[35:08] I came across this little poem by Helen Malakote. It's called I Am. She says I was regretting the past and fearing the future.

suddenly my Lord was speaking. He said my name is I am. He paused. I waited. He continued. When you live in the past with its mistakes and regrets it is hard.

I am not there. My name is not I was. When you live in the future with all its problems and fears it is hard.

I am not there. My name is not I will be. When you live in this moment it is not hard. I am here. My name is I am.

He took care of yesterday. He holds tomorrow. And he is today your source of joy. Let me give you a fourth and final kill joy.

[36:16] pig pens. Prodigal son felt the allure of the world.

He asked for his inheritance because they said I want to be happy. I want to be rich. I want to be famous. And he went off into the far country and he ended up as you know in a pig pen.

And in the pig pen he came to his senses and he said father I am not worthy to be your son. I have sinned. I want to be one of your servants.

He flipped his attitude completely around. And as a result of that we read that the father ran to him, embraced him, kissed him, felt compassion for him, forgave him, put a robe on him, a ring on him, sandals on him, killed the fatted calf.

You know what else it says? It says they experienced joy. These words are used in that passage. They had music and dancing, they celebrated and they rejoiced.

[37:34] Let me tell you something. The sign on the pig pen never reads pig pen. trust me, I've been there.

It says we'll make you happy, we'll make you rich, we'll make you famous. And I think in a room this size I'm sure that some of you have the go into all the world down, but you've gone into the world and you're knee deep in the slime.

there's nothing that kills joy like a pig pen. There's no joy in Mudville. The only benefit of a pig pen is that it can bring you to your senses to say I've hit the dead end at this point and I need to turn around and go home.

We're to be in the world but not of the world. We're to be in the world but distinct and one of those distinctions is joy. If you're going to be joyful, beware of the kill joys.

Hiding your sin, falling for a counterfeit joy, baggage like guilt or fear, and pig pens. And how do you avoid those?

[39:14] You keep coming home. there's a phrase in a hymn that resonates with me.

It's prone to wander, Lord, I know it. Prone to leave the God I love. That's my tendency.

get close to the Lord, experience the fullness, and just kind of drift a little bit. And I've learned, keep coming home before you get to the pig pen.

I challenge you tonight to come home. You know, the interesting thing about the prodigal son, everything he was looking for out there, he found when he came home.

He was looking for all those things, and it was actually back home where he needed to be. And that's the challenge I would give to you. In God's presence is fullness of joy.

[40:35] In his right hand are pleasures forever. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word.

Thank you for this word about joy. Thank you that you are the most joyful of all in this universe. And Father, I pray that we would reflect that joy in the way we live our lives.

And Lord, I pray that we would not be distracted or held back by the world around us or by our own misconceptions. but Lord, that we would truly find what you want for us in your presence.

And we would really display that as we relate to other people and that they would see us as people who know you because we have your joy. And we pray that in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.