

Invited into Jesus' Joy (Ps 45:6-7, John 15:9-11)



'You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.' (Ps 45:6-7 c.f. Heb 1:9)

Jesus was the most joyous person ever lived. Jesus was a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief (Is 53:3). His joy was a supernatural dimension of joy – the fruit of the Spirit. There is a difference between joy and happiness. The occasion of Jesus' great joy is recorded in Luke 10:21-22. Jesus invites us into His life of joy - by abiding in His love. (John 15:9-11)

1 The Purest Joy

Pure joy eternally wells up and flows out from the love that exists within the triune God. There is overflowing joy and pleasure in God's presence because God is a joyful God. This joy of God is seen in the creation account: *'Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? When morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy?'* (Job 38:7) *'and God saw that it was good,' 'indeed it was very good,'* (Gen 1:25, 31).

God rested on the 7th day to enjoy His creation. But God's joy precedes His creation and traces its origin to the eternal love relationship within the triune God. Therefore, joy is the natural overflow when we encounter the beauty of the Lord (Ps 27:4; Ps 90:17). David said, *'In Your presence is the fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forever.'* (Ps 16:11) *'Taste and see that the LORD is good.'* (Ps. 34:8)

David set his heart early on to search out the beauty of the Lord all his life. Life is a mystery. It only makes sense when you are brought near to God's presence. Pain, fear, and unfulfilled longings melt away when we encounter the beauty of God. Then we know nothing else matters, but that we are held and loved by the Almighty God. We see a glimpse of this holy overflowing love and joy of God at Jesus' baptism. This is the holy ground for us all. The Father's complete and unconditional love for Jesus before He performed a single miracle or preached a single word. *The voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'* (Is 42:1 c.f. Matt 3:17, Mark 1:11).

2 Abide in My love (John 15:9-11)

Jesus tells us to abide in His love so that our joy may be full. How do we abide in God's love? By growing deep roots into the two foundational truths: God's love directed at Jesus, and Jesus' love directed at me.

- a) How do we get into the Father's love for Jesus? The pure streams of the river of God, that make glad the city of God (Ps 46:4; Ps 1) are released by our worship, adoration, and devotion to the Lord. Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17:26 – *'And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I them.'*

When we give our hearts in adoration of Jesus, the revelation of His beauty falls like raindrops at unexpected moments. *'Worship is inner health made visible.'* (C.S. Lewis). Christians who forgo worship end up becoming very unhappy people.

- b) How do we get into Jesus' love directed toward us? Know that we are loved and favoured by the Father just as Jesus is. This is the deep well of truth that we can excavate for eternity. A young man's depression instantly left him with the prayer of Is 42:1. Hearing the Spirit's voice of the Father's pleasure in the Son opens the door into God's presence. Meditate on this truth and never depart from this truth! *'The Father delights in me. He is not just tolerating me.'*

'I will love you O LORD, my strength...He delivered me because He delighted in me...Your gentleness has made me great.' (Ps 18:1-2, 19, 35) *'The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.'* (Zeph 3:17)

3 What About Our Sinfulness?

Deep repentance and healing come out of understanding God's love for us. We respond to His love by wholly turning our hearts toward God. We live within tension right now – between the gift of Christ's righteousness for us, and the Spirit's work of sanctification in us. *'Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.'* (Phil 1:6) If we do not give up, we win.

TWO important truths to remember:

- a) Know the difference between the voice of conviction ('I need to turn toward God') and the voice of condemnation ('You have failed again'). Remorse vs repentance - repentance produces liberty and freedom, and remorse leaves you with condemnation.
- b) Understand the grace of God's total forgiveness now. Do not go out of God's presence just feeling sorry for sin, but with a thankful heart for His forgiveness and love. God commanded Israel to come together for mandatory celebrations three times a year. *'Your joy shall be complete.'* (Deut 16:15). *'The joy of the Lord is your strength,'* (Neh 8:10) was said on the National Day of Repentance as Ezra read the law on the Jewish new year (Rosh Hashana). Keeping joy even in repentance is important.

4 Joy Centre

Developing the joy centre early in a child's brain is very important for his healthy social and spiritual growth. Children process information, thoughts, and feelings through this joy centre (near the frontal lobe of the brain) which helps them to form an attachment, belonging, and identity. This equips them to endure the pressures of life later. Children are meant to be thoroughly enjoyed by their parents – to be held, looked upon with adoring eyes, tickled, and shown delightful affection. When children know they are deeply loved and enjoyed, they respond with smiles, giggles, and laughter. They become playful, and the joy centre is formed very early in life.

Those with a strong joy centre formed in their mind are better equipped to take on hardships in life and stay positive through trials. Whereas those who do not have a well-formed joy centre will struggle to process the challenges of life. David formed a healthy spiritual joy centre by beholding God's beauty – His holiness. *'In Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.'* (Ps 16:11)

For Christians who do not have well-formed joy centres in God - faith becomes an inconvenience and a weekly duty, rather than the fiery desire and longing of their hearts. The first danger sign for Christians is spiritual boredom. It is the first sign of a backslidden heart. It is the proof of their lost connection to God who is the flawless perfection of beauty.

So, Scripture says the one who has set his affection on God ends up in His secret place and knows His name. (Ps 91:14). We end up with what we 'set our affection on,' because over time, what you set your affection on will win over every other influence, including your will.

This was the essence of Jesus' high priestly prayer (John 17:24-26). This is the river of God whose streams make glad the city of God (Ps 46:4).