

Choose Joy (Week 2): Joy and What Matters Most:

Yesterday's Sermon - In 10 Sentences or Less



1. In her research on the subject, Dr. Pamela King contends that joy is often attached to or grounded in the things that matters most to you: such as, a) living authentically, that is, being your best, honest self, b) leaning into your strengths, c) deepening your most important relationships, d) contributing to the welfare of others, and e) living true to your core values.
2. Joy being associated with those things that matter most to you is clearly seen in Philipians too, as well as Paul's own life (i.e., his experience in Philippi as recorded in Acts 16).
3. First, in a heartfelt, autobiographical passage, Paul says that there is Jesus, and there is everything else (see Phil. 3.1-11).
4. That passage is put together as a contrast: Paul lists all the things that used to form his self-identify and to which he looked for purpose, meaning, and direction, and then he says that Jesus surpasses them all (3.4-8).
5. This passage reveals one good working definition of what it means to be a Christian - we are those who discovering every day the superlative supremacy of Jesus in comparison to everything else.
6. The great Russian Christian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1800s AD) sounds a lot like Paul in Phil. 3 when he writes, "I have shaped for myself a credo where everything is clear and sacred for me. This credo is very simple, and here it is: to believe that nothing is more beautiful, profound, sympathetic, reasonable...and powerful than Christ."
6. Our lists from which we try to derive value and self-identity don't work because, as C. S. Lewis puts it, "God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing," and, "I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for joy. Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is."
7. Another way that joy is clearly attached to what matters most is self-sacrifice for the sake of others (Phil. 2.17-18; see also Col. 1.24 and 2nd Timothy 4.6-7).
8. "Sacrifice" is a word that comes to English from Latin, and is built of the root word "sacred," so it is by our sacrifice for the sake of others that makes both the givers and receivers more sacred and holy.
9. In his book on the spirituality of being a pastor (but its insight is certainly more widely applicable to everyone), Alan Jones, the former rector of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, says that we all experience seasons that feel like sacrifice and others that will be full of delight, but there will be a third kind in which the sacrifice is in fact the delight, very much like what you fear from Paul in Phil. 2.17-18.
10. This leads us to ask any number of questions: a) To whom or what am I gladly giving of myself right now?; Who or what do I allow to cost me? To whom or what am I adding through my own subtraction? And, what commitment or sacrifice, however small or daily, is currently giving me joy?

B. For the Week

- Keep up your reading through Philippians, either doing all four chapters each week or just one chapter per week: [Phil 1-4 NRSVA](#)

- Want to read the full story of Paul and Silas being called to minister in Europe, and their persecution and imprisonment in Macedonia? Check out Acts 16 - [Acts 16 NRSVA](#)

- Spend some time journaling about the connection of what matters most in your life and joy. How have you seen that be true? Perhaps even reflect on how self-giving/sacrifice has been a source of joy in the past?

- Make a list like Paul's in Phil. 3.4-6: What are your identity groups?; Who is family of origin?; What's your privilege?; What's your religious background, zeal, study, and training?; What are your worst failures?; What's your sense of your moral goodness and attentiveness? Once you've made your list, reread Phil. 3.7-11, maybe even rewrite those verses in your own words, and remind yourself that Jesus trumps everything on your list.

- A great devotional on joy as "the intersection of deep pleasure and deep meaning," which syncs up with the idea that joy is attached to what matters most to us: [Joy is the Intersection of Pleasure and Meaning](#)

- Another great devotional article on the connection between self-sacrifice, love, and joy: ["Finding Joy in Sacrifice"](#)

- Try it out...Find a way to sacrifice for the sake of someone else this week, or give of yourself to someone else, but before you do, ask for it to spawn joy both in you and the recipient.