

# Learn What Happiness Is...

December 10, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "Learn What Happiness Is, and When You Find It, Hold On To It." Thank you to Jeff, Mike, Toluwani, and Don for being part of the video, and to members of the Great Lakes Chorus for teaching us a new song. The scripture reading this week is Jude 20-25. Happy birthday to Dianne and to Debby.

## Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning, everyone. [Good morning]. Let's try that again. Good morning, everyone. [Good morning!] That's much better.

Welcome to the services of the Church of Christ here in Beamsville. I do see that we have some visitors, and I promised I would embarrass them. This is Michael and Vanessa from Omagh, and if you have a chance to see them, by all means do, but I know that they have an appointment, so they won't be staying too long afterwards. But welcome. We're glad you're here. We're glad everyone is here. Birthdays, is that next on your list? There we go. Cody and Lee, those are two different people. I see two laughing over here. So happy birthday to them. How old is the Cody part of that this year? Twenty-eight. I'm getting old. [Laughter] He's the baby of the family.

Okay. The 2024 budget. You can speak to Adam or Amy or any of the elders, if you would like to have input to that. And Ed's singing group has several concerts. He's going to be a busy boy that weekend as well. You can see December the 9th here in Beamsville at 4, 7.30 in Grimsby, and the next day 3 p.m. in Grimsby. I have no specific prayer requests, but I do want to transition now to the things of today.

The 113th psalm begins with "Hallelujah," which literally means "praise, yah, the Lord." It begins and ends with that. It's like a complete circle to remind us that everything revolves around our adoration of God. It's a short psalm. It speaks about God's excellence, His goodness, His compassion, how He lifts up the poor, how He rescues the needy, and He honors the childless woman. In fact, it's the psalmist says, "She is happy," or we might translate that, "She is blessed," because God gives her a home as a mother. Today we're going to be talking about happiness. Don is going to speak to that in his sermon, and I want us to think about the fact that to the psalmist at least, from the rising of the sun to its setting, praising the Lord is the way to find true happiness. Let's go to God in prayer.

Father, You are so far above us, and yet You love us so much that You would stoop down from the majesty of heaven. More than that, You would send Your Son, Your very own self, from the majesty of heaven to be with us. This morning, Father, we'll break bread, we'll sing songs. We ask that these be pleasing in Your sight, that the aroma of our singing come up to You as our offering of praise to You. There's nothing that we can give that You need, but there is something that You want. Father, help us to give our lives over to You. Help us to celebrate this morning, remembering Christ, remembering what You've done for us. Hallelujah. Praise YAH. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. Amen.

## Communion

This is a time-- that was well done, and I appreciate the young folks from Great Lakes. You're not just students, you're part of the family here, and that was very uplifting. And thank you so much for sharing

your talent and praising God the way that you just did. Now's the time to remember what God did by sending His Son.

You know, I'm going to work every night. I work midnights. I've done for most of my 26 years where I work. I work in retail. And sometimes when we walk in, the store looks like a tornado hit it, or a hurricane just ran through it, or it was a really, in other words, a really busy day. And then a couple of weeks ago was one of those, everyone either was sick or on vacation, or for whatever reason wasn't in, but there was just a couple of us, and the store was, as I expected, totaled. So basically, one of our managers came by, and I said, "How are we going to put this back together?" Because our job is to stock the shelves and to clean up the store and make it ready and open for business at 7 o'clock in the morning. That gives us 8 hours, 7 and a half, because we get a half hour lunch. So, and she just walked by and she says, "It is what it is." In other words, that fatalistic, "There's nothing we can do but our best, and we can just do what we can and let your chips fall where they may, and it is what it is."

And, you know, I got to thinking about the cross, and Jesus hanging on the cross, and I wondered what Jesus was thinking when he was looking down at the soldiers and the people that came, too. Some were spectators. They loved to watch a good crucifixion. Some were family, like his mother. He had a couple of disciples. He had John the disciple at the cross. And so, there were people there for various reasons. There were people there saying, "Let's see if he'll call Elijah. Maybe God will come down and lift him up and save him." And, you know, there were various reasons why people were looking at a suffering Jesus on the cross. Some didn't believe. Some were skeptical. For the charge that was written against him, this is Jesus, King of the Jews. And, you know, some people just said, "It is what it is." They looked at Jesus and this was a guy that stirred up the masses, boasted a few things, and he couldn't keep his end of the bargain. He was just all, all just talk. Where others just saw him and thought, you know, "What a suffering poor man. He was a good man." Matter of fact, this man healed a friend that I knew that was blind (and that, that hits home with me) but was lame. This person raised somebody from the dead.

And so, they believed and they were waiting. And, you know, you've got to wonder if Jesus was saying, "What a thankless bunch of people. It is what it is." But something was going on. The world was still, you know, there's wars going on all the time, probably wars going on when Jesus was living the three years on earth that he lived. But there was something about the cross, the power of the cross. Something spiritual was happening that mankind did not realize at that point. And, of course, looking back, we know that Jesus was taking on the sins of all of mankind from before the cross, way back as far as Adam, to when he comes home, comes back to call us home.

And the powerful thing is that I got out of it was we forget the power of the cross because we look at the world and we say that it is what it is, and we don't look really inward and look at each other or our neighbor. And the power that we have because of the cross and because of our salvation, we can change people's lives one at a time. The power of the cross in us is our salvation. And it's our job, basically mission, it should be our joy to share it with family and friends or maybe take it back home with you when you go back overseas and know that a lot of you live overseas. But it's with us until the day we die and the day that Jesus will come back and get us. But until that day is not our lives aren't, it is what it is and we're going to face those times in our life where we say it is what it is, what can I do about it? Jesus did a lot about it. He didn't take that attitude. He loved us so much, each one of us so much that he took our sins and died on the cross for us and gave us eternal life for those who believe.

And if you have not yet made that commitment yet, you need to think about it. But this is what this represents, the blood and the body that was broken on our behalf so that it wasn't our cross that we were hanging off of. Jesus did it, bore it all for us. And it's something that we should never, never take lightheartedly or ever forget and ever be thankful for. Let's go to God in prayer.

Dear heavenly Father, we're so grateful. Sometimes we forget the power of the cross and the power of sacrifice and the power that was given to Jesus to come to serve, that you gave up your Son for us and so that we can live with you someday. Matter of fact, in a way we live with you now, every day you're with us and we are so grateful for that. And someday we look forward to seeing you face to face. Help us to ever be thankful and grateful and never take it for granted. In Christ's name, Amen. (Music)

## Reading

### Jude 20-25

The reading is taken from Jude 20 to 25. And it says, "But you dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you eternal life. Be merciful to those who doubt, save others by snatching them from the fire to others show mercy mixed with fear, hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior, be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages now and forevermore. Amen." (Music)

## Sermon

Good morning, everyone. Thanks for being with us today. We have so many hymns with the theme of joy and refreshing. And in your hymn books, I just wrote down some of them that we know. Here are just a few. Some of them I forgot and some I remember singing over and over again when I was a boy and sometimes even here. And some of these would be familiar with you. "Angels from the realms of glory, angels we have heard on high, for the beauty of the earth, he has made me glad, he keeps me singing." And this song that we haven't sung for a long time and I just forgot about it. "Heavenly sunlight." How many of you remember that song? Isn't that wonderful? "I stand amazed, joyful, joyful, we adore thee." And this happy song. "Sing and be happy, to God be the glory."

And then when I was a young boy, my mother on Sunday mornings would play hymn records. And one of them was by a man by the name of Tennessee Ernie Ford. Anybody remember him? Powerful, powerful voice. And he sang this song called "Whispering Hope" and sent shivers through us. These are just some of these praise hymns. And how many of us remember, and I don't know that we've done this for quite a few years, where congregations would just come together on a Sunday evening for an evening of singing. And you could just almost float out of the church building because it was so happy and the singing of praise of God to worship. It was really, really a wonderful time. So what I want to do today is just say a few comments about joy and refreshing and the refreshment that we have from the scriptures as well.

A Gentlemen, by the name of John Bangs, I did not know this man before, and I got investigating, he wrote these words.

*Today, whatever may annoy,  
The word for me is Joy, just simple joy:  
The joy of life;  
The joy of children and of wife;  
The joy of bright, blue skies;  
The joy of rain; the glad surprise  
Of twinkling stars that shine at night;  
The joy of winged things upon their flight;  
The joy of noonday, and the tried  
True joyousness of eventide;  
The joy of labor, and of mirth;  
The joy of air, and sea, and earth—  
The countless joys that ever flow from Him  
Whose vast beneficence doth dim  
The lustrous light of day,  
And lavish gifts divine upon our way.  
—Whate'er there be of Sorrow  
—I'll put off till Tomorrow,  
And when Tomorrow comes, why then  
'Twill be Today and Joy again!*

I think as Christians we need to constantly celebrate the joy and the refreshing that we have in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and all of us together. So a very brief message today and I hope it will be positive and I hope it will be helpful.

I guess if I was to put a theme to the sermon, it would be this. Learn what happiness is and when you find it, never let it go. The happiness of God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, Jesus himself living inside us. So we're emphasizing happiness, joy and so forth. Have you ever thought, what does God look like? And have you ever thought that when you picture God that he's smiling? God the Father smiles. Most often when our children laugh, we laugh and we are God's children. So I'm confident that God laughs along with us. Scripture is overflowing with happiness. Sometimes we can get so deep into Scripture that we forget about the joy that we have in God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, Scriptures, and Christians everywhere. But it's overflowing in a very interesting Scripture in the Old Testament, specifically in Deuteronomy 24 and verse 5 written years ago. And I've never known of the Scripture. This is interesting. If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year, he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to his wife and family. Interesting Scripture.

In the book of Esther, chapter 8 and verse 16, for the Jews it was a time of happiness and joy, gladness and honor. There was gladness feasting and celebrating. And then in the book of Ecclesiastes, it says, "God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness." God gives these things to us. God gives us wisdom. God gives us knowledge. God sends to us happiness. There is a time to weep, but there's also a time to laugh. And it is precious to laugh. Do you remember, some of you, whether you're a parent or not or young siblings at home, the first time your baby smiled and the first time your baby giggled. You will never forget that. We are children of God, and God smiles along with us. When King Solomon became king, the people of Israel were numerous, and it says the people were happy. In 1 Kings 10, when the

queen of Sheba visited King Solomon, she said, "How happy your people must be. Your officials and all know the Lord." You are on the throne to maintain justice and righteousness, that God is happy to do so.

In the wonderful book of Esther, in Chapter 8, it says, "For the Jews, it was a time of happiness and joy and gladness in honor. In every province, in every city, there was gladness, joy among the people. There was feasting and celebrating." What were they celebrating? The joy of the Lord. It was a time, at least once a year, to set everything aside like we do often at Christmas, and it is to celebrate the joy that the Lord gives us. Sometimes we forget about that. Sometimes the Old Testament seems harsh, cranky. Other times, it's the opposite. There's this laughter and joy, and then there's just this peace that comes upon us and calm that God sends us. And if you can think just this week of times in your life where God is with you, and he always is, but remember that he joins with you. He's joyous with you. He's joyful for you, and we need to return in favor.

So there are many scriptures. Psalm 63, "May the righteous praise you, O God. May all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy." In this world today, it's not so easy. Where we are here in Canada, it is easy. We are so grateful for the goodness and the love and the joy that we can have with one another. Yes, sometimes life can be excruciating, but oftentimes life is wonderful. You're never alone, never for a moment. Even when you're sleeping, you're not alone. "I am always with you," is a reminder that Jesus said. And not only this, God's love is enduring. It is forever. In Psalm 136, it's repeated over and over and over again. The praise is there 26 different times. Proverbs 15, 13, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful, the joy of it all."

Then in Ecclesiastes, he says this, "I know there is nothing better than to be happy and to do good while we live, that we share this joy with one another." In chapter 12 and 9, "Be happy while you are young and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth." And may I also say, those of us who are middle-aged and older, that joy should be with us always. And if you're having a bad day, think of the joyous times you've had in your life, the wonderful times that you've had in your life. I was thinking about that this week, personal stories and so forth. But for some reason in my mind, and I believe it was the Holy Spirit, it was God whispering, "Do you remember when you were baptized?" Oh yeah. Do you remember much about it? Every second of it. Because it was a time of, "I'm connecting with God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit." You mean when you go into the water, come up out of the water, that made you feel wonderful? Oh, incredible. Well, it's just water. Yeah? But you're signifying that as Jesus lived, died, was buried and rose again, so are we. It's a symbol of the washing of the love, the goodness, the grace of God. Never forget that for a moment, that preciousness where you and Jesus and God and the Holy Spirit have connected. And you do that every time you talk to them. God hears us every minute of the day. And so we need to be happy. And so in Proverbs 15 it says, "A happy heart makes the face cheerful."

It must be a very sad situation when Christians can be so, so angry and sad and come to church and say, "Well, that's my duty." Well, no. It's an opportunity to share with God Himself. So in Ecclesiastes, He says, "I know there is nothing better than to be happy and to do good while we live." In Chapter 12, it says, "Be happy while you are young and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth." And when we get older, we can say, "I remember those times. I can bring them back. I can be happy in the Lord." And I know that one of these days we will see Him face to face and our loved ones and those who have helped us, taught us over the years, over and over again. So the sermon today is more just of

somewhat nostalgia, but also the importance of realizing the joy that we have, the refreshing that God gives us by the Holy Spirit. Listen to what this says, and James, many of us know this. If any of you is in trouble, then pray. Sing songs of praise. Sometimes that's the last thing we would do. If you're in trouble, you're going to praise. Yeah. Praise Him.

He's with us. 1 Peter, it says, "Peter celebrates the salvation and joy that we have because of Jesus," even though many Christians perished. You look in the scripture, because of Roman dictators. Peter continues to encourage us. And Peter knew that he was going to be crucified. I'm not sure he knew he was going to be crucified upside-down, but he knew he was going to be crucified. But he also knew that when he opened his eyes after his death, he would see what he's always wanted to see. The face of God the Father. The face of God's Holy Spirit. And of course, Peter knew Jesus very well. A welcoming homecoming together.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish. It can never spoil. It can never fade. Now listen to this. And it's kept in heaven for, who do you think? You. Your salvation is kept for you. Lots of people. Everyone. But for you, specifically. For me. It's remarkable. Who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed the last time? In other words, when Christ says, this is it, this is now a new heaven and a new earth. Peter says, for you know that it's not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you've been redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to us by our forefathers. But by the precious blood of Jesus, a lamb without spot and without blemish. He has chosen us before the creation of the world to be revealed in these last times. In other words, to know this, that we understand this. It's all from God to us. Through Jesus, we believe in God who raised him from the dead, glorified him. And so your faith and hope are in God. We have been born again, not of perishable things, but of imperishable. Imperishable. It can't be destroyed. It won't perish. It's imperishable through the living and enduring word of God. So. This morning. If you ever feel, maybe you do this morning, that you just don't measure up. Please hear the word of the Lord. Here's what it said. But you. That's us. But you. You are a chosen people. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. You are a people belonging to God so that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. He comes to you in wonderful light.

And then at first John, he writes, how great is the love that the heavenly Father has lavished upon us that we should be called Children of God. And that is what we are. Children of God. It's wonderful. And then in first John. He says, how great is the love the Father has? And I always want to say it this way. Lathered upon us. I remember so well and many of you parents can remember this when you're washing your baby. One, maybe two years old and you have soap all over them and bubbles all over them. And you look at and say, this is my precious child covered in soap and bubbles and they're laughing and enjoying themselves so much. Take them out of the bathtub, put towel around them, wrap them, put your arms around them. That baby wraps their arms around your mommy or daddy. Even though there might be soap in their hair and everything else doesn't make any difference. There's this lathering, lavishing love that God gives to each and every one of us. I thought about that a lot this week. Just because I'm getting older. But that same love hasn't changed.

Do you remember lathering your baby with bubbles? Even if you're getting older, God lathers us with bubbles too. Spiritually. He is with us every second of the day. And so it's remarkable what John says.

How great is the love the father has lavished upon us that we should be called. We are God's children. And then in this little book, second John, he says, I'm not writing to you something that's brand new that you haven't heard. But this is the command that you walk in love. If the father lavishes his love upon us, then we need to walk in that love. And then in the very brief book called Jude, not Judas, Jude, he says this, but you remember this is for us. But you dear friends, build yourself up in your most holy faith. Listen now. Keep yourself in God's love. Keep it there. Keep yourself in the love of God. God loves us. Keep yourself in God's love. As you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. Just think of the day that you will see God's face. And I'm sure his arms will wrap himself all around us.

And so now in conclusion, these words spoken by John, because he saw something. He saw the future. He saw our future. He saw what will be our reality. I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count. Too many. They were from every nation, every tribe, every people and language standing before the throne of God and in front of the lamb, meaning Jesus. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands, meaning peace. And they cried out in a loud voice, salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb, Jesus. All the angels were standing around the throne and the four living creatures were there and the four living creatures fell down on their faces before the throne of God. And they spoke to God saying these words. Amen. Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength. Be to our God forever and forever. If you're having a bad day, a bad week, a bad month, a bad year, a bad life. Remember God's arms are around us. He celebrates with us the joy he gives us because of his love for each one of us. I guess maybe all of us this week, just think about the love that God has for us and share that with others. Amen. [Music]

## Closing

I'm not going to lead the song. For time we've decided to cut the song. Just a couple of things. I want to bring you a reminder that you need to keep praying for the people who are mentioned in the bulletin, some of whom have physical needs, some of them who have spiritual needs. Keep them in your prayers. And if you want to see happiness personified, Lee came in after we spoke. So if you see him out there at the end, wish him a happy birthday. And even more exciting, I got something slipped to me in purple ink. I don't know the significance of that, but Janet, who's here with Gloria, brought treats because she is a proud grandma of a grandson who was born one month ago today. So they're at the Welcome Center. [Applause] And celebrate with her. All right. To finish off, if you'd like to stand, I'm going to read the 113th Psalm as our closing prayer.

Praise the Lord who's exalted over all the nations. His glory above the heavens, who is like the Lord our God, the one who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth. He raises the poor from the dust and list the needy from the ash heap. He seats them with princes with the princes of his people. He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the Lord. So should it be with us. Amen.

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