

Our Joy In The Lord.

Text: Mark 2:18-20

Suggested Hymns:

97, 184, 452, 169

1) In What Our Joy In The Lord Consists

2) How Our Joy In The Lord Is Obtained

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Mark 2:18-22, ¹⁸ *The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"*

¹⁹ *And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. ²⁰ "But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.*

²¹ *"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. ²² "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins." (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is the Third Sunday after Easter. It is Jubilate Sunday, which means joy.

Listen to Psalm 23, ¹ *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.*

This Psalm gives expression to the Christian's holy joy in his Lord and Shepherd. There he sings the praises of Jesus who provides all that he needs for body and soul. Green pastures, still - refreshing waters, sweet - soul-restoring comfort, guidance and protection in times of great dangers.

And this joy continues, even though fearful storms may sweep down and mighty enemies threaten to attack him. Even in the shadow of death this joy is not destroyed. On the contrary, it is this joy in the Lord that enables him to bear up and carry on under all circumstances.

Therefore he concludes his song with the triumphant conviction: ***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.***

It is sad that Christians so often forget and fail to appreciate the joy in the Lord! Some Christians are more inclined to think of their sorrows and to complain of their hardships, and thus they make their burdens heavier and more difficult to bear.

So look up to your Lord. Study what Scripture says about His person and office. Today our text tells us how to have *Joy in the Lord*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. In What Our Joy In The Lord Consists

Our text begins, ¹⁸ ***The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"*** Fasting means abstaining from taking food for a certain time and, rightly understood, it is expressive of sorrow or sadness, and repentance.

However, the Pharisees understood it to be an act of worship whereby they would merit God's favour. And the disciples of John seem to have accepted this erroneous idea. They do not enjoy Jesus. There is criticism, contempt, and no joy in the Lord.

Jesus' answers ***"Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast.*** Jesus uses a striking illustration. A wedding-feast. There is joy,

happiness, and gladness at a wedding. There is no sorrow, and there is no sadness. Everybody is happy.

Jesus is the Bridegroom. Imagine the joy of the disciples when they saw His wonderful miracles, — the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead, the stilling of the storm, — these are exhibitions of His marvellous power and wisdom.

When they heard His magnificent sermons, which were filled with sweet comfort, a strong feeling of elation must have swept through their souls. Our Lord and Master — no one else is like Him!

It is true that much of their joy was based upon earthly expectations, but that was burned away in the fire of their Master's suffering and death. Our text says, ²⁰ ***“But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.***

Jesus is the Bridegroom. We read in Hosea 2:19, ¹⁹ ***“I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy.***

In order to understand in some measure the magnitude of the Bridegroom's love and beauty, we must remember the pitiful state of the bride, the Church. She was not beautiful. She had been unfaithful. She had listened to the seducer. She had thus lost her beauty. She was utterly ruined. No hope. Before her stood death and damnation. She had become abominable in the sight of the holy Lord. She was lying in the gutter of sin and — liked it.

But now look at the wonderful loving-kindness of the Bridegroom; instead of spurning her forever, He left His heavenly glory and stepped down to her, partaking of her flesh and blood. He suffered and died for her. And with His own blood He washed away the filth and the shame and made her beautiful. He covered her shame with the beautiful robe of His righteousness.

Was there ever such a bridegroom? Yes, our glorious Saviour, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature. He has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil - not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. All this He has done that I may be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally.

That is our joy in Christ. Therefore the angel proclaimed at His birth, ***“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.”***¹

And this joy is lasting. Jesus’ disciples, later on in His service, met with the bitter hatred and cruelty of His enemies. They suffered persecutions. But in all these sufferings they had that joy in the Lord. They knew that their Master was with them, guiding their steps, shaping things for their good, and giving them strength to endure.

For was not their Lord exalted above everything, having all power in the world? They want to see Him again in His divine glory and enjoy that glory themselves.

It is the same with us. We study the life of our Redeemer in Holy Scriptures. We see Him suffer and die for us. We see Him rise triumphant from the grave, ascend to heaven, and rules the whole world.

And that is our Lord. It is for us He did all that. We are therefore safe with Him, safe in tribulations, safe in persecutions, and safe in death. That is our joy in the Lord. Do you, too, have this joy? Let me tell you how it is obtained.

2. How Our Joy In The Lord Is Obtained.

Our text says that ²¹ ***“No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse.”*** ²² ***“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.”***

An old garment is rotten, and it easily tears. If you mend an old garment with a new piece of cloth, you do a foolish thing; for such mending will not hold, and the tear is made worse.

The wine-skins mentioned in our text were made from goat-hides. New wine is strong; it ferments, and it expands. If you put such new wine into such old leather bottles, they will burst; they are too old to withstand the pressure. Therefore the rule is to put new wine into new wine-skins.

The meaning of these parables is this. The Pharisees had the notion that they could work out their own salvation. This is the pride of natural man. By keeping the Law, augmented by their own laws, they thought that they would earn God’s

favour. That was their old garment, their old wine-skins. But that garment was rotten. Our own righteousness is as filthy rags. It cannot be mended by patching it. And as long as these people remained in such a state of mind, they could not receive the new wine of the Gospel. Indeed, they refused to believe in Jesus as their Redeemer. In fact, they hated Him with a bitter hatred.

They have many followers today. *“Be good, then you will go to heaven.”* *“Be honest and upright in your dealings with your fellow-men, do your duty as you see it, be faithful to your wife,”* etc. They think that such a virtuous life is the pass to heaven. Such conduct is good before the tribunal of the state and therefore, they argue, ought to be good before the tribunal of God.

Consequently they accept some of the teachings of Christ, especially those pertaining to their conduct. Some people even may accept Jesus as a Redeemer, but only as far as their weaknesses or failings are concerned. Thus they attempt to mend their old garment with new cloth, or to put new wine into old wine-skins. But the Lord emphatically declares that that will not do. In this way joy in the Lord is not obtained.

There must be a complete change. Study God’s holy Law, the Ten Commandments and see what the Law really demands. See that perfection, that spotless holiness, that snow white purity, which ought to be yours. Then hear that threatening voice which curses with an eternal curse every one who fails in just one point² in its fulfilment.

Then if you realise your utter inability to attain such perfection and to escape that dreadful curse, then you have understood the Law properly. Then you will throw away that foolish pride, become humble, and acknowledge that you are a lost and condemned creature.

Then listen to the gladsome news of the Gospel, that God Himself has wrought perfection for you, has gained the forgiveness of your sins, freedom from that curse, and comfort your soul with the glorious truth that Jesus is your Redeemer.

Now you have obtained joy in the Lord. Now you understand the exhilarating joy of the psalmist, *“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want; ... He restores my soul.”*

Likewise the joy expressed in Psalm 103, *Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!* ² *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:* ³ *Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases,* ⁴ *Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,* ⁵ *Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

And Mary sang and rejoiced in Luke 1:46-47, *“My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.*

Nicodemus, on the other hand, thought that the old garment could be patched; but Jesus told him, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*³

Jesus continued to teach Nicodemus and us, that *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,* ¹⁵ *“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*

¹⁶ *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

Yes, Jesus certainly gives us true and lasting joy. We also know from Scripture that *whether we live or die, we are the Lord's*⁴ and this is the Christian joy that nobody can take away from us.

So let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁵

The joy of all who dwell above,
The joy of all below,
To whom He manifests His love,
And grants His name to know.

To them the cross, with all its shame,
With all its grace, is given;
Their name an everlasting name,
Their joy the joy of heaven. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Luke 2:10

² James 2:10

³ John 3:3

⁴ Romans 14:8

⁵ Hymn 169