

"The Joy Set Before Him!"

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Scripture Lesson:- St. John 15: 1-11.

Text:- St. John 15: 11. These things have I ~~spoken~~ spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

Introduction:- A deeper gladness has flooded the whole range of human experience since Jesus lived and died. We have a new joy in nature. The lilies which whiten the hillsides in the spring of the year wear a spotless bloom; the sparrows in the eaves have a higher value. The face of man shines with a purer loveliness since Jesus came. We have an intenser joy in life, and our common toil has a new sanctity since Jesus toiled. The delights of love and home and friendship have been purified. Grief has worn a more placid face. Sin and death have been robbed of their power. Jesus became the Man of Sorrows that He might increase our joy.

But the joy Jesus came to give is the joy of the spirit. The joys of the spirit are to be entered with a complete abandonment. "There is a spiritual joy!" A joy of service. Then there is joy that comes to those whose names are written in heaven. They joy of the redeemed. The joy of the acceptance of the will of God. And then there is the joy about which Jesus was silent. "Who for the joy that was set before him endures the cross!" That is the joy Christ desired.

I.

We need not wonder at the exuberant joy of the disciples. To see men possessed with evil spirits and held under the domination of the foul and evil MOTIVES, brought back to self-control and sweet sanity, might well elate their hearts. You have known some measure of joy. A little child has had his young heart set on Jesus, and in some solemn hour of appeal, has yielded to him. A face of some young maiden, blotted by tears of shame, has been lightened, because you have brought comfort and the strength of some message of God. A young man's eyes have gleamed with faith because of a word of Christ's you have spoken to him. A drunkard has been redeemed from his vice, and walks in stead-

fast sobriety through the wrestling of your prayer and devotion. Yes, you have known the joy of service, in the Lord's name? *Have you?*

II.

Then there is the joy Jesus commended, the joy of the redeemed. "Rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven." There is a secular cant which cries that any care for the salvation of one's own soul, or any joy in it, is selfishness. Then there is the religious cant which says that a man should be so busy caring for other men's souls, that he has no time, or need no need, to care for his own soul. But surely, a man's moral and spiritual well-being should be his first concern. A man has no right to trouble himself about keeping his neighbors door-step clean, unless he has first cleansed his own. When a man knows all that redemption is, and all that it may mean, when he feels its healing and uplifting power, when he realized that all is due to the will of God, he will humbly rejoice that his name is written in heaven. *Is your name written in Heaven*

But what is to have one's name written in heaven? The joy of having your names written in heaven, is really a nobler joy than the joy of service. What were you? One of you had a past that you can thank God that those that know you best shall never know. Another has felt the sweep and scourge of a sordid temptation, and was swept away in its flood. Another has felt the tyranny of an overmastering evil habit. Another has felt the impotence of his will, and has become a mere drifter in life. But some great word was spoken to you, "Thy sins which were many, are forgiven you." "There is now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Then you looked up and you saw God writing your name in heaven among the redeemed. Was was your joy in service, in any gift or word or deed, compared to your joy in that redemption. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Most men become true in the hour of death.

Then, if God grant the clear mind, they see, as Jesus saw, how petty and how full of peril is the joy of casting our devils, and how meek and lowly the joy of having one's name written in heaven.

III.

Thirdly, there is the joy Jesus indulged, the joy of acceptance of the will of God. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit!" It is clear that Christ has been perplexed and disappointed at the reception of his message. The proud cities by the lake had not repented, although they had seen his mighty works. The Pharisees has made fun of him. The Sadducees has met him with undisguised hate. No rabbi has joined his company. No scribe sat at his feet. A few fishermen, a tax-gatherer, a political insurrectionist, men so humble that their names are unrecorded, and women who lived in simple villages and lived simple lives, made up his company. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble." God had hidden His grace from the wise and prudent, and revealed it unto babes. He was at first bewildered, disappointed, saddened. But, "in that hour, as He saw these men's hearts aflame with spiritual desire, and as he realized his Father's infinite wisdom in giving Him, not the proud and crafty scribe, but honest, child-like men. He accepted the will of God with a deep joy. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!"

This was the joy which Jesus indulged in every great hour of His earthly experience. Again and again, in the course of His ministry, He entered into this joy. And when some one faces a stern duty, or takes up a heavy burden, and bears it in silence, or when some one surrenders some cherished hope, and steps out into some cheerless future, they all drink of Christ's cup of joy.

Do you accept the will of God?

IV.

Lastly, there is the joy Jesus desired. "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross." This is the joy about which Jesus was silent. Radiant as His face was on the Mount of Transfiguration, and with the heavenly beauty on it as he ministered in the upper room, His disciples never saw the still more wonderful glory of the

joy Christ desired, and attained. Perhaps when John the divine saw the face with eyes as a flame of fire, shining as the sun in its strength, it may have been the fulness of the joy of Christ. But among men, Christ was silent about it. He was as one who saw the land of his desire across a dangerous strait, he had yet to pass. He kept it as the secret passion of His heart and did not whisper it to His own. What was this joy he so much desired? What was the joy that would consummate his gladness? It is the joy of the resumed fellowship of God, of the unhindered access to His presence, of the reentering into His glory. It was more. It was the joy of seeing men and women He loved redeemed by His cross. It is the joy of having finished the work God gave him to do, and of waiting the results of it all.

When David Livingstone made his journey into Africa, he had his days of despair. When he saw Africa's open sore, the slave trade, and remembered the apathy of his own countrymen, he sank into hours of discouragement. But ever, and again, he had visions of Africa redeemed. He heard its wide distances jubilant with song, the song of praise to Christ. He saw its people, clothed, ~~sitting~~ sitting at the feet of Jesus. He saw its little ~~and~~ children lifting their young hearts in prayer to their redeemer. For the joy that was set before him, he endured his cross, despising his shame.

The joy Christ desired, is the joy that Christ has attained.

My fellow Christian, my sinner friend, during this Holy Week, we again are face to face with the Christ. What shall we do with Jesus. Shall we as Christians, not render him the joy of service; shall we not rejoice in the fact that our names are written in heaven? And then shall we not rejoice in accepting the will of God. I am wondering whether we will do these things. And you, it was that Christ died upon the cross, my sinner friend, just what are you going to do with who gave his life for thee? I invite you, my friend, to seek him while he may be found and to call upon him while he is near. It may not always be so easy, it may not always be so natural a way to seek the Lord. Come, while we sing.

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