When Jesus Rejoiced…and its monumental effects

“In that same hour, He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit…”

Introduction: Each week we gather here to worship God in Jesus Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. We talk and laugh with each other, catch up, sing, and hear someone teach through God's Word. In this, you inevitably draw some preferences, opinions, observations, and even evaluations. But have you ever wondered what a preacher thinks on Sunday’s?

Listen to what one "Honest Preacher" said when he gave his opinion, observations, and evaluations:

Satire is not only a great way to enjoy the gift of laughter (Prov. 15:13), but also gives commentary and evaluation. I laughed heartily at this for a couple of reasons: 1) This could be a way to cut down on preaching time - short, sweet, to the point. 2) The frustration is real - this IS how we feel sometimes, especially when we are too self-focused. 3) What Dan experienced is what everyone fears will happen to them. It also struck at a nerve in what people think of the experience at a church - "don't be bad, be good", "you're making me look bad in front of God", "oh, what did Jesus say - STOP IT". This subtle, or not so subtle, message is what so many think the message of the Bible is, or what religion is, or what it means to be saved. In this, we are dreadfully and miserably wrong.

Last week we looked at principles of Jesus sending out his followers to prepare cities for Jesus' arrival. In similar ways, we are commissioned to call people to the King and teach them what it looks like to follow Him. We also saw that Jesus condemned the religious Jews of His day, who followed the Law, prayed to God, participated in worship, went to Synagogue, but ultimately rejected Jesus, refusing to repent of their sin. In this, Jesus said it would have gone better for cities like Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon (who where epitomes of wickedness) than for these Galilean cities. This should sober us. We live in a culture that is religious, that has access to Jesus, and has heard the message of the gospel. But we also live in a day that defaults to moralism (or to take it a step further, therapeutic moralistic deism - we believe there is a God, He's there to make us feel better or be happy, and He wants us to be good). Moralism means there is a code of right and wrong, a desire to do good, and actions that accompany. Here is the problem with it:

- **Moralism cannot save** - Charles Spurgeon wrote "Morality may keep you out of jail, but it takes the blood of Jesus to keep you out of hell. Good works, in any quantity, cannot cancel out the debt that our sin piled up. Morality focuses on our work, not Christ.

- **Moralism is self-deceptive** - Looking at our own works keeps us away from knowing Jesus (Matt. 7:21-23), keeps us from confessing our sin (1 John 1:5-10), and only could contribute to our dead state (Eph. 2:1-3).

- **Moralism cannot bring joy** - Morality wants salvation, and maybe even God, but fails to treasure Jesus. When Jesus is not loved and treasured, we cannot have the joy that ONLY comes from Him. Morality, then, ultimately leaves us burdened, weary, tired, never having the peace that comes from knowledge of salvation, and wondering if we did enough.

Salvation is not ultimately about us. It is a much bigger story. Salvation is the central echo of redemptive history, the song that will resound in heaven (Rev. 5:9, 15:3), and the driving force behind Jesus' entrance into this world. From before the world began, God planned that there would be a seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15-16) that would produce One who would crush the serpent and redeem His
people. We must secure a much higher, broader, and deeper view of our salvation, because it in our salvation that Jesus Himself rejoiced. When we have this understanding, we will properly **rejoice, boast, and find rest** for our weary souls.

**Because Jesus Rejoiced, We Can Rejoice**

*Luke 10:21-24* In that same hour he **rejoiced** in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

As the 72 returned, you'll notice that they returned in joy, but it also elicited a peculiar response from Jesus. I do not believe that it was strange because Jesus never emoted joy, but it is interesting that this is the only time the Bible records Jesus rejoicing. The only other time He expressed gladness was in *John 11:15*, where it records that Jesus was glad He was not there to save Lazarus from dying, so that they may believe. In both instances, Jesus' gladness and joy had to do with the gift of belief and salvation of those He made His own. Salvation for Jesus is not a secondary priority or side note, but a primary focus and means of joy.

Notice here that the whole of the trinity is involved in rejoicing: Jesus rejoices at the work of the Father, the Spirit was guiding and leading Jesus to rejoice, and the Father acted according to His good pleasure, or what was well pleasing in His sight (a better translation than gracious will). The entire Godhead rejoiced in the fact that their children who were called were responding to the Son through repentance, allowing them to see and know the Father. What drives God to rejoice in this? We must understand a bigger picture of the way God interacts with Himself and creation.

**God acts in sovereign freedom**

- **God is and always has been an exhuberantly happy God** - He has never been lonely but has been perfectly happy in the love of His Son (John 17:5).

- **God is not constrained by any deficiency or unhappiness to do anything He does not want to do** (Acts 17:25) - In other words, God is not a reactive God, making decisions against His will or against His pleasure.

- **God acts according to His good pleasure in all that He does** - "**Whatever the LORD pleaseth, He does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps.**" (Psalm 135:6; cf. Ps. 115:1-3; Isa 46:9-10).

- **God acts, then, out of the overflow of joy in His self-sufficiency** - All His acts are an expression of the joy of His boundless pleasure in all He does. No one forces Him to act, so He acts out of His sovereign freedom, to create the world, not because He lacked anything, but because He desired to share His joy with us.

**God takes pleasure in His Son**

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1 John Piper, "The Pleasures of God", p. 50.
The Son is the perfect imprint of the Father - (Hebrews 1:1-3) - When the Father looks at the Son, it’s like looking into a divine mirror that radiates His glory. He delights in the Son because in seeing the Son, one can see the Father (2 Cor. 4:6).

The Father took pleasure in crushing His Son - (Isaiah 53:10) - The Father was equally committed to upholding His glory and redeeming mankind to Himself, so He was not ONLY willing to crush His Son, it brought Him pleasure to do so. "Yet is was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand."

The Son went to the cross with joy to please the Father - Hebrews 12:1-2 - "who for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." He did it to uphold the perfect will of the Father (Luke 22:42), and in Him the Father was well pleased (Matt. 3:17). No one took Jesus’ life, but He freely lays it down for His sheep (John 10:17-18), because they were given to Him by the Father, and He gives them eternal life (John 10:27-30), because the Father and the Son are One.

God takes pleasure in redeeming mankind
Romans 3:23-26 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

This is all good news and necessary because the nature of the gospel is that God acquits the guilty. If there were a justice department anywhere in the world that knowingly let guilty criminals walk free, the world would come together in opposition with full force. Yet this is exactly what God does. Because He is radically committed to His own pleasure and will, it means He upholds His righteousness and pours out His wrath on sin. But His commitment in love to those He saves means He is equally relentless in making a way back to Him. That path was making His Son a propitiation, or one that satisfies or averts His wrath. This God did for His good pleasure, not guilt laden reaction. God justifies, or declares righteous, guilty sinners who CANNOT DO GOOD, but are made righteous through the blood of Christ alone.

“This is an unspeakably wonderful truth. The foundation of our justification --- our acquittal, our forgiveness --- is not a flimsy sentimentality in God, nor is it a shallow claim of human worth. It is the massive rock of God’s unswerving commitment to uphold the worth of His own glory, to promote his praise of His holy name and to vindicate His righteousness. The God-centeredness of God is the foundation of His grace to the ungodly. If God were not committed first to vindicate the worth of His own glory, there would be no gospel and no hope, for there would be no glorious God.”

We rejoice that our name is written in heaven
So we rejoice, not in our worth or work, but in the worth and work of Christ. We rejoice that our names are written in heaven because we will be with Christ, in the presence of His glory, rejoicing in Him forever.

We rejoice that our salvation was not cheap. It is the focal point of redemptive history, and we not only have value but security in it.

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2 John Piper, “The Pleasures of God.” p. 169. I would highly recommend this book as it explores God’s pleasure in being God as the foundation for our joy.
We rejoice because we have access (finally) to God in Christ and thus have access to living waters (John 7:38) that will satisfy our deepest thirst and greatest longings.

We rejoice because our obedience (which looks like morality) driven by the Spirit and our freedom from sin leads us to joyful dependence on a sovereign God, in whose presence is the fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11).

Because Jesus Rejoiced, We Can Boast

1 Corinthians 1:26-31 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

God rejoices in confounding the proud

Jesus rejoiced that God did not reveal Himself to the wise and understanding, but to children. He not only revealed, but He hid himself from the wise and understanding. The wise in this context were those who trusted their own righteousness and work. They thought they had it figured out and did not need to repent, and definitely did not need Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Paul speaks extensively as to God's strategy. He chose the foolish, little, nothing, and insignificant things that repulses the wolves. There is one overwhelming reason for this: the human drift is to trust self, and thusly boast in our own abilities, putting ourselves in the place that only God deserves. We are all prone to this pride, even as it is spun in so many different expressions. He shames the wise because they wise are too smart for their own britches.

God rejoices in saving the weak

He brings shame by revealing the truth to those who have no business responding. Jesus said that it was revealed to little children, to infants. Paul said it is given to the weak, low, despised, and things that are not. Each of these have to same commonality: they had nothing to offer, no wisdom or understanding, no morality to offer, but were simply dependant on the one calling. This places all the emphasis and glory on God alone, and He does not share it with anyone. Salvation was not a joint venture. We responded in faith, and even that was a response to grace.

NOTE: Children are simple but not simplistic. We come to Christ in weakness, but we grow in our love and affection for God. I saw pictures of Johnny French this week sleeping with baby Julia on his chest. (This is the real payoff for a parent, having a child totally dependent on you cling to you because you care for them). An infant is totally dependant and willing to yield. As that child grows, they begin to see the imperfections of the parent, but the love they have also grows and changes. My 9 year old daughter likes to sit and cuddle with me still, and though her legs and elbows dig in and hang off, she still draws in because of love. As we grow, we continue to draw closer to God as we grow in our love for Him. Our love for Christ should grow, and this is one of the greatest evaluations as to whether we are a moralist or yielded in faith through the gospel.

Our joy is in boasting in the Lord alone

Jeremiah 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this,
that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. **For in these things I delight,** declares the LORD.  

God delights in displaying His grace, love, justice, and righteousness in saving the guilty and wicked. He gives all of this to those who show His glory, and to turn enemies into worshippers. That is what our boast in. The gospel leaves us with a boastful heart, but that boast is in the work of God alone, the mercy Jesus and drawing of the Spirit. Morality is focused on self, while the gospel puts self in a proper position to yield to the loving wisdom of God. If it seems harsh that God keeps this information from the self-sufficient, Matthew addresses it in His gospel.

**Because Jesus Rejoiced, We Can Rest**

**Matthew 11:28-30** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you **rest.**  

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find **rest** for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

**Rest is given to those who are tired**

The moral man can never find satisfaction because everything is banked on a fallible man (self) to find a fix to the eternal problems of our soul. What Jesus offers is **rest, rest** for a weary soul that is tired from striving to find salvation and joy apart from God. We have seen this over and over, especially when young people leave the faith in which they were raised, in the church or school. They discover there are other philosophies, religions, and teachings in the world, and believe that they are wise enough to find the right one, or at least one that works for them. Pride is elevated when they find temporary satisfaction in a relationship or a group of "friends" that give them little to no push back on anything they venture into (see, these are loving relationship), but then get bogged down into real life. Instead of returning, they plunge deeper in trying to find answers (save the planet, cut down on carbon foot print, join a cause) through **doing** something significant. This pursuit never satisfies, and often leads to a harder heart. It is to this group and every other that Jesus offers rest, real, spiritual, eternal, confident, continual, joyful, and unending rest.

**Rest is given to the lowly of heart**

Jesus offered us to come to Him because He was lowly of heart, gentle, and His yoke is easy and burden in light. In other words, He has done all the work on the cross to satisfy God's wrath, and we can come under His care. But the requirement is clear: we must be lowly of heart, humble, broken, and contrite. The missing word for Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin was clear: **they lacked repentance** (Matt. 11:20; Luke 10:13). Repentance moves trust in morality to confession of sin, a turning from it, and a following of Christ as the source of all joy. When we repent, we believe and are given Christ's righteousness, allowing us to **become righteous,** and now obey **because** we are new, not to try to make ourselves new. **Repentance is the key to the gospel, and the gateway to joy.** Without repentance, we are simply trying to be good people, outdoing each other in action on our way to hell.

**Rest is given by One who takes our burden**

So Jesus says **Come to me** (the only better call was John 21:12 - **Come and have breakfast** - now that would get people to follow). He opens up His arms to the weak, the lowly, the desperate, and offers so much more than forgiveness, He offers Himself. We come to Him in joy, and He delights in saving us. He gave everything up for us, and holds us in His big old hands (John 10:29). Jesus took our burden on Himself, and actually **wants us.** But we must remember that this type of love is unconditional in the sense that we cannot gain or earn it, but is given to those who repent of their sin. God upholds His glory.
by redeeming sin AND pouring out His wrath on sin. He is so committed to this that He was willing to kill His Son instead of playing favorites.

So I ask this morning: Have you come here this morning thinking that we are simply trying to be good? That people are watching, and we hope desperately that no one finds out that we are bad. Or have we come to revel in the joy that we have in Christ, the fact that we are lowly, childlike, and desperate, and God so loved us that all of creation and redemptive history pointed to our salvation. That when God saved us, He rejoiced, because it flew in the face of human wisdom? That is why we worship today, that motivates us for tomorrow, and this is so much more than just being good.

Concluding Questions:

- Are you lacking joy in your life in Christ and corporate worship experience? What would you diagnose as the reason for a lack of joy? How do we regain the joy of our salvation (*hint* - see what David discovered in Psalm 51)
- How do we combat our drift toward *therapeutic moralistic deism*? How do we help those who are focused on their own morality for salvation? What have you seen in the attitude, life, and passion of someone focused on their own morality?
- What do you think this church would look if we drifted from the gospel toward moralism?
- If Jesus rejoiced at the granting of salvation, what should that inform us as to the importance of joy and the emphasis on salvation? Both in evangelism (the salvation of others), and *worship* (our response to our salvation)
- What confidence do we gain in our salvation when we realize how much God was committed to it, even to the point of Jesus' death? *What do we gain from this confidence?*