

## **Message: “The Care & Keeping of Joy”, Week 3 of “The Christmas Payoff” series on 12-11-2016**

**Presented by Rev. Kristen Lowe at  
Crossroads United Methodist Church, Waunakee, WI.**

“There is more joy in Jesus in 24 hours than there is in the world in 365 days. I have tried them both.” R. A. Torrey

**Answer:** James 1:2-4 says, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” This is the very first thing James writes in his letter after his salutation. Why? Because of its import. Many Christians think once they’ve made that decision for Christ that everything will fall into place and life will be that proverbial bowl of cherries. And when trials and tough times come upon them or continue, they begin to question, “why?” Wondering how they could possibly endure horrible circumstances and consider it joy.

It’s true. Trials make us stronger.

Tree story

This tells us that strength is a blessing, but how can we find joy in the midst of all the junk, hardships, and painful circumstances?

First, we need to understand that joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness comes and goes sometimes as often as waves hitting the shore. Happiness isn’t something you can cling to when you’ve lost a loved one or are facing bankruptcy. Joy, on the other hand can stay with you for the long haul.

Because... real joy is from God. For the believer, it is like a bottomless well of water—always an abundant supply. Even in the darkest days, when sadness, grief, and loss may threaten to overwhelm you, God’s joy is there.

Second, we need to understand that God’s joy cannot be taken away. Oh, you might think that it’s gone—that the hands of misfortune have snatched it from you—but it’s not. As believers, we are promised the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. We are promised His joy. Just as our salvation is assured through Jesus’ one-time sacrifice for all. Jesus’ words in John 15:11, “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be

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complete.” Other examples, Acts 13:52, “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” Acts 16:34, “The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole family.”

Third, we need to stop wallowing, whining, and complaining and grab onto God’s joy. Just like salvation, joy is a free and perfect gift from Him, and we must reach out and accept that gift. Grab onto it. Like a lifeline. Choose joy. Over bitterness, anger, and sorrow. Make a decision to choose joy every day. “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

All through Scripture we see the persecution of the church, the trials and hardships that believers have faced. The challenge then is to truly learn how to consider each trial joy.

I know a woman who has something negative to say every time I see her.

This topic is very near and dear to my heart because it is a lesson I’m relearning each and every day.