

We begin our 4th year together, 3 are completed. Thank You!

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. nasb*

Our topic this morning is joy.

Blaise Pascal said "All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves."

Thomas Jefferson said; "We hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable; that all men are created equal & independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent & inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; ..."

John Piper said; "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."

Pascal gets at the roots of the issue. The deep seated desire to thrive, to

experience a sense of well being is the motivator that drives every man. The motivation is the same for the one that goes to war and the one who stays home. Both are driven by happiness. Wellbeing. Thriving.

Even the man who hangs himself believes that he will be happier . . . dead.

And that leads to a discussion of the depths of distress we will go through to be . . . happy.

We watch this show about people who go to Nome Alaska to dredge gold out of the ocean. Nome Alaska is more desolate than Tonopah. A bunch of desolate huts gathered in one place and the chief daily task is not to freeze to death.

And these hardy folks will put up with living somewhere with nothing to cause any joy, constant wind, bitter cold, survival always the first order of business, and then they'll put a wet suit on that has to have hot water pumped through it constantly so you don't die of hypothermia in about 3 minutes in the cold water, and they work for hours and hours in grave danger, and at the end of the day in most of the cases, they could make more money working at the drive up window at McDonalds.

We put up with ridiculous deprivations, driven by happiness. Those folks believe that having some gold will make them happy.

People jump out of airplanes, race cars on figure 8 race tracks which has odds similar to spinning a revolver and pointing it at your head, climb mount Everest, swim the english channel with the sharks, . . . you name it.

I hear some people in their sixties still roll around on the ground underneath ancient cars that are completely impractical with oil dripping in their face and hair, hours on end. For what??

Or consider the folks who get up, on their days off, in the darkness and biting wind and cold and walk with a heavy back pack out to some perch and sit there and shiver while they set up . . . cameras. To make a

picture they think no one else will have . . . although thanks to the internet we find out, everyone has a better one.

We deprive ourselves and torture ourselves and take idiotic risks, all driven by the same motive. Happiness.

Paschal has it just about right. Happiness motivates every decision somewhere at the root of everything. The other two people I quoted, understanding that motivation, take that root cause truth and use it to form a basis for directing men into actions, using the motivator that is built in.

Thomas Jefferson said, let's take the motivation that's built in, and use it to form a government.

And John Piper says, let's take the motivation that's built in and discover that real happiness, real thriving, real joy is ours when we are restored to our Creator and make a connection to His pleasure.

That root motivation is there. Built into our cores, by our creator. This book we hold has much to say about joy.

Israel was captured and enslaved by the Babylonians for 70 years because of disobedience and idolatry. And when they returned to their land, Ezra, the scribe opened the book of the law of Moses and read. And scribes mingled with the people did exactly what we are doing this morning, they made the sense. They helped the people understand.

And the people, probably many of whom this was their first contact with the word of God, the reaction was weeping. God moved in their hearts and what we would call a revival, broke out, and the people were weeping. Over their sin. Then listen to what Ezra the scribe said in response.

*9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. 10*

*Then he said to them, “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, **for the joy of the LORD is your strength.**” 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for the day is holy; do not be grieved.” 12 All the people went away to eat, to drink, to send portions and to celebrate a great festival, because they understood the words which had been made known to them.*

It's OK to weep in repentance over our sin which has offended a Holy God. But that doesn't move a people forward. What did Ezra and Nehemiah and all the scribes say was the basis for strength? The joy of the Lord.

These ancient people understood the root of all motivation. With a twist. This joy that is their strength is a joy with roots in worship of the God of all joy and the God of all strength.

Proverbs 17:22 makes a simple statement that modern science has proven. They brag as if they have made a great and important discovery, but our ancient book said it all along; *22 A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones.*

Wellness is directly related to joy.

Listen to Psalm 42 where the Psalmist speaks of the depths of emotions in search of joy. In the end, he says, even though despair is present, he will wait on God, because he believes in the source of all real joy.

This is a most interesting Psalm because it speaks of all the same issues that Peter is addressing. It's almost like a parallel to 1 Peter 1:3 - 9

*Psalm 42 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

*2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

*3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say*

*unto me, Where is thy God?*

*4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*

*5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

*6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.*

*7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

*8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.*

*9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*

*10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*

*11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.*

So, we discover that joy is our root cause motivator. And we will endure deprivation, desperation, risk, almost anything in pursuit of what we believe will bring us, joy. Happiness. Wellness.

Jesus speaks directly to that motivation in 2 simple parables in Matthew 13. The Hidden Treasure, and the Pearl of Great Price.

44“*The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

45“*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, 46and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Both parables are the same. We discover some thing, in this case a one on one relationship with the creator, our sins forgiven, and that will give us more joy than anything else, and we will sell everything else, to have that one thing.

Again the motivation is joy. Happiness. Wellness. And that brings us to Peter's words to some people who were in distress. They were under the gun, so to speak.

Christians, living within the Roman Empire, in the time of Nero, were in a bad spot. They were despised. They were blamed for all of Rome's problems. They were the scapegoats for everything that was going wrong in a decadent declining Roman empire.

They were being arrested. Their property was being seized and confiscated. Some of them were going to prison. Their freedoms were diminished or removed. Their acceptance in society was gone. They were outcasts. Despised. Persecuted.

In modern time, what the jews experienced in Germany on November 9th, 1938. Kristallnacht. The night of broken glass. We shudder when we look at those images of 80 years ago. That's what some of the christians in the early 60's AD were experiencing. It's a good parallel for us to understand.

What do you say to people in distress. How do you encourage them to "hold on" for dear life? Well, you say exactly what Peter says in chapter 1 of 1st Peter.

In spite of what's going on around you, you are citizens of something

much bigger, much stronger, more potent than pusillanimous little Rome. We are citizens of another realm. Just like Jesus said, *My kingdom is not of this world.*

God chose you before the foundation of the world to be His. In the fullness of time His Holy Spirit set you apart from this world, and called you out of this world by forgiveness of sins in His risen Son, and that same Jesus ratified that covenant by the sprinkling of His blood.

You are because of these actions, born again, regenerated, made alive together with Christ and you are waiting for an inheritance of such riches, we can't even imagine them. A dwelling place in heaven, with God, for eternity, sharing His joy forever.

In this world you are despised. Spat on. Hated. The scum of the earth, but in realities beyond this realm, you are wildly rich. And those riches, unlike anything on this earth, are imperishable, and they are protected, kept for you by all the powers of heaven.

In this world, men come and take your stuff. They punish you. They imprison you. They mock you. They spit on you. They tattoo a number on you. They march you down the center of town chained together clothed in articles whose only distinction is that you have no distinction left. They put you in cattle cars. They march you to a camp. They starve you. Then they exterminate you.

All of those things are possible. We've seen it burned into silver nitrate just 2 generations ago. Some of the people Peter wrote to were experiencing something like that. But they are wildly rich. But not now. Not in this world. In the next one.

That truth, that basis, is the cause for a joy that transcends this world.

I've been reading Fox's book of martyrs. I recommend it to every christian. That and John Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress should be required reading for every christian living.

In Fox's book there is story after story after story of christians who face

death with a joy and peace and glow that transcends this world. Real stories of real christians who trod those paths and their stories are recorded to strengthen us.

So what do you say to people who are up against it? Listen again to the apostle, Peter.

*1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,*

*To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

*6 In **this** you greatly rejoice,*

In what? What does the pronoun *this* reference back to. Rejoice is the subject. Joy is the subject, but what is the basis for that joy. Why are we rejoicing?

Exactly what we spoke of in our lengthy introduction. Their joy is

based in their position, their possession. Their joy is based in another world, and thus it transcends this world. Election. Salvation. Position. Inheritance. We possess God and God possesses us. No one can take that away. Those truths transcend anything this world can throw at us, and that is the basis for rejoicing.

When I was a new christian I wrote in the flyleaf of my bible; "If my joy is based in things, and somebody takes my things away from me, my joy will be gone. But if my joy is based in having God, no one can take that away from me."

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

Why does God allow trials? Why doesn't he just save people and they live happily ever after? Easy peasy. Accept Jesus and life will be like a Hallmark movie.

The answer is in this verse. Trouble proves that our faith is real. Trials prove that our faith transcends the trouble.

The world looks at us. They aren't impressed with fog machines and light shows and rock and roll music that is an imitation of them, except not as good. Rock n roll wannabe's. That doesn't impress the world. In the end, that makes christians sort of pathetic.

The world is impressed when they see real christians under pressure who draw on a faith and a joy that transcends this place. Transcendent faith and transcendent joy are what this world is watching us to see.

Some of you in this room...the possibility is mathematically viable, might drop away if pressure came. Some of you would be gone. Look again with me to the parables in Matthew 13. The words of Jesus.

*3And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold,*

*the sower went out to sow; 4and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. 5“Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6“But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. 7“Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. 8“And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. 9“He who has ears, let him hear.”*

*18“Hear then the parable of the sower. 19“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. 20“The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 23“And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”*

Evangelical christians in America think any response to anything about Jesus is proof of eternal security and gleefully tell their "converts" this is so.

But Jesus speaks of two cases where the seed is germinated and a viable plant from the seed occurs. Evangelical easy believism says those folks are christians whether they remain, or not. They are secure.

How many funerals have you been to where some guy has died of a drug overdose and people are standing around saying, but he's in heaven. He hadn't been to church for 20 years but I remember the day when he went forward.

It was after his wife left him. He came to church for, like 6 weeks and one morning he went forward and prayed with the pastor, so we know he's in heaven.

How does that square with what Jesus says here? 20“*The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. 22“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

And John says in his epistle, 1 Jn 2:19 *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.*

Trials. Pressure. Cost. Distress. Peter says, the pressure, the trials are proving your faith.

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

Did you know Gold is perishable. It's the most imperishable thing on this earth, and thus the most valuable, but in reality, it's just molecular structures that can and will perish. With this world.

It's so common in heaven they pave with it. Peter says your faith is of more value than gold. Gold will perish, faith endures.

The world is watching. They aren't impressed with rock star wannabe christians. The world wants to see something real. Something that transcends here. And when it does, when that happens . . . when faith endures all of the pressure, God is glorified. See it there in vs. 7

*faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ*

Even if the world doesn't notice now, the world will notice when Jesus returns, with His saints who have endured every trial, and the faith that caused that will be glory to our God. Our trials and tribulations glorify God, when we seize a faith, not of this world, and make it through, with joy.

*and though you have not seen Him, you love Him,*

Every time I have ever read this, my mind goes immediately to the story of doubting Thomas, and I choose to believe that occurrence and the resulting words of Jesus were fresh in Peter's mind when he wrote these words.

*From John 20; 24 Now Thomas called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."*

*But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands, and put my finger where the nails have been, and put my hand into His side, I will never believe."*

*26 Eight days later, His disciples were once again inside with the doors locked, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then Jesus said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and look at My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe."*

*28 Thomas replied, "My Lord and my God!"*

*29 Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed."*

Peter got to see Him. After He was dead. Buried. Risen from the dead.

Peter is a faithful witness of those truths.

We don't. Our first view of Jesus will either be when we meet Him in the air when He comes for His church, or it will be in our death. Absent from the body, present with the Lord.

We wait for that day.

*8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls*

We don't see Him. But we know Him. He lives inside our hearts. He is a presence with us. And we love Him.

These truths are foundational to our joy. We are elect. We are separated out of this world by the Holy Spirit. We are quickened from the dead and made alive together with Jesus. We are indwelt with His Spirit. We have a faith that is more precious to us than gold or anything else this world can offer.

Therefore, no matter what comes, that relationship, that basis for real transcendent joy, is more precious to us than anything this world can take away from us.

Let me end our thoughts this morning with a letter. Jesus wrote the letter. It's addressed to a church not far from the ones Peter mentions in his preamble. The message of the letter is self evident. There are no difficult words to understand. Face value. Precious.

*8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:  
The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:*

*9 "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 "Do not fear what you are about to suffer.*

*Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'*

Oh, Father, make us rich, like these. I pray that every person in my hearing will be rich with treasure that transcends this world. Treasure that is true treasure. An inheritance in heaven.