JOY

Well we need to remember that GOD is for your JOY.

Isaiah 54

See here Isaiah throughout this chapter find joy in the most unlikely places and in this text he finds 3 scenes of intense human sorrow. Here today you may identify with one of these.

First we have the Barren woman

Isaiah 54:1 Sing o Barren one, who did not bear break forth into singing and cry aloud you who have not been in labor!

This can be a great pain and sensitivity and even in the ancient world, family was the key to survival, land was vital in these days and if you had land you needed people to work the land, so having lots of children to work with you on the land, so in that time the barren woman would be poor and desolate.

Second one: Isaiah 54:6 For the Lord has called like a wife deserted and grieved in spirit.

A wife deserted. A wife who married young and was rejected, someone told you that he loved you, and swiftly, you saw he didn’t keep interest in you
Isaiah 54:11 O afflicted one storm tossed and not comforted…

He talks about the afflicted city, ravaged by storms, and we know with Hurricanes and earthquakes, the energy needed to rebuild life after storms, flooding this past year

Isaiah says the sorrow of a city slashed by storms; homes ruined. More is being said than storms of weather, a city is where we drive and go into the city, you may live in a cutthroat city, for pressure to earn money and work and keep up.

So, the choice of these 3 scenes is significant because we are often prone to seek our happiness in one of 3 places, children, marriage, money, naturally our life and joy and pursuit get wrapped up in these areas, that’s why when kids go off the rails or marriage is on the rocks or your career is challenging or jobs lost or changing etc. People think think my life is over. Therefore you would expect the most unhappy people to be the barren woman, deserted wife or the people who live in the ruined city. ISAIAH see’s JOY in the most unlikely places, what is the barren woman doing, in verse 1, she is singing, she is bursting forth in song, the deserted wife, verse 6 is finding security, she knows she is loved, what’s happening to the ruined city it is being re-built, and not with bricks and mortars but it says in verse 11

 Is 54:11 O’ afflicted one storm tossed and not comforted, behold I will set your stones in antimony and lay your foundations with sapphires, I will make your pinnacles of agate (quartz), and your gates of carbuncles and all your wall of precious stone.

Isaiah 54 & 55 are basically a unit together and if you follow it through to verse 12 it says God says to people who have had great sorrow- the barren woman the deserted wife the afflicted city“ And you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace, the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

How can the people with this great sorrow find this great joy.

Barren woman finds joy in Gods people, she is loved and she loves others.

Deserted wife finds joy as after her trauma she is not put to shame and Gods secures her. For your maker is your husband….

Ruined city finds joy in being rebuilt, guys in construction, you have never seen a building project like this. Turquoise, sapphires, quartz

Isaiah in a sense is speaking about the joy that awaits GODS people in the city he prepares for them

Fullness of this joy awaits us in the return of CHRIST…

But the beginning of that joy is ours already!!!

There is also no ration to the supply of God’s joy…

Joy is one of the vital gauges on the dashboard of the Christian life. When the needle dips — when you lose your joy — you should take note. To stay safe, you need to pay attention to your joy.

Jesus himself connected our daily spiritual life with JOY;

John 15:10-11

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full..

Philippians 4 is Paul writing from prison saying REJOICE in the Lord always again I say rejoice…

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone, the Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything….

I have to say it, we are commanded to rejoice, we think Rejoice is too nice of a word to be a command.

But I would beg to say it is a command we should honor as others.

I heard Pastor Francis Chan teach on Living with Joy he said Can God command us to rejoice…

Here Paul is writing this from Prison, this can be sin like everything else we don’t do that God commands.

God wants to see his Children in JOY

Just like we love when our kids are joyful, I don’t know a more wonderful thing than when your kids feel happy being your kids.

In fact our son Harrison plays flag football and early on in this season Joel told him and his team if you go undefeated this season I will give each kid $20, there’s like 11 kids, and so guess what they went undefeated and so after the game concluded Joel gathered all the kids around and began to pass out their bonus bucks, and there was so much excitement and joy for these kids, all the kids parents were watching and the kids were so excited.. Well we hear this afterwards, “I want your DAD!!!” And Joel was just happy to see his son enjoying being his son…

No greater joy for a parent than seeing your kids love being a part of your family…

As Christians our JOY is to be a proclamation of the peace we have being Gods Children that your joy is not based on things that go up and down, but on Christ, his Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Our names are written in the Lambs book of life. Mediate on that.

So a joyless believer is not ok

Sorrow may come for the night and we know we have trouble but our command is to rejoice so people say “I want your Dad, I want to be in this family!!!!”

Most people derive their peace from control, well I have control of this so I am peaceful. I’ve worked this all out so now I can rejoice…

My peace is in the confidence is that my Father has me.

In Psalms our boy DAVID teaches us this:

Psalm 23:5 Esv

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies

You anoint my head with oil

My cup overflows

The cup shows us how God sustains us by giving us joy.

You hear this down beat version of Christianity

You’re going to have enemies, it won’t be easy, stick it out and if you make it through you will be blessed in the end when your life in this miserable world is over and then you’ll go to heaven

Life stinks but heaven is coming

But this is not what David is saying

He had plenty of trouble

David’s life was an unrelenting battle, he was a shepherd, then a hunted fugitive by King Saul, he inherited a deeply divided kingdom, rival tribes filled with seething resentments, divisions, Later on his family is torn apart by cycles of abuse, violence and death. Later David had to flee for his life as his own son raised a rebellion against him. How did he keep going? Yet he says my cup overflows

Even with present dark valleys, he says my cup overflows

Jesus said in this world you will have trouble

These things I have spoken that my joy may be in you and it will be full

I just finished a book called the nightingale and in this book during ww2

They had these ration books in France and the book was presented to get food

The world we live in knows nothing of this – we can buy with coupons to get more

Gods’ blessings to his -people are never rationed.

One blessing on top of another

It overflows

When Isaiah talks about God’s forgiveness, he says not only he will pardon

He will abundantly pardon

Psalms says plentiful redemption

Life more abundantly

When prodigal son returned home- father didn’t meet him with anything but kisses, robe, ring, prepared a fatted calf!!!

That’s the grace that David experienced in his own life- abundant, plentiful, cup overflows

For you shall GO OUT IN JOY and be led forth in peace.

What did the cup mean for Jesus

In the garden of gethsemane saying father if it be possible let this cup pass from me- the cup

In revelation14:10

Wine of gods wrath poured full strength into the cup of his anger and that is the cup Jesus was given-

What must the reality of drinking this cup feel like?

Because he is so good and and the good shepherd and the lord laid our iniquity on himself- he bore our sins in his body

That wrath that should have been ours fell on him

Jesus drank the cup of Gods wrath so you can drink the cup of god’s blessing

God holds a cup in his hand the cup is full with your name on it

But before the cup reaches your hand the good shepherd reaches up and he takes it-

If this cup may pass – but if not

Then the good shepherd drinks that cup all of it until its emptied- then he takes the empty cup and then he fills it until it runs over- love, mercy, grace, peace with God

He offers you this cup

David says my cup overflows!!!

Why do we need the JOY that comes from Christ:

Joy is a key to strength not the only key but a key

Chapter 8

Verses 9-12

In Nehemiah chapter 8 a revival is in progress

Ezra and some scribes read God’s word to the people from dawn until noon

As the standard of the law hits them and they are realizing how they fall short of that standard they are mourning and weeping, but Nehemiah and Ezra and other leaders tell them not to mourn but to feast and rejoice adding in verse 10 do not be grieved THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH

I can understand the peoples response as they see their past and their failures in light of the standard and often we respond as if we should be down cast when we sin and have a tough week, day or month,

You know honestly it can take great faith to rejoice rather than be overwhelmed with the weightiness of sin.

But being distressed or depressed about your condition does not help you be free.

When we fail we often mope around more like Eyore than bouncy like Tigger

The bible says in psalm 30:11

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing you have loosed or removed my sack cloth and clothed me in joy.

In Nehemiah chapter 8 they read the law and realized their condition and what was their response

Nehemiah 8:11

So the Levites calmed all the people saying be quiet, for this day is holy, do not be grieved for the joy of the Lord is your strength. And all the people went away to eat and drink and send portions (share) and to make great rejoicing because they understood the words that were declared to them.

It’s quite remarkable that often times when you realize where you are as where you know God would want you to be the response naturally would be mourn but Gods is saying rejoice feast in fact schedule JOY, plan joy, they began to celebrate because it says they understand.

We often spend our weeks mourning as a penance of sorts but God is showing them rejoices and celebrate get back out there and plan joy in, plan feasting and celebrating.

I heard a pastors say:

Your personal strength will not be greater than your joy.

Nehemiah and his team built in 52 days what couldn’t be done in years

There was strength because the team practiced JOY

As a kids my dad at the piano every Sunday morning:

If you want to master anything Piano, a language, it takes practice

even if we start at rookies in the culture of joy, practice joy, train for joy.

Anna Hayford, kids laughing hard out loud every day example

When joy is full in you aren’t tempted by the bait that satan brings of much lesser loves…

I can’t tell you how many times I’ve left my doggy bag at a restaurant because I’m so full, I forget it. Satisfied in Christ and his joy full in you protects you from temptation.

When you get up from the table at Thanksgiving the last thing I want is more food. You can’t tempt me with another bite, In the same way its hard for Satan to tempt a joyful believer with the empty pleasures of the world.