

Well, Christian Wyman is a poet, he's a professor, he's a Christian intellectual, he teaches at Yale, he teaches literature at Yale, and he wrote a book that's a collection of poetry, a collection of essays called Joy, and the subject of the book would be

Joy, okay, I'm just making sure that you're awake this morning.

And at the beginning of the book, he writes, he begins with an essay dealing with a common maxim or motto that artists or novelists, writers, poets kind of say around the world, and that is this, light writes white.

I was going to have the group of kids that sit in this pew.

There's about 15 of them.

I don't know how they get on that pew every morning.

To see if they could say that three times out loud, they've kind of gone to junior church worship.

But what do you think he means?

Light, rights, white.

Or what does artists, what do they mean by that?

Well, it means this.

That means that...

If you are sitting before a blank page and you're about to compose something or paint something, and all is well in your life, in other words, all is light, then you have nothing to say.

The page remains blank.

And so what Professor Wyman is saying here is that generally art is birthed out of this inner sense of turmoil or this inner sense of satisfaction in our lives.

I thought that was very interesting for me because for me, sometimes joy, my experience of joy is just kind of elusive.

It's kind of like grabbing a handful of sand and trying to carry it around with you all day long.

It's just somehow it manages to sift through my hands.

And so I was thinking about that because oftentimes my experience of joy is interrupted by this inner sense or this kind of right below the sense of dissatisfaction of my life or the sense of anxiety that's produced by uncertainty.

But what if, what if

the dissatisfactions of life, and the uncertainties that our culture says, get rid of it by all costs.

What if those things are actually gifts from the Lord to point you in the direction where only true and deep and lasting joy can be found?

Now, before we kind of dive in, I want to ask real quickly, you know, what is joy?

Many of you heard many teachings on joy or sermons on joy, and you've heard definitions of joy that goes something like this, that joy is just kind of this inner sense of contentment that's not latched onto circumstances, something to that effect.

That would be correct.

I love that definition.

But I really love what John Piper, how he kind of defined joy.

I find it useful and helpful not only in my own life, but in my counseling ministry.

And he says this,

The biblical joy is a good feeling in the soul produced by the Spirit who shows us Jesus.

Really good.

Let's unpack that for just a second.

I'll just paraphrase, cut to the chase.

It's a good feeling.

Emotions, joy is really just, it's an emotion.

You know, we've done many weddings.

I've officiated many weddings.

And if I'm standing here by the groom and the bride bursts through that door, she's marching down there with all her radiance.

I look at the groom.

I don't have to tell him what to think.

He's just bursting and oozing with joy, right?

It's an emotion.

It's a feeling.

It's in the soul as opposed to the body.

In other words, you might experience joy in your body, right, with tears of joy and the dance of joy, things like that.

But by most accounts, joy resides in the soul, right?

It's also produced by the Spirit.

The reason I say that, or John Piper would say that, is what?

It is the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience.

And then finally, because it's produced by the Spirit, the Spirit's spotlight ministry is to make much of Christ.

And so we see that joy is found as we gaze and magnify Jesus.

And so that's a good thing because this psalm is actually about Jesus.

How do I say that?

Because Peter and John, the apostles Peter and John, excuse me, Peter and Paul, when they were preaching about the resurrection in the New Testament, this was one of their texts.

And really, it's David is writing this, but he is speaking prophetically for Jesus.

This is a messianic psalm.

Jesus is the only one who, he died, but his body did not see corruption, right?

His body did not turn to ashes and dust.

He's raised from the dead.

And so you can think of this psalm as kind of a window into the prayer life of Jesus.

And we know from the Gospel of John that Jesus prayed for your joy, that your joy might be full, that you might experience his joy.

So that's the question for this morning is, you know, how do we experience this joy, the joy that we long for?

Three things we're going to look at this morning.

First of all, if we're going to experience this fullness of joy, it starts with a commitment that says, I'm all in.

Second, involves a declaration that says, God, you are all satisfying.

And third, we're going to see a conviction that says, God, you are all sufficient.

So first of all, let's look at this.

It's a commitment that says, I'm all in.

Look with me again, verse 1.

David writes this, Then he says this,

So right there in those first four verses, we see kind of four aspects of this commitment I'm talking about.

And the first aspect of commitment is this, that David is expressing a commitment that's a stake in the ground.

It is a flag he's planting that says, I will not find salvation in no other God and nothing else.

And actually, the only petition in this psalm is, preserve me, Lord, preserve me.

Literally, that means, Lord, watch over me.

Now, David would know a thing or two about those words because he was a shepherd, and that was his job description, to watch over the sheep, to preserve the sheep.

Now, if sheep could talk, what might they say?

They might say something like this.

Shepherd, watch over us.

Preserve us.

You're the only shepherd we know.

You're the only shepherd that we have.

We don't have plan B shepherd.

We don't have a backup plan for salvation.

watch over us, and preserve us.

And that's the sense in which David is expressing his faith before the Lord.

But he also says that the Lord is his fortress.

David was not just a shepherd, but he was also a soldier, and he knew the value of a fortress.

He knew the value of a shield on the battlefield.

He knew the value of a cave on the hill.

He knew the value of a fortress that is set on a hill.

He is saying, God, you are my ultimate salvation and life.

Now, Jesus once spoke to a group of people, and he said this, Do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

And what Jesus is saying, I'm just going to kind of paraphrase this, is this.

There are a lot of evil people and evil things and bad things that can do a lot of bad things and damage to your body.

Do not fear them.

Rather, have this submissive fear of the only one who can destroy body and soul.

Or, if you understand this positively, you might think of it like this.

Have this trembling rejoicing.

before the only one who can preserve and purify and beautify your soul.

He is the ultimate refuge.

And that's the sense in which David writes verse 1.

But the second commitment I want you to think about this morning is this, verse 2.

It is a commitment to look for and enjoy the goodness of God and whatever He chooses to give you.

One of my favorite authors, a friend of mine, Scotty Smith, says, all we really need in life is Jesus plus whatever he chooses to give us.

I like that.

You think about this, the goodness of God, we can experience the goodness of God in whatever he chooses to give us, in whatever measure he chooses to give it, and however long.

He chooses to give you that good thing.

The Apostle James said this, every good and perfect gift is from above.

It's from the Father of lights.

You can think about that in terms of every gift that God has given you in whatever measure.

Maybe you'd want more of it, but you don't have it.

Whatever He's given you is good.

It's good because it's perfectly suited for you.

You can do with His good gifts one of two things.

You can receive the good thing in whatever measure, whatever quantity, for however long you have it.

You can receive it from the Lord, and you can taste and see that He is good.

Or,

you can try, good luck, you can try to seek goodness apart from his provision.

Think, for example, of a young man who's trying to find intimacy and pleasure outside of marriage.

Think of Jesus.

Remember, David is speaking prophetically for Jesus, and Jesus on earth, he was homeless.

He barely had anything to his name.

And out in the wilderness, Satan came to him and tried falsely to persuade Jesus, to tempt Jesus and said, you know, you worship me and I'll give you all the kingdoms of the earth.

And Jesus refused to worship Satan or his false promises because what?

He was committed that God was good.

He was committed to finding the goodness of

of the Lord, experiencing the goodness of the Lord and whatever God provided for him.

Well, the third thing, this commitment is, we see the people of God, the people of God, it says, as for the saints, they are the excellent ones in whom all my delight.

It's a commitment to the people of God.

What do you mean by that, Dan?

Well, statistics show that church attendance and church involvement are declining in the Western culture.

You know, even committed Christians might tell you or might say, you know, the church is a messy place.

It's kind of messy.

It's kind of inefficient sometimes in the way they do things.

There's people that lack self-awareness.

There's the people that are kind of annoying.

There's people that even have bad breath.

Can you imagine in the church?

And yet the church is called the bride of Christ.

That one day Jesus will return and collect his every nation bride

And he will cleanse her of all blemishes and iron out all the wrinkles.

In the meantime, the church is the ordained place where God works on our hearts together.

It is where very impatient people become more patient.

It is where stingy people learn generosity.

It is where very touchy and insecure people learn to be more secure in Christ.

David says...

It takes delight in being with the people of God.

So don't fool yourself that you can find joy on some type of private odyssey or journey.

You need the people of God.

Fourth commitment here is this.

It's a commitment to say no to the false promises of false gods.

Now, what do I mean by that?

We have this penchant to take good things and make them ultimate things.

Good things and make them ruling things.

What about something like affirmation or, you know, just being accepted?

Affirmation.

Is that a good thing?

Yes, I like those actually.

But you know what?

Affirmation or acceptance can actually become a ruling thing.

Anything.

Comforts.

You name it.

And how do we know that that thing is a ruling thing?

Well, because we pour out our drink offerings before it.

That's how we know a good thing is becoming a ruling thing, is we are pouring out our drink offerings.

Check it out, chapter 4.

What does that mean?

I think it means something like this, that I will sin in order to get that thing before

or I will sin if I don't get it, right?

I'm pouring out a drink offering before that thing.

It's ruling my heart.

And when God says there should be no other gods before me, he's not saying I want to be the first god in your pantheon of deities.

No, no, he's saying I'm the only god

And in me you'll find the truest and deepest and ultimate form of joy.

J.R.

Vassar was leading a Christian prayer walk with Christians in an Asian country, and they went through this really large Buddhist temple.

And as they were going through there, he witnessed something that just made his heart sink.

There was this massive...

golden Buddha statue, and there was a large number of people who were coming in.

They were bowing before it, paying homage, and it looked like that they were taking their last little bit of money, and they were stuffing it in the treasury box, and then they were kneeling down before this massive Buddha to try to eke out a blessing.

But on the other side of this Buddha, there was this large scale of scaffolding

Because on the other side of the Buddha, the Buddha was deteriorating and there were all these workers trying to frantically try to repair the Buddha.

And this is what Vassar said.

He said, as I took on the scene, there were broken people who were bowing down to a broken Buddha, asking the broken Buddha to fix their broken lives while someone else fixed the broken Buddha.

The insanity of this hit me.

We are no different.

We are broken people looking to other broken people and broken things to fix and satisfy our broken lives.

I think here in the first four verses of that commitment that David is making is this commitment, planting a flag in the ground saying, God, watch over my heart.

Watch over my heart, prone to wander.

Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love.

Here's my heart, O take and seal it.

Seal it for thy courts above.



It is a commitment to say, Lord.

You're my salvation.

You're my ultimate refuge.

The second thing I want you to see this morning is this.

There's a declaration that says, God, you're all satisfying.

You see it in verse 5?

Verse 5 says, the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup.

You hold my lot.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel.

There's a declaration that says, God, you are all satisfying.

Now, if you hear the word portion and boundary and lot and inheritance, what do you think about?

You think about the promised land.

These are words of the promised land.

See, the conquest was led by Joshua after the death of Moses, and the people of God crossed the Jordan River, and God delivered the land into their hands.

And so how is the land apportioned?

Well, they received...

They received their portion, their land, by lot.

So it was kind of by lottery.

And they received definite boundaries.

And this would be an inheritance to pass down to their children.

Except for the Levites.

The tribe of Levite, they were set apart to lead God's people in worship, lead God's people in service, and they were not given land.

They were given cities that were scattered throughout the tribes.

And instead of receiving land, their portion was the Lord.

The Lord said to Aaron, Numbers 18, you shall have no inheritance in the land, neither shall you have any portion among them.

I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.

David is saying this, I may be from the tribe of Judah, but I think like a Levite.

Because ultimately, the satisfaction is in God.

See, the Levites were like, they were posters in all of these cities that shouted that deep, subtle commitment does not come from property.

It does not come from possessions.

It comes from God who can only and ultimately satisfy.

Isn't that beautiful?

So, okay, practically speaking, how do we experience this joy of the here and now when life comes at you hard?

And some days life just seems so random.

It's not random to God.

It seems random to us.

And there's all of these uncertainties in our life that we just want to get rid of, but we can't.

How do we experience this joy in the here and now?

Well, he helps us out in this passage.

He says that he has God's counsel.

What is God's counsel?

God's counsel.

Well, he received God's counsel from God, and I believe that that is God's written word.

In fact, the Gateway Psalm, Psalm 1, says this, Blessed is the one whose delight is in what?

The law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He's blessed.

He's blessed.

In other words, David is saying that one of the primary ways that we set the Lord before us continually, as he's saying in the psalm,

as we saturate our hearts and our minds in the Scripture.

For us New Testament folks, we would say something like this, God, show me Jesus on every page of your Word.

Show me my need for Jesus.

And we ask God to prepare our hearts for that blessed day when we will behold Him face to face.

You know, there's gonna come a day where we will see Him, and just gazing at the beauty of Jesus

will be so purifying that that one gaze will be transformative and purifying us so that we will look just like him.

In fact, the Apostle John says this, behold, we are children now.

And what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is.

Philip Ryken tells a story about Lat Vi Ho and the days where Saigon was falling and the US was pulling out of southern Vietnam.

Latvi Ho was afraid for his life, afraid for his family's life.

He was an administrator at the University of Saigon, and so he had the presence of mind to take his little son, his pregnant wife, and send them, get them to safety, get them on a plane, send them to Vietnam.

And when he was driving to the airport, he was going to join them.

His passport was seized, and he was thrown in prison for five years.

He tried to escape a number of times.

The fifth year he actually got out, he walked to Cambodia where he was captured by a rogue militia mob.

Escaped that, rode to Thailand.

And in the meantime, in the midst of all of this, of course, his wife had given birth to his daughter, and she wanted their children to grow up loving their father.

And so every single day, she set his picture in front of his son and his daughter.

Every single day.

The little girl grew up, the little girl that she birthed grew up, and she never said a word.

There was nothing wrong with her intellectually.

She just never talked.

Until the great reunion in Thailand.

And she sees her father in person in the flesh for the first time.

And she immediately recognizes, runs, drapes her arms around, collapses his arms, and started talking excitedly and hasn't stopped since.

But one day you will see Jesus for the very first time.

And you will recognize him.

because he spent time with him, hearing about him from his word, seeing him in the accounts of the gospel.

And the fullness of joy on that day will break in, and to this day,

and pull you up and pull you forward with only the joy that Jesus has for you.

It's real.

And he's prayed it for you.

There's a commitment that we need to make that says, God, I am all in.

You're the only savior I have.

There is a declaration that we need to make that says, God, you alone are all satisfying in my life.

And last but not least, we're going to look at this.

There is a conviction that says that God is all sufficient.

God is all sufficient.

Verse 8.

I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand.

I shall not be shaken.

Therefore, my heart is glad.

Present tense.

You don't think joy is possible right now?

Present tense.

Therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices.

My flesh also dwells secure for you will not abandon my soul to shame or let the Holy One see corruption.

What is that about?

First of all,

David is, in writing, speaking prophetic for Jesus, he's saying that God is all-powerful, that my God is all-powerful.

In His sufficiency, He can do anything.

Jesus prayed for the fullness of joy, so does that mean He can deliver?

You know, FedEx is reliable, but sometimes they even have a slip-up, and Jesus delivered.

And the answer to that question is yes, Jesus can deliver because of the resurrection of the dead.

Again, the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul preached from this very text about the resurrection of Jesus.

We know that in Jesus, that Jesus had this amazing conviction and this belief.

That yes, he would die, but on the third day, he rose from the dead.

He even told his disciples in Mark chapter 9, the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him.

And after three days, he will rise.

Do you hear the conviction?

Jesus indeed was killed.

Killed.

He was abandoned by his closest friends.

He was hung on a Roman cross in our place to pay the penalty of our sin.

We deserved to be on that cross, not Jesus.

He received the darkness of God's wrath and

the abandonment that we deserve when the Father turned His face away, so that you would never be abandoned.

The resurrection declares,

That Jesus' perfect sacrifice was accepted.

That His perfect obedience was real.

That the Father vindicated Him.

He raised Him from the dead.

He was not abandoned to the grave.

He sits at the Father's right hand where there's pleasures evermore.

God is all-powerful.

Another thing we need to see is that God gives His presence and the grace that we need in the moment.

His grace is sufficient for you right now.

no matter how dark the valley you're in right now, He walks with you.

The path of life, unless Jesus returns soon, if Jesus tarries, the path of life will go through death, but it will lead to everlasting joy, permanent joy, joy that no one can snatch from you.

And even in that valley, even on that path, you have his presence.

Because you are united to Jesus, you are united to him by faith.

Then you can experience the joy that he has for you.

and receive sufficient grace for each moment.

Johnny Erickson Tada is one of my heroes.

You know, many of you know of her.

She's a Christian author.

She's an artist.

She's a conference speaker, and you know that she's a quadriplegic.

She was involved in a very tragic diving accident at an early age.

And one time she was surrounded by a group of women at a Christian conference.

They were all in the bathroom, and there was one lady that was putting on lipstick, and this was like right between sessions.

This was on a break.

And one lady was putting on lipstick, and she said, oh, Johnny, you always look so put together, so happy.

so happy in that wheelchair.

I wish I had your joy.

How do you do it?

And all the women turned and said, yes, how do you do it?

And this is what she said.

I'm going to read it to you.

She says, I took a breath and said this.

I don't do it.

In fact, many, in fact, may I tell you honestly how I woke up this morning.

This is an average day.

After my husband Ken leaves for work at 6 a.m., I'm alone until I hear the front door open at 7 a.m.

That's when a friend arrives to me, arrives to get me up.

And while I listen to her make coffee, I pray, oh Lord, my friend will soon give me a bath, get me dressed, sit me up in my chair, brush my hair and my teeth, and send me out the door.

And I don't have the strength to face this routine one more time.

I have no resources.

I don't have a smile to take into this day, but you do.

May I have yours.

God, I need you desperately.

So what happens when your friend comes to the bedroom door, one of them asks, I turn my head toward her and gave her a smile sent straight from heaven.

It's not mine, it's God.

And so I said, gesturing to my paralyzed legs, whatever joy you see today was hard won this morning.

I have learned that the weaker we are, the more we need to lean on God.

And the more we lean on God, the stronger we discover him to be.

Hard fought each morning.

You want joy?

Sure you do.

We commit our hearts to the only one who can satisfy.

And he will supply what you need.