

**Call to Worship.**

Opening Scripture Reading and Prayer (Vance)

**Daniel 4:34-37.** Praising God through renewed eyes.

**Hymn 1.** Praise to the Lord. (Andy, Janine, Anya)

**Hymn 2.** Let There Be Praise.

Announcements. (Ron)

Scripture reading for Advent season. Simple reading of God's will through the arrival of Christ.  
Zechariah 13:1-9

**Hymn 3.** There is a Fountain. Verses 1 and 2

Offering prayer. (Tom)

Offering Song.

And Can it Be. Verses 1 and 2

Pastoral Prayer.

**Sermon Text.**

**John 17:13-19. The Marks of a Church: Joy and Truth.**

'But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me in to the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.'

This prayer is known as the **High Priestly Prayer**. We've always been told that the prayer Jesus gives as an outline in Matt. 6 is the Lord's Prayer and that is true.

**A High Priest.**

Q: What is a High Priest?

In the NT nothing tells us about the life and work of a High Priest like the book of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews tells us that **'we have a High Priest'** Heb. 4:15

This is amazing love. This is God's love. That he gave us a High Priest that is in constant intercession for us.

A high priest. A priestly prayer before a priestly sacrifice.

### **OT Priest.**

In the OT the priests, especially the High Priest, had special exclusive duties and responsibilities.

There were a variety of responsibilities but one of the most serious responsibilities was the spiritual oversight of the people. The high priest **was expected to be spiritual senior** and maturity.

That spiritual oversight led the High Priest to uphold the task of atonement for his own and the people's sin. Done on the **Day of Atonement**, known as Yom Kippur. On this day, the High Priest presented himself before God in the Holy of Holies and stood before the 'mercy seat' and sought God's forgiveness on behalf of the nation of Israel.

That was the responsibility of the High Priest. Make intercession for the people of Israel.

Now let me tell you this, Jesus Christ is the High Priest, and He is praying for a 'kingdom of priests.

The disciples are priests.

Ex. 19:6 'you shall be to me a kingdom of priests'

1 Pet. 2:9 'you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession'

### **A throne. That's kingly.**

Q: Who can approach a throne? Who? All by Faith. How? By Christ's death. Why? God's Grace. When? Now. Today Where? Here.

Look at this...I walk right up to the throne of God. In the OT you have three main roles, You have a King, You have a prophet, You have a Priest. In the NT, you have one figure that is King, Prophet, Priest – its Christ.

So here we are today, in Jn. 17, with the Priest praying for us.

We know that Jesus prays constantly to the father. We see in the Gospels that Jesus' devotional life is composed of regular reading of the OT scrolls and teaching in the synagogues

The prayer is in three main parts; for Himself, for His disciples, for all the church for all time.

I'm going to preach this passage over the course of the next 4 weeks in this manner. The 5 attributes Christ prays for the church.

## Joy, Truth, Holiness, Unity, Love

These are the 5 attributes Christ prays for the church. Today we are going to look at two; **Joy and Truth.**

These attributes that Christ is praying for the church build upon each other.

We see the mind of Christ in this prayer. What is Christ thinking about? He is thinking about these things.

### Things that Inhibit Joy.

#### 1. **An Overly focused on Self.**

A sure fire way to become a weak and non-influential personality is to become self-focused.

Focusing on your personal strengths and weaknesses does nothing to bring God glory nor bring joy in your life.

I remember years ago now; I was working for a church staff and the lead pastor spent a few thousand dollars on personality assessments to find out who had what strengths and weaknesses on his staff. I told him, you should of just had me come in and tell them **Self-focus is doomed to cause a person to lose joy.**

**In addition to the problem of self-focus is the problem of a News-focus.** We can get too caught up on the world news and not enough daily updates on the Good News.

You know if you spent as much time reading about the Good News, you'd be so filled with Joy you wouldn't know what do to with yourself.

I read once that the New York Times publication has approximately the same amount of words in its weekly publication as the entire NT. And there are some people who read the entire NY Times every week.

Could you imagine if we had the population getting an evening hourly update from the NT? My goodness you'd be so filled with the Good News of Jesus Christ you'd be palpating to get to Heaven.

**I'm not completely convinced that some Christians and their churches are more steeped in World News than they are the Good News. And I will tell you that will steal Christ's joy in your every day.**

#### 2. **On-going unconfessed sin.**

It grieves the Holy Spirit that lives inside you. Jesus Christ, our High Priest is praying for His Joy to be in us.

It does Grieve and sadden the spirit of God living in you to not be filled with Joy.

Other people's sin can be disappointing, but it is not capable of stealing you joy, because your joy comes from the Spirit of God living in you.

I want to give a few practical remedies to this problem. Yes, I will say these are prescriptions not just descriptions.

In your prayer, take the time need to have the Holy Spirit inspect the sin in your character. Do not give yourself an out. Stay under the weight of this burden. And then watch how the Lord Jesus lifts this weight off you.

If you want to experience, unparalleled joy, recognize the lifted weight of sin off your shoulders. You talk about feeling like a brand new man!

You will feel like Gillette, you will be the best a man can get! You will think your heart is a Timex...you can know keep on ticking.

To know that the sin you have thought, desired, and deed, has been freely and graciously resolved in Christ is the most amazing love you can ever learn!

You can learn math

### 3. **Concern for things we see in this world.**

I don't have this; I don't have this. We try to keep up with the Jones' and forget to keep up with our own souls.

Look at it this time of year with Christmas, how many children will become sad because they don't get something on one day that they are going to forget about in the next month.

It is an odd quirk of human behavior but the more we have the less we are appreciative and the less we have the more thankful we are.

**Our Consumption Culture** has caused us to focus on riches of this world instead of riches in Christ.

Our High Priest is praying 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies'

People still have not learned the getting things do not make you happy, it is sacrificing things that makes you happy.

Give up things will cause you to lean on Spiritual things, and the joy it will create in your soul will warm you and your family through the winter.

If you want to become rich realize how little you need. **Consumption corrodes joy.**

#### **Contentment.**

**Contentment is the tent that the Holy Spirit likes to reside.**

'contentment with godliness is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world' 1 Tim. 6

There is a constant temptation to be discontent with the lot we have in life.

Bob Cracket was pleased with half a bean on Christmas eve, and Scrouge was spilling his beans over not getting more gold coins.

Everything we have has been given to us from Almighty God and God chooses to give us what we have to determine the Spiritual things that are happening to us.

God has determined the

To the wealthy He is testing their generosity. TO the poor He is testing their trust.

God is not opposed to your getting, He is opposed to your grieving not getting.

#### **4. Living too fast.**

Some of us live at a pace that God Himself doesn't live at. We lose joy when we live at a rate that God doesn't live at.

We start living in the tomorrow when God is only expecting us to live in today.

#### **Slow Down and Enjoy God!**

Westminster Confession of Faith '**we were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever**'

**When we stop enjoying God we stop living in the very way God has created us to live.**

It is concerning to see how little people find joy in knowing God. It is telling.

Where we place our focus is almost certain to determine our joy.

God has determined in His wisdom to tell us how to have the Joy of Christ.

**Things that promote Joy. This is an attribute Christ is praying for the church.**

#### **1. A settled trust in God.**

- a. A statement like this helps promote internal joy, '**thou He slay me I will worship Him' Job**

So much of the Christian faith just comes down to trusting God. We often get ourselves depressed when we stop trusting God.

Jesus said in this prayer '**this is eternal life, that they may know You**'

Knowing God is eternal life. If you want joy know eternal life. That will have you skipping out of the church today.

If you resolve in your mind to trust in God, your worries will begin to fade away.

**Ps. 19:8 'The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.'**

Precepts are principles. Principles are made concrete in commandments. The point the Psalmist makes is the obedience to the principles of God bring joy in our heart.

Jesus puts it this way 'If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so **that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.**' Jn. 15:10-11

## 2. Focus on the goodness of God.

It has been said before by Bible theologians that if there is an overarching attribute of God in the Bible it is that God is good.

Ps. 34:8 'taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him' 'Happy is the man who trusts in God.' Knowing God will make you feel joy in your heart.

## 3. Focus on meaningful fellowship with God and God's people.

It has been said before that Great Preaching will bring people to church but it's great fellowship that will keep people at church.

In order to have great fellowship with God's people you first have to have great fellowship with God.

Great fellowship with God starts with a great prayer life.

I will tell you that Jesus wants us to be joyful. He prays that His joy would be fulfilled in us. So Jesus definitely wants us to be joyful.

### **Duties and Privileges.**

Everything that Jesus desires of us is **both a duty and a privilege**. It is our duty to be joyful and it is a privilege given to us

Duties are the joy of obeying God's commandments. Privileges are enjoying the promises that are given distinctly to those are disciples of Christ.

As you follow the p

There is coming a time where joy will be a constant. It is our duty to endeavor to make joy a marker of the Christian church. It is also our privilege to live in the joy of the Lord.

**Finally, Joy is a strength for the Christian and Christian church. In Scripture, Joy and Salvation are almost always tied together. That the people shout**

**The prophet Isaiah tells of the Happy Future of the Israelites.**

**The Happiness of Israel tied directly to God's goodness to save them.**

**Is. 35:3-10** ‘Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, “Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, He will save you.”

The eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf will be stopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute **will shout for joy**. For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah.

The scorched land will be

God does intend to strengthen the Christian church.

In the Scripture, Joy, is almost always tied to Salvation.

**Joy and Truth.** Two Marks of the Church.

Pastoral Prayer.

**Hymn 4.** Nothing But the Blood.

**Hymn 5.** And Can it Be. (all verses)

Closing Prayer. Vance.

**Small Group Questions.**

1. Why do you think that Jesus is praying for joy to be fulfilled in us? Does it seem like this is a distinctive of your church?
2. What are things that inhibit joy?
3. What are things we can do to uphold the duty of joy?
4. Do you see joy as a distinctive of the Christian church?
5. What can you do to build joy in the church?