

A few days ago, Jana and I returned from Africa where we served on board the Africa Mercy for three weeks. We came home to some bad news stories. We heard accounts of the tornados that touched down in Dallas leveling some very nice homes. Many homeowners, now homeless, were wiped out while their neighbor's house across the street escaped unscathed. How do you explain that?

Pastor Tony Evans went on social media to announce that his wife Lois' stage 4 cancer has reached the point where there will be no more chemo and no more radiation. God used Tony and Lois Evans to plant and then grow Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship into one of our city's finest churches. The four Evans children, Anthony and Jonathan, their daughters, Crystal Hurst and Priscilla Shirer all have influential ministries. Unless the Lord intervenes, Lois doesn't have long to live. Why do godly people get cancer while the godless live long lives?

Last week Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was hunted down and eliminated by special forces in a military operation named after Kayla Mueller. Kayla was a devoted disciple of Jesus who traveled to Syria to serve with Doctors Without Borders in Aleppo, Syria in 2013. She was taken captive by ISIS then abused, tortured and killed by Al-Baghdadi. Before she died, she got a message to her family. "I have been shown in darkness, light, and have learned that even in prison, one can be free." Kayla refused to renounce her faith even when she was tortured. Why does a beautiful, young disciple of Jesus get treated so inhumanely?

Life just isn't fair. There seems to be a lopsidedness and randomness to it all. Who will get cancer? Who will get rich? Who will lose their house in a tornado? Who will lost their live as a martyr? Is there any sovereign logic to this? These are questions that are above my pay grade to answer. But I think I can answer this question: **Why do some people respond joyfully in spite of adverse circumstances while others remain chronically unhappy even in favorable circumstances?** How can I find joy when everything seems to be so crazy? What is it going to take to find happiness in this life?

Americans are not very happy. In spite of being envied by other nations in the world, we rank #19 on the World Happiness Scale. We're behind countries like Iceland where they eat fermented shark just for the fun of it and Belgium where they put mayonnaise on their French Fries! What is going on here? How can we find happiness in such an unhappy world? The answer is contained in the letter to the Philippians.

The secret of Paul's joy is no secret. In fact, he wrote a book about it, or at least a letter. The dominant theme of this short book is joy. The word "joy" or "rejoice" occurs sixteen times. Paul describes a joy that can be experienced regardless of our circumstances. Even though he is in prison, he is full of joy. The verses that we are going to consider this morning teach us that **when you build your life on a flimsy foundation you risk profound unhappiness but when you follow the infallible Christ, you can experience a deep and abiding joy.** If you think being happy is like winning the lottery then you have as much chance of being happy as you do winning the lottery! If you think like Jesus, you will enjoy happiness. This morning I want to offer a crash course on happiness. And, just for the record, the Bible does not distinguish between joy and happiness as is often assumed. God is for both. What is the source of Paul's joy or happiness?

1. Joy results from the progress of the Gospel...1:12. Paul's dominant desire was to advance the good news of the Kingdom. He was in prison for his faith and yet considered it a privilege to die for the faith if necessary. What is your dominant desire? I hope it is more than retirement or just living as long as you can. Many Americans today could be characterized as those who "believe in nothing, care for nothing, seek to know nothing, interfere with nothing, enjoy nothing, hate nothing, find purpose in nothing, live for nothing, and only remain alive because there is nothing for which they will die."

Paul was consumed with the message of the gospel, the good news that God wants to take up residence within us and live with us forever. In England, a flag, the royal standard, flies above any building where the Queen is present. Joy is the flag that flies over our lives announcing that the King is in residence.

2. Joy results from the progress of others...1:23-25. Taking an interest in others is what Christianity is all about. Jesus defined discipleship this way, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (Jn. 13:35).

In 2:1-2 Paul writes that his joy will be full and running over if the Philippians are of the same mind, maintain the same love, are united in spirit and intent on one purpose. There is only one way this can happen - if they humble themselves and do nothing from selfishness, regarding others as more important than themselves...2:3-4. In these first two chapters, Paul makes a selfless sandwich! He models selflessness in the first chapter. He provides two examples of selflessness at the end of chapter two (Timothy and Epaphroditus) and in-between he provides one of the meatiest passages in the entire New Testament in 2:5-11.

The most exalted example of selflessness is Jesus. These verses provide us with one of the clearest, most beautiful Christological passages in the whole Bible. Jesus was fully divine and fully human. If He was not God, He would not have the authority to forgive our sins. He would not be a "perfect sacrifice." If Jesus was not human, He could not be qualified to represent us as our high priest. As to divinity:

Hebrews 1:3 "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power."

Colossians 1:15-16, "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things were created through Him and for Him."

John 1:18, "No one has seen God, the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known."

John 14:9-10, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...I am in the Father and the Father is in Me."

Jesus is God. In Jesus, we have the full revelation of God the Father by God the Son. The second person of the triune Godhead reveals the first person of the Trinity. From eternity past Jesus Christ has always existed in the form of God.

We cannot comprehend the humility of Jesus if we do not first understand who He. Humility is demonstrated in the contrast between position and practice. When you go to lunch today, you don't comment on how humble the busboy is because he is clearing dishes. His position and practice are the same. That is his job. But if the owner of the restaurant put on an apron and cleared and washed the dishes, that is noteworthy because he is doing a duty below his position. To understand the humility of Jesus, you must first understand His position as God.

How we answer the question of the nature of Jesus Christ is one of the purest tests for Christian orthodoxy. Any group that is wrong about Jesus, can't be considered "Christian." The two-fold nature of Jesus, His simultaneous humanity/divinity, has been a stumbling block from the first century on. Some heresies deny the deity of Jesus. Heresy is a departure from historic Christian doctrines derived from a diligent study of God's word.

Arianism, Nestorianism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons. Mormon doctrine teaches that Jesus was a preexisting spirit who was exalted, just as Mormon followers hope to be exalted someday.

I had the privilege of teaching several Muslim men a couple of weeks ago. One of the sticking points for them as to the person of Christ is that the Koran teaches that God has no son. The Koran repeatedly and firmly asserts God's absolute oneness, thus ruling out the possibility of another being sharing his sovereignty or nature. Muslims have rejected Christian doctrines of the Trinity from an early date. Therefore, when the Bible talks about Jesus as the son of God, that is blasphemy to a Muslim.

Other groups deny the humanity of Jesus. Docetism, Gnosticism, Apollonarianism, deny the humanity of Christ. Jesus may have appeared to be human but He was actually divine. But Phil. 2:5 makes it clear that Jesus was the God-man, fully human and fully divine.

Apart from the deep theological importance, the point of this passage is the selfless humility of Jesus. He is to be our example as we experience the joy of serving others and being committed to their progress and growth in the faith.

3. Joy results from my own progress. The word "progress" is only used three times in the whole NT. In Phil. 1:12 Paul emphasizes that his circumstances have resulted in the progress of the gospel. In 1:25 Paul declares that he is going to fight on for the sake of the Philippians "joy and progress in the gospel." The only other time the word is used is in Paul's words to Timothy. "Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress." 1 Tim. 4:15

2:12-13 reveals how we make progress in our walk - work out what God has worked in. To work out our salvation means to continuously present ourselves to God to be transformed so completely that His thoughts are our thoughts, His ways are our ways. That is not always a comfortable process. "You will know that you know God when sometimes He makes you weep as He humbles your pride. Reverses your expectations. Upsets your priorities. Offends your behavior." David Gibson. These are some of his tools to shape us and mold us into the people He created us to be. God is recreating us in His image and for His purpose. Jesus suffered and died for a purpose greater than a few short years of human happiness.

How can I experience this transformation that leads to happiness? How do I live a life that is full of joy? It starts by tethering your life to the infallible Christ.

Communion is a good place to start. By partaking in this observance, you are declaring your desire to partake of Christ, His resurrection power as well as the fellowship of His suffering. You are saying, "I want to be like you Jesus. I bow in worship before You and call out in praise that You are the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father."

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion. Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father. (The Message)