

A God's Eye View: Of You! Pt. 5
My Delight
Jer. 31:3; Zephaniah 3: 14-18; Isaiah 62: 1-5

**First Presbyterian Church
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Delight is a word full of pleasure, surprise and laughter. Delight can make you belly laugh or even feel for a moment that you've tasted heaven.

What gives you delight?



For me, watching this guy walk with his arms straight up in the air gives me continuing delight!



And the delight that these wild pups get from their daily chase of the hose water becomes my delight. So what would it mean to learn that God's Word promises that the LORD delights in you, right this very moment? That will be our interactive question for the morning: If we knew God's delight, what would change in us?

I imagine that God's people in exile found it hard to believe that the LORD God was delighting in them. The people felt rejected and undesirable. Their lands were ruined, their homes destroyed, the sacred temple sacked and burned, and the future of their children appeared to be one of slavery. They knew they had not worshipped with pure hearts nor lived in justice and compassion. A sense of unworthiness pervaded their thoughts. The little nation of people who had claimed that their God was King of all had become the laughing stock of the known world.

But the LORD their God had not abandoned them. There came through Isaiah the promise of a new identity. We have already considered how God sought them while they were far away and made a way to redeem them and bring them home. Now we see the further results of that redeeming work:

...you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,

but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her,
and your land Married;
for the LORD delights in you,
and your land shall be married. (Is. 62: 2-4)

The work of the promised Redeemer was to change the name of *Forsaken* to *My Delight Is in Her*. This change was to be an objective transformation. The Hebrew literally means "it shall be called to you." The accurate description of who you are as given by an outside, impartial observer will be that you are cherished by your God. Moreover, the promised new names arise from God's *present* love, "For the LORD delights in you," now, while you are far away, seemingly forsaken and exiled. This immediate pleasure while you are unworthy leads to a future glory caused by the loving work of the LORD's Redeemer.

This is tremendous good news! God delights in you right now. The situation of your life does not change his delight. The presence of doubt or a pattern of disobedience does not change God's pleasure in you. Right now he takes delight in your existence.

How can this be? Is God blind? Or deluded? No, this is nothing less than the work of the promised Redeemer, Jesus Christ. We recall from last week that the Redeemer does for the people what they cannot do. He brings them home, not only from physical exile, but to their God. He makes them called the Holy People not because they have suddenly become worthy, but because he gifts them with his own holiness.

In the name *My Delight*, we realize that the Triune God takes pleasure in his work of redemption. He desired heartily to be among us in Jesus Christ. We read "For in him [Jesus] all the fullness of God was *pleased* to dwell" (Col. 1: 19).



Let's go to an event at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. His cousin John was in the wilderness calling people to confess their sins, repent of their sinfulness and be baptized in the Jordan River as a sign of their commitment and cleansing. Jesus also went to be baptized. But he had no sin to confess, no evil from which to repent. John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized. But Jesus insisted, saying it was necessary "to fulfill all righteousness." When Jesus came up from the waters, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased" (Mt. 3: 17). The Father delighted in his Son Jesus.

He was pleased that Jesus took a sinners' baptism for us and began his ministry consecrated to the task of redeeming us. Jesus is the one who pleases utterly his heavenly Father. Jesus is the Beloved of his Father, by nature and by obedience.

And the wonderful gospel news is that the Father turns his pleasure in his Son Jesus toward us! Once when a crowd had gathered around him, Jesus sought to reassure his disciples concerning their worries about daily bread and provisions. He said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's *good pleasure* to give you the kingdom" (Lk. 12: 32). God took delight in offering us the splendor of his kingdom and the joy of life lived under his reign.

The heart of this truth is revealed in Ephesians 1. Let's pick up Paul's thought mid-stream. He writes that God the Father has predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the *good pleasure* of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us *accepted in the Beloved* (1:5-6, *NKJV*). Do you see how delight fills this passage? It is the good pleasure of the Father's will to adopt us as sons into his own family. Into his own heart. Into himself. But why can he do this? Because we have been accepted in the Beloved. Our acceptance occurs by being united to the Acceptable One, the Beloved Son who lived as humanity was meant to live, for our sake.

Once more, we see this wonderful exchange occur. It has been promised since Isaiah. God delights in us, sinful and broken, ruined and twisted though we be. Not because God is blind or indifferent. But because the Father delights in his Son. And we have been accepted within the embrace of that delightful Son. We have been joined to him by the Holy Spirit when we came to faith. This Sunday is known throughout the world as Pentecost Sunday. Churches celebrate the mysterious, miraculous gift that God sends his Spirit to join us to Christ. This is the glorious, mystical heart of Christianity. We are not a religion merely of ethics. We do not follow Jesus just as an impossible example. We are mystically united to him by the Spirit. We commune with a man who lived two thousand years ago, right now, because his Spirit connects us on earth to Jesus in heaven.

Paul puts this another way in Romans 5: 5:

and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us...

The picture is that of God the Father pouring his love into the empty container of our spiritual hearts. He gives his Spirit to us. He unites us to Jesus, creating faith

in us. And that faith does not end up disappointing us like so many things do. It holds. It satisfies. For in Christ we are made new, accepted in the Beloved. Paul goes on to tell us that the Triune God knew full well how sinful we are. He knew we would reject his Son. So he made that part of his redeeming plan:

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Ro. 5: 5, 8, 10).

Scripture assures us that the LORD our God entered his mighty work of salvation willingly. Knowing full well who we have been, who we are, and who we will be, God nevertheless became one of us in Jesus Christ. Understanding that though our souls ache for God, we also flee God, and knowing well the cost, Christ the Beloved One lived and died to be the Redeemer not only of Israel but the world.

Several decades after Isaiah, the prophet Zephaniah received a vision. It included judgment on both Jerusalem and her enemies for rebellion against God. But in his prophecy, the judgment becomes redemption. Zephaniah saw the heart of God revealed in his rejoicing over a forgiven and restored people:

Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!
The LORD has taken away the judgements against you....
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing (Zeph 3: 14-17).

To be named *My Delight* is to participate in the exultant joy the LORD our God has in redeeming his people. Taken into the life and work of the Beloved, Delightful Son Jesus, our essential identity is that we are now God's adopted children, his treasure, the apple of his eye, his dearly beloved. On us the unworthy, he has through Christ *lavished* all the riches of his grace (Eph. 1: 7).

So what would change if I realized every hour that God is delighting in me? Some things would have to die. Most notably my desire to be delightful and acceptable in myself. When I was a saucy teenager, I know I mouthed off with a bit of cockiness. I acted like I could get away with anything and that the music would

never stop. Sometimes my mother would call me on it. She'd say, "That is neither funny nor cute young man!" She knew that I had made a career out of being funny and cute. I believed my own press. And, as she would tell me, it was disgusting. I think probably what I needed was a good crack across the face!

It's been a long time since I was a teenager. But I still want to be somebody God sees as delightful and acceptable in myself. I want God to be charmed by me. But Jesus doesn't work that way. The individualism so rampant in our world has no place in the Kingdom of God. I don't get to have an independent rightness. What matters is not that I made myself happy so God should be happy with me. We don't enter the Triune God's delight on our own merits. Or because we win. Or look great. Or have fun. Or learn to be our best selves. I don't get any independent standing before God. I have to die to that hope. I only participate in God's delight when I am taken under the care of the Delightful One. I only get in on being beloved when I am accepted by the merits of the only Acceptable One, Jesus Christ.

At first this truth kills my pride. It obliterates my independence. But then it frees me. It takes all the pressure off. Even to my mother who adored me, I couldn't be funny and cute all the time. I certainly could never pull that off before the burning eye of God. But if I acknowledge my need for Jesus, I am taken into his Life. I am adopted into his Sonship. I am included in his delighting, beloved life. I die to myself and discover he makes me alive in him. I give up independent me and discover he makes me more myself, in relationship to him, than I could ever be.

In fact, living in the delight of God is a constant life of dying and rising in being joined to Christ.

- It has to do with asking forgiveness instead of making excuses.
- It has to do with forgiving others instead of holding a grudge.
- It has to do with seeking out the least and the lost as well as the useful and powerful and discovering Christ in their midst.
- It has to do with being in community with Christ's people. He is the Head of his Body. We are members of that body, never independent of him or each other.
- It has to do with finding our purpose in enhancing whatever our Head wants to do. We want to be delightful to God in his Delightful Beloved Son.

What would change if I realized every hour that God delights in me through his beloved Son Jesus?

- It would free me from hiding the results of ruin and exile when I have gone my own way. It would free me from pretending.
- It would call me to confess, repent and rely completely on the love of God poured into my heart by the Spirit of Jesus the only, the beautiful Acceptable One.
- It would cause me to put aside envy, jealousy, control and stress so that I could see and delight in others.
- It would cause me to realize it has never been about me. Down that path lies death.

When my life is enfolded into Christ's life, it lights up. When I am communing with him through his Word and sacraments, through community and acts of love, I rejoice in the relief of being accepted in the Beloved. Through Christ alone, I can take the name he gives me, "My Delight."