**Enjoying God Series**

**“Joy in God’s Word”**

**Introduction:**

Last week I mention that last summer a friend shared with me that he had lost his passion for Christ. After that we attempted to get together and discuss the topic of “Enjoying God.” During our conversations we recalled the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism that asks, “What is the chief end of man?” which means “What should be a person’s highest purpose, goal, or endeavor?” Our Church Fathers answered that important question saying, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” What they are saying is that a person’s highest purpose; goal, endeavor, or achievement is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. As I studied their answer I discovered that many theologians preferred to answer the first question of the shorter catechism differently. Their answer is, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God **by** enjoying Him forever.” What they are saying is that a person’s highest purpose; goal, endeavor, or achievement is to glorify God **by** enjoying Him forever. Simply stated, we glorify God by enjoying God.

Well, if its true that we glorify God by enjoying Him (and I believe it is true) is there a manual that tells us how to glorify and enjoy God? And the answer is yes! God wrote a manual called the Bible that directs us how to glorify and enjoy God. As a matter of fact the second question of the Shorter Catechism asks, “What rule has God given to direct us how to glorify and enjoy Him?” (WSC#2) And the answer is, “The Word of God, which consists of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments,is the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy Him.” God has given us His Word, the Bible, so that we would no longer be tossed here and there by waves of worldly wisdom. God in His infinite wisdom scribed His Word and Will onto the pages of Scripture so that we would no longer carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, and by the craftiness in deceitful scheming. (Eph.4.14) God’s Word is a *“lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.”* (Ps.119.105) How can we keep our ways pure before God? By keeping it according to God’s Word. (Ps.119.9)

Let me set the record straight. We believe that all Scripture, both the Old and New Testaments, was inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for the training in righteousness, so that we may be adequate and equipped for every good work. (IITim.3.16-17) We are Bible believing Christians. This is a Bible believing church. We believe the Bible is the Word of God and is true from cover to cover. If the Bible says that God created all things from nothing in six days by the word of His power then that’s what happen. If the Bible says that God parted the Rea Sea and the children of Israel walked across on dry land then that’s what happened. If the Bible says that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary then that’s what happened. If the Bible says that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Then that’s what happens! We believe that all things necessary for God’s glory, our salvation, and faith and life, is found in the Word of God.

If you are here today and you have questions about the Bible I want you to know that you can come to me. You can ask me anything. If you are here today and are embarrassed because of your lack of Bible knowledge I want to encourage you to get involved in one of our Bible Studies. God wants you to grow in the knowledge of His Word. As I’ve said on many occasions, “There is nothing wrong with being a spiritual child but it is wrong to remain as one.” Every Christian has to transition from drinking only spiritual milk to partaking of spiritual meat. (Heb.5.12-13; IPt.2.2)

**Joy in God’s Word**

Our motive of knowing the Scriptures is not to become a Bible teacher, professor, or theologian, even though that could happen. God desires for us to know His Word because it gives us the knowledge of who God is and how we can glorify Him. (WSC#3) God desires for us to know His Word because knowing God’s Word brings fullest of joy.

Just hours before Jesus’ betrayal and arrest, our Lord was comforting His disciples by giving them His final instructions. On the night He was betrayed Jesus taught His disciples that He was the way, the truth, and the life; and that no one comes to the Father, but through Him. He spoke about the coming the Holy Spirit. He told them the works that they would do after His departure. As He was sharing these things He said to them, *“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”* (Jn.15.11) Isn’t it remarkable that in Jesus’ darkest hour just prior to His arrest that He is concerned about our joy?

Jesus continued His teaching and eventually He lifted His eyes to heaven and began praying to His Heavenly Father. As Jesus prayed He said, *“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.”* (Jn.17.13-14a)

Notice that Jesus spoke God’s Word so that His joy would be in us. He said, “*These things I have spoken to you so that* ***My joy*** *may be in you”* and when He was praying He said, “*these things I speak . . . so that they may have* ***My joy****.”* Jesus’ desire was that His joy, His perfect and complete joy, would abide in us. Jesus is not referring to an occasional feeling of happiness or delight. He is referring to a divine disposition that constantly abides in the believer. *Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!* (Phil.4.4) Jesus’ joy was to glorify the Father and He would not allow the persecution of the Pharisees, the betrayal of a brother, a denial of a disciple, or the curse of the cross to take His joy away. No, for the joy set before Him He endured all these things. (Heb.12.2) And it is His joy that Jesus desires to be in us. A supernatural joy that overcomes darkness, depression, and discouragement. A supernatural joy that overcomes trials, tribulations, and temptations. A joy that cannot be taken away from us. (Jn.16.22) A joy that stays focused on glorifying God in all circumstances.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus’ darkness hour He taught His disciple the Word of God so that their joy would be full. If our chief purpose is to glorify God by enjoying Him forever we must find joy in God’s word. We cannot count on our own emotions to bring us the fullest of joy because our emotions are fickle and fleeting. We cannot count on our judgments to bring us the fullest of joy because our judgments are bias and pretentious. We must find the fullest of joy from embracing God’s Word. As the Apostle John wrote in his epistle, *“And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”* (IJn.1.4) Our joy is complete only as we embrace the Word of God. God gave us His Word so that our joy would be full. As we embrace God’s word we will experience the fullest of joy in the Holy Spirit. (IThes.1.6)

There is an episode in the book of Nehemiah when the exiles had returned to rebuild their lives and ruins of the city of Jerusalem. They were people of faith determine to rebuild and begin a new life. They overcame opposition from outsiders and defections from among their own people. They rebuilt the city walls, set new doors at the city gates, and appointed guards for security. But they had neglected one thing – the Word of God. So Ezra the priest gathered the people together in the square in front of the Water Gate and read the Word of God to the people. As the Word of God was read there were others who would explain so that the people would understand the reading. The people were taught the Word of God the entire day and then Nehemiah, who was the governor, said to the people, “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet; for this day is holy to our Lord. And all the people went away and celebrated because the Word of God had been read and explained to them. The people gathered for the next seven days to hear the Word of God read and there was great rejoicing in the city. (Neh.8)

Brothers and sisters, I see it all the time – people trying to rebuild their lives while neglecting the Word of God. They are people of faith, overcome obstacles, and begin to experience a certain level of security living in God’s kingdom. But something is missing. They have neglected God’s Word. But once they gather themselves together and begin learning the Word of God, they experience a joy that is inexpressible and full of glory.

Only the Word of God restores the soul. Only the Word of God makes us wise. Only the Word of God rejoices the heart. Only the Word of God enlightens our eyes. Only the Word of God endures through the ages, is righteous in all of its parts, and desired by all who seek to glorify God. (Ps.19.7-10a) Only by the Word of God can we truly discern our errors. (Ps.19.12) Only the Word of God can restrain us from presumptuous sins. (Ps.19.13a) Only the Word of God is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb.4.12) Only the Word of God causes our hearts to burn within us. (Lk.24.32) Only the Word of God is able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. (2Tim.3.15) The Bible has *been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.* (Jn.20.31) *These things have* been *written . . . to so that you may know that you have eternal life.* (IJn.5.13) Only the Word of God has the words of eternal life. (Jn.6.68)

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.* That man *is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.* (Ps.1.1-3)

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*(Josh.1.8)

King David wrote, *“I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel.”* (Ps.16.7a) Can you believe it? The Lord Himself gives us counsel. Through His Word He makes known the path of life. (Ps.16.11a) But we must get the Word of God into our lives. The Bible says, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.”* (Col.3.16a)We can no longer neglect it or ignore it. I promise that when you start learning God’s Word you will rejoice like a person that found a hidden treasure. (Ps.119.162) When you start integrating the Word of God into your life you will rejoice in God’s Word more than all riches. (Ps.119.14)

The Bible speaks of washing with the Word. (Eph.5.26b) What that means is that we must bath ourselves in the Word of God. We need to take time to read it. We can read it devotionally like reading a Psalm or a chapter from Proverbs every morning. We can read it more deeply by reading through the Gospel of John or one of the New Testament epistles. We can read it instructively by being part of a Bible Study. And best of all is doing all three.

In many ways I am a blessed man because both my undergraduate and graduate degrees are in the field of biblical and theological study. I have enjoyed the privileged to interact with the Bible on a daily basis in the preparation of sermons, Bible studies, and training programs. But my knowledge of the Bible started at the same level as everyone else.

There was a time when I didn’t know the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. There was a time when I didn’t know the difference between the book of Habakkuk and Hebrews or the difference between the book of Judges or James. But through the prodding of the Holy Spirit and the encouragement of my wife the Word of God became the joy and delight of my heart. (Jer.15.16) It might come as a surprise to you but for the first years of our marriage Barbara was clearly more grounded in Scripture than I was and now we are only “neck and neck.”

The Prophet Ezekiel in the early stage of his prophetic ministry had a vision. (Ez.2.8-3.3) In this vision the Lord speaks to the Prophet and says, “Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you.” The Prophet saw a hand extended to him holding a scroll. Then the Lord said to him, “Eat this scroll and go, speak to the house of Israel.”

So Ezekiel opened his mouth and ate the scroll. Then the Lord said, “Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body, with this scroll which I have given you.” And Ezekiel ate it and it was sweet as honey in his mouth.

Brothers and sisters, I extend to you the Word of God this morning and I say to you, “Open your mouth and eat it. Consume the Word of God today! Let it provide spiritual nourishment for every part of your life.”

Brothers and sisters, consume the Word of God today and not just today but everyday for the rest of your life. I promise that it will bring joy to your life and a delight to your heart. It will be as sweet a honey in your mouth!

**Conclusion:**

God desires for us to know His Word because it gives us the knowledge of who God is and how we can glorify Him. (WSC#3) God desires for us to know His Word because knowing God’s Word brings fullest of joy.

Billions of dollars are spent each year on prescription drugs - Medicine for high blood pressure, lowering cholesterol, and diabetes. But as I was thinking about this, it suddenly hit me that if those prescribed medications just sit on a shelf in the medicine cabinet they are not going to do anything. And yet, how many Bibles remain closed? Sitting on the shelf? There is great joy to be found in God’s Word. Its time we take in off the shelf and dwell in our lives richly.

God by His grace has recorded in His Word all things necessary for His glory, our salvation, and faith and life. Isn’t time for you to get in on the celebration?!

**Call to Prayer**

*But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law he meditates day and night.* (Ps.1.2)

**Benediction**

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.* (Ps.19.14)