

### **Advent 3 – Joy Sermon**

Jeremiah 7: 13

***I will turn their mourning into laughter and their sadness into joy;***

How do you describe Joy?

The Scriptures are full of Joy – especially this time of year leading up to Christmas.

For most of us joy comes from something joyful – the birth of a baby, a celebration, an achievement.

Each of today's text tell us that joy comes from deep, deep sorrow.

***I will turn their mourning into laughter and their sadness into joy.***

Mourning is deep, deep sorrow but it's from that deep sorrow that Jesus promises great joy.

It seems that you see joy when you see your way out of the pit.

In our Gospel we are led to repentance. We are led to see the terrible depth of our sin.

We are led to the point despair – who can save me – what a wretched person I am!

In repentance the Holy Spirit leads us to look at the misery we have cause and the misery we are.

It's easy for the Holy Spirit to lead us there.

Just a word: do not steal, do not commit adultery. do not covet – and it is done – our life is on display before God.

Where can we go for help?

At first, we turn to ourselves for help – we deny – eventually the lies just don't do it.

Where can we go for help?

And there is the hand of Jesus – he says: *“I will forgive you wickedness and I will remember you sins no more.”*

Relief, joy! I rejoice and again I say rejoice!

“Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.”

It seems God is in the pit when one of his beloved sheep are lost. Then we see how much joy he has when he finds the lost sheep.

There are 99 sheep who claim they are not lost – they say they have “no need of righteousness”.

Do you know a single person who “has no need of being made right with God”? There is no such person.

God laments that the 99 claim to be self-righteous – they’re really the lost ones.

Never the less it’s the one who doesn’t deny he is lost that the Shepherd rejoices over – the one once lost is now found,

John Newton wrote the hymn Amazing Grace – you know the line: “I was once lost but now am found”

He was so lost – the Joy in John Newton’s life comes from acknowledging he was lost – from knowing the depth of his sin.

John kept a detailed diary – his sins are not forgotten.

(I warn you this is not pretty)

### **Monday 24 June 1754**

"...buried a slave girl at sea, number 92. In the afternoon we seduced a slave woman number 83 ...she was big with child."

### **Friday 28 June**

...slaves were forming a plot for an insurrection. Put the slaves in irons and thumbscrews to urge them to a full confession

### **Saturday 29 June**

...punished 6 slaves, put 4 of them in collars."

### **Sunday 30 June**

..executed troublesome slaves, numbers 21,38,44, and 79.

### **Monday 8 July**

"...landed the slaves. Sold all but 20. Got anticipated good price"

### **Wednesday 10 July**

"Buried one of the remaining slaves, a man, Number 52."

### **Monday July 15**

"..begin loading sugar with remaining slaves."

### **In John Newton's logbook:**

"my temper and conduct were exceedingly various."

"my whole life when awake was a course of the most horrid impiety and profaneness".

"I had the ambition to outrank Caesar in wickedness"

"I made it my goal to tempt and seduce others."

### **Did you know Newton wrote other "hymns" – evil hymns?**

"Sometimes I fought to extinguish other people's faith, composing and performing songs to annoy, alienate, and injure the hearts and minds of as many as possible".

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When he was found – when the Holy Spirit worked repentance in him - when he became a Christian - it's little wonder he wrote "I was lost but now I found".

*"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."* Luke 10:19

John Newton spent a lifetime accepting God's amazing Grace.

The sermon slide says: ***True repentance brings joy to the heart***

*True repentance is the work of God – the Holy Spirit.*

John spells it out in the job description of the Holy Spirit in chapter 16:

1. The Holy Spirit's job is to convince us the truth about our sin. We convince ourselves that some sin is OK – "it's a little white lie", "he didn't want it any way" – "nobody wants that old sign on that abandon railway line". The Holy Spirit calls all sin what it really is – it's sin – condemning, damning sin.
2. Then John says the Holy Spirit convinces us the truth about righteousness and judgement.

We are experts in convincing ourselves that we are going to be not too bad on judgment day – I have volunteered, I have given, I have led a pretty good life. We give thanks saying, "well at least I'm not as bad as him or her". The Holy Spirit put an end to that nonsense and convinces us of the truth – the wages of sin is death.

The Holy Spirit does have some joy in his work – once he has led us to the truth about our selves he also leads us to the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

He leads us on a journey from hell to heaven.

***True repentance brings joy to the heart***

He leads us to joy.

He ***turn our mourning into laughter and our sadness into joy;***

That little journey of Salvation starts with knowing the depth of our sin – I was lost but now I'm found – blind but now I see.

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In 2001 John Piper wrote a book for pastors about John Newton called: **The Tough Roots of His Habitual Tenderness.**

IN this book we we learn how to live as someone who has been found.

John Newton says he has joy in his life after committing a lifetime of the “worst of intolerable sins”.

Joy comes from the pit.

In the mirror of life he sees who he really was, then and only then, does he sees the Amazing Grace of God, then and only then he experiences “Joy in the midst of a thousand nightmares”.

John once said “I had the ambition to outrank Caesar in wickedness”

After repentance and forgiveness he said “I could now write a book on my ‘habitual tenderness, my gentleness of spirit, and my true joy’.

Can we say this?

I know what some of you are your going through.

You can have joy – great joy.

But first you have to look backward at your life – honestly. If you can see it – please know Jesus wants you to give it to him, leave it at the cross for him to deal with. Turn toward cleanliness, and forgiveness. Turn toward eternal life with him, no more crying, no more pain, just joy.

Slim Dusty may be on the right track finding Joy – that's true Joy not his wife Joy.

He sings that song “looking forward looking back” – “making songs from what I know”

Look back – make a song of repentance from what you know – look forward and make a song of Joy of the love and forgiveness you have received.

***Lord, send us your Holy Spirit to break our pride – to turn us to the mirror of life – and let us see our lostness and your amazing Grace.***