



**Series: The Fruit of the Spirit**

**Title: Joy**

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**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**

We were driving home from a trip a few weeks ago, we had just gotten into the car for what was going to be a 700 mile journey that we were tackling all in one day with our three kids and we hadn't driven 15 minutes before all three of the kids were screaming... fighting... crying... angry. Refusing their blankets that usually comfort them, Fiona

threw her binky when Dawn put it in her mouth...

"Its going to be a long drive."

So Dawn gets out this essential oil stuff. Now, somebody needs to tell me if there is some weird spiritual thing connected to these oils or something... It always seems like when good things get developed and they are effective, you start hearing all the reasons why it's a form of witch craft or something. That's what they said about elderberry syrup. Every time I get sick, i take some of this elder berry syrup and it's like instant healing. Then someone told us "look that up, the witches used to use it for something or another." I don't know.

So if essential oils are that, please tell me... because oh my word are they effective. When the kids won't sleep, Dawn dabs a little of this frankincense oil on them and they are out in moments... anyway, in the car, she got out an oil called "Joy" and she dabbed a little on them, and two of the three girls instantly stopped screaming... instantly calmed down... Fiona fought it, but you could tell she was fighting it. It was like, suddenly she wanted to be happy, but yet she wanted to fight the desire to be happy, so she kept trying to cry but it wasn't long before she was just smiling... and laughing.

I don't know what to think about this essential oils business... effective... yes. Sketchy? possibly. I don't know. But they seem to work.

But today we are talking about joy.

Not about the Joy essential oil, but about joy as an essential fruit of your life, if you are in Jesus. If you have the Spirit living in you.

lets look at what Jesus says today, in John 16:20-22:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and **no one will take your joy from you.**”

Circumstances.

You will weep and lament, because the circumstance is dire. Jesus is talking to his disciples about how he is about to be crucified, so naturally they will be sorrowful. He is their teacher... their mentor... their friend. But something is coming Jesus tells them, and when it comes, that sorrow will turn to joy. and not just any old joy, he says that this joy, no one will be able to take away from you.

No matter what the circumstances.

Now, if you go backwards four verses, you see that He says all this right after he tells the disciples:

“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” (John 16:16)

and they were confused by this. They asked each other to themselves, “what does he mean, a little while?”

So then Jesus says to them, are you asking me what I mean when I say “a little while, and you will see me no longer; and again, a little while, and you will see me?”

and he then proceeded to give this example of childbirth.

But the way that this example came up in this conversation, is Jesus was telling the disciples,

“circumstances change.”

I don't know who originally said this, I have heard Joseph Prince use it, my pastor has said it...Creflo Dollar in one of his books says it, but really it is a great perspective. “That circumstance is just the circle you are standing in.”

That's it. Its a present reality based on nothing but what is going on right here and right now. For you, your current circumstances include sitting in a somewhat hard pew at Courage Church in Detroit, Michigan and listening to me give a sermon on the Fruit of the Spirit. You at any moment can change your circumstance. If for whatever reason you do not like something that I say, or you just don't want to sit any longer you have the freedom to get up and walk away. You can come back, or you can chose to do something different with your time.

You have the freedom to change your circumstances. and we have grown up with this mentality have we not? It has actually become an entitlement for us!

What is the most famous line in the Declaration of Independence? What does it mean to be American? The words that stand out to me most are these:

Life.

Liberty.

and the Pursuit of Happiness.

But one of the questions we are trying to ask ourselves during this series is: What should the fruit of a person be like in this world, knowing that their kingdom is not of this world?

We have grown up under this assumption that we are entitled to happiness. That it is the bottom line, that it is our privilege and nobody has a right to take it away from you and you have a right to do whatever it takes to achieve it.

Its an end all for most people.

and if we aren't careful, we will live our whole lives pursuing happiness... this external experience based on our circumstances and when our circumstances change our "happy" tank will deplete and we will be left empty because we spent our lives pursuing something circumstantial, which by default means its something fleeting, when the way Jesus called us to is the way of something internal... something... eternal. Something constant.

Jesus has called us to Joy.

Not to be confused with happiness.

When John starts his first epistle one of the first things he says is (1 John 1:4) that we are writing these things so that our JOY may be complete.

Where there is nothing wrong with being happy, the pursuit of such will always leave you empty, when Joy will leave you complete. Happiness is never complete. Its an ongoing timeline of ups and downs. It is based on the circle that you are standing in... It is based on your circumstances. One day you have it all, the next you are bankrupt. One day you have your health, the next, you get a bad report. One day you have your parents... one day, you don't have them anymore.

John Stott says (in his commentary on the books of Romans):

"The real problem with happiness is neither its pursuers nor their books; it's happiness itself. Happiness is like beauty: part of its glory lies in its

transience. It is deep but often brief ... To hold happiness is to hold the understanding that the world passes away from us, that the petals fall and the beloved dies.... no amount of fashionable scowling will keep any of us from knowing and savoring the pleasure of the sun on our faces or save us from the adult understanding that it cannot last forever.”

In a world that is always changing, its crucial that we grab ahold of something that is not. Beauty fades and stuff will break... Everything is temporal, everything is decaying. We will have good moments, and we will have incredibly hard moments, and that is called life.

Ann Voscamp, in her book “one thousand gifts,” which is recommended reading for this series... I just discovered it this week and it has absolutely wrecked me, I will link it on the website and also have purchased a couple of copies of it for our little library if you want to check it out, anyway, I learned a lot from it and used some of what I learned in this message today... she starts the whole book out by telling the tragic story of her younger sister dying at 4 years old. She tells of how she was run over by a truck while chasing a cat out into the street.. and she talks about the images of her parents holding the child. The mother having the breast feed their new, 4 week old baby while having the bury the four year old. Ann asks this question right at the start of the book, and it set such a tone for the journey that she leads you on... she asks:

“How do I wake up to the joy and grace and beauty and all that is the fullest life when I must stay numb to losses and crushed dreams and all that empties out?”

And I know that resonates with some of us. I know it resonates with all of us in different times in our lives, because our world is just so broken. And sometimes Christians, we put on the Christian smile in the midst of being devastated and we mistake that for joy.

James starts off his Epistle by saying (James 1:2-4): “Count it all joy, my brothers, when trouble comes your way. For when your faith is tested your endurance has a chance to grow.”

But for most of us, is that really our first reaction?

“Sweet. I lost my house.”

“Sweet. I have to go further into debt to fix the car.”

“Awesome. I am sick again.”

Of course not. Because our lives are circumstantial. They are on a linear timeline and when things knock us off course we have trouble finding our way back. We don't typically rejoice when bad things happen to us. But that is the thing. It is possible to weep on the outside... to cry for a loved one who went home to be with Jesus, to cry reading about an injustice that feels so out of your control but you know is just not right... its possible to be sad about a circumstance, externally, yet still have joy.

Joy is not external.

It's not an essential oil that you put on your neck and immediately your whole temperament changes.

Yet for a person who has the Spirit, Joy has it has a similar effect.

Nehemiah 8:10 “The Joy of the Lord is your strength.” It would not say that, if we did not need strength... nobody needs strength in the good times. Nobody needs strength when everything is going well.

You need strength when you feel like you can't carry the weight on your own. When you feel like its too much. When you feel like you are all along, and you are desperate for someone to come alongside you.

within Joy is an assurance that there exists a bigger picture. One that does not move forward on that same linear timeline that our lives rise and fall on.

When James is saying “Count it all Joy, when trouble comes your way...” he is not saying we should be always be throwing parties when bad things happen to us. He is saying we should rejoice in the one who controls the bigger picture.

Lets look at the middle part of this passage in John.

(John 16:21) - When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer

remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.

Now lets explore this a little. First of all, when we read this, we think, rightly so... “okay, this is a good example. She has pain, that pain is horrible, you women in here can blame Eve for that, but no matter how hard the pain is, at the end of this experience, she won’t be thinking about the pain anymore. Why? Because now she has a child. Now she has joy.

Yes, true, but it is more than that. So much more.

Let me try and personalize this a little for you.

Two of our daughters were born at home, and both stories were awesome but today you are going to hear a part of the one about Fiona. Our youngest. I may actually tell another piece of it later this series, we will see. Here is what happened.

When you have a home birth, you have a midwife. She is basically a Doctor, I think she actually is a doctor, and then she normally has an assistant with her.

Toward the end of the pregnancy, the midwife would come over all the time, check Dawn, make sure everything was good... they would do little exercises and things like that... and then would leave and say “call me if you need anything, obviously, call me if you go into labor.” and the theory of the process is when you are in labor, you call the midwife, and then she drops everything and gets to you and delivers the baby for you and its all beautiful and you don’t have to spend the weekend in the hospital but instead you just get to rest in your own bed.

So that morning, the midwife came, checked Dawn, and said to us, I think you may have this baby today. I am going to leave a few things here... so she left a bunch of doctor tool things at our house, but then she left.

She went home.

low and behold, the contractions started coming... they started speeding up. So we called the midwife, who dropped everything and rushed back to our house. But she was racing from Brooklyn to the beach against some very fast contractions.

Dawn and I were alone in the house and I kept telling her “hold on for a little while Dawn. The midwife is not here yet.”

But that doesn't really translate into anything tangible when a baby is coming. We called the midwife again, by now everyone is just yelling... the contractions are like a few seconds apart, its our third baby and it all was happening way faster than either of the other two happened. Long story short, and maybe I will tell it longer some time, but the midwives were on the bridge to the Rockaways where we lived, on speaker phone trying to coach a panicking me through the delivery of our baby when Fiona finally came out. They were five minutes away.

But the baby was not waiting.

So I delivered the baby. It was just Dawn and I... and now I am so thankful that it happened that way, but at the time all I wanted was for her to hold on for just a few more minutes until someone who knew what they were doing was there. But there was no waiting.

The baby was coming.

So this is what Jesus is saying. Joy: There is no way to stop it. The Joy has to come for those who are in Jesus. The world may rejoice now, but you will be sad. You will be sad because you love me, and I am going to a cross, but that cross is not going to hold me. Its not. that tomb, I am going there, but i am not staying there long, it will not hold me. It won't. And when I rise again and I am with you again, your sorrow will turn into Joy. It has to. It has to come.

and what he is saying with this example of the woman in labor, is this... and this has really convicted me especially this week... I got home from traveling New York tired... I wasn't extremely pleasant to be around... I kind



of let life get to me a little more than I should have... but what this is saying is that Joy is not actually optional for the Christian. Jesus says:

I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and **no one will take your joy from you.**

Jesus is saying: Circumstances change. **I DON'T.**

There is a moment earlier in John (John 8:58) when Jesus puts it like this: "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

He is the constant.

Jesus is saying here that they will be sad when he dies... but that is not forever. That is a needed, temporary, one time veering from the constant... but that he will rise again, and he will be living... and that is our current reality. We live now in the reality of a risen Lord who has conquered the grave. Jesus died, and he rose again and he is alive and living in us and if we have Jesus living in us, joy will come. It just will. Its just like Fiona, she was coming... there was no delay there. I couldn't stop her from coming. "When you see me again, you will rejoice!"

Joy has to come.

but who wouldn't want it to?

But look again at this childbirth scenario. It says that when the Mother has the child, she no longer remembers her anguish. But it doesn't say that the anguish is gone. Its not gone. There is a long and sometimes incredibly painful process to healing a woman's body after giving birth to a child. All of the mothers in this place know this. I know this because not only because I watched my wife go through it 3 times already, but also because there is a long and sometimes painful process of serving a recovering mother and taking care of the kids double time while she is laid up...

But none of that matters in light of what you now have.

But she doesn't think about the pain anymore. She thinks about the child.

What is Jesus saying?

He is not only saying that Joy is coming, he is saying that you can, and should be joyful in the midst of pain. In the midst of not understanding what God is doing in your life... In the midst of uncertainty and questions and fears and loss and hurt and sickness...

Not fake. You shouldn't be fake.

There is not much that is harder to deal with than someone who pretends to be happy when their world is obviously collapsing around them. There are not many things more irritating than the smile from someone who you know is upset with you but is putting on a front. Text messages like that are the worst.

You say something, and maybe it's a bit mean or a bit corrective or something you feel like you should be tiptoeing through, so you say it over text message and you end it with a smiley face so you think everything is ok. That's fake. Just because you end a sentence with an "LOL" or a smiley face, does not necessarily make what you are saying better or even ok. And as long as you are pursuing happiness you will always work to make yourself feel like you have it, or you will beat yourself up over the fact that you don't.

Now remember, as we explore this series, we are exploring it with this mentality... Our Kingdom is not of this world. So, what does the fruit of a person look in, in this world? In this place that we are not actual a part of?

Well, let me give away the end for you now, and then we can work our way through it a little.

Joy manifests itself in our world through thanksgiving.

So maybe you aren't happy with the way our nation is going? But are you still thankful that you get to live here?

Of course you aren't happy about losing someone that you loved... but are you thankful for the good times you have had with that person?

Are you able to thank God for what you have, even when it is being taken away from you?

You should have joy because Jesus is in you, and you are so thankful... Because of what he has already done through you, what he has already done for you. Its not based on circumstances or scenery.

Think about the Apostle Paul. He wrote all of Philippians from a Prison in Rome. Those were not ideal circumstances! But one of the things he wrote in that moment is that "**I have learned** to be content, no matter what my circumstance" (Philippians 4:11) - He learned it. It was not necessarily the natural for him to rest assuredly through his troubles. But how far he had come. He wrote this book literally chained to a prison guard there. But Paul had a very different goal for his time in Rome than that. Paul went to Rome because he wanted to preach to the entire city, and basically start a revival in a part of the world that needed Jesus so very badly, and instead found himself locked up, in chains, unsure about any sort of future.

He wanted to do something great, but it didn't go his way.

Yet whats the first thing he does in the letter? He gives thanks. He says "I thank God for you! I always remember you in my prayers with joy!"

But I think we read about that and we miss something. We see, "wow! Where was God? Paul wanted to go to Rome to preach to this great crowd and change the whole city, and it didn't end up happening?" and we miss the whole point that all that mattered to Paul was the gospel. All that mattered to him was telling people about Jesus. About the good news of Jesus. And he was able to maintain joy in the midst of persecution because he knew that God holds the whole world in his hands... God held Paul's entire world in his hands, that is why Paul in that letter was able to say things like "For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)

and the whole time, the desire of Paul's heart was that people would hear the gospel. Well, the very guards he was chained too would hear the

gospel. And they would rotate each day to a new guard and for Paul it was just a new chance to share the gospel. In (Philippians 1:12-13) he actually says that his imprisonment has served to advance the gospel.... and that through that situation the gospel has become known throughout the whole imperial guard! And of course, It was in this setting, that he penned this letter, that has gone farther into all the world and as a part of the most timeless book in all of history has reached far more people over the centuries than even were alive in Rome at that time.

He had joy. It was not fluctuating day to day. It was not like wall street. It was not up and down. It was not here today and gone tomorrow. It was a constant. It is a constant flow.

But what is Joy?

It is the Greek word *Chara* (har-a) and at the surface it means to be exceedingly glad. But it is not just happiness on steroids... Happiness is external and fleeting, Joy is internal and constant. It can't be taken from you. Joy is not circumstantial. Just like the mother having a baby... it cant be stopped if you have the Spirit. There is no way it will not come if you are in Jesus.

Well what brings Joy?

Proverbs 10:28 says "The Hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectations of the wicked will perish."

HOPE. Hope brings joy. The hope of the righteous. The hope that there really is so much more out there than this dying earthly kingdom that we are in but not of.

Think about what Paul says in 1 Thessalonians (4:13) - we do not want you to grieve the way that others grieve... the way that those who have no hope grieve. Grieving is never the problem. You can grieve when your heart hurts, but you don't grieve like the ones who have no hope. Joy is something that can be maintained even through the various levels of grief.

There is Hope that no matter where our chips may fall here in this Kingdom, we do have a future in Jesus, no matter what our future may look like here in this earthly kingdom.

Joy is a kingdom of God mindset, its home is not a temporal world based on quick fixes and instant gratification.

And like we talked about earlier, it manifests itself in this world by Thanksgiving... your world may have fallen, yet a person with joy knows enough about God and his grace to know that he still has so much to be thankful for.

And of course, Jesus is our perfect and ultimate example of this. Lets look at Luke 22:14-20:

“And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” And he took a cup, and when **he had given thanks** he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the **fruit of the vine** until the kingdom of God comes.” And he took bread, and when **he had given thanks**, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

The thing that is so incredible about this passage, this amazing passage is the word thanks (he gave thanks). We talked about it some already, about how thanksgiving is, in a way, how we manifest joy in our world.

Here we have Jesus Christ, about to die, and he starts out by saying that he has earnestly desired to eat this passover... before he suffers. He knows, suffering is coming, but its necessary to fulfill the kingdom of God.

The circle that he was standing in was one surrounded by death. It was surrounded by betrayal... in fact the very next verse after this he begins talking about how the one who would betray him is taking this communion with him. But in the middle of all of that, he gave thanks.

It is the Greek word “*eucharisteō*” (*you-har-estay-o*) -

It is, of course, where we get the word “Eucharist” from.

The root word of *eucharisteō* is the word *charis* (har-ese) which means grace. Grace is a gift... its the ultimate gift, notice the way the beginning of this passage is written... look at how badly Jesus wanted this time with his disciples... with his friends... it says “I earnestly desired...” when Jesus took the bread and broke it, he saw it as a gift. He saw it as grace. He saw the time as grace, knowing it was short, and he saw the bread as grace, knowing it would be his last meal on earth.

So Jesus he gave *eucharisteō*.- he gave thanksgiving.

and its root word is grace.

but can you take a guess at what its derivative is? it is the Greek word *chara*, (*ha-ra*)

It means joy.

“*eucharisteō*” (*you-har-estay-o*)

In this one, rarely talked about Greek word, lies a lot of answers to a lot of our questions. A lot of questions that maybe we shouldn't even be asking. Questions that maybe we don't really want to know the answers to.

Questions like why?

Why did that happen?

How can I have joy, when \_\_\_\_\_?

questions that we use as a means to distance ourselves from the God who we need most in those vulnerable moments in our lives.

But a question that may be worth asking would be this:

How could Jesus have joy, when the circle he was standing in was surrounded by death? Surrounded by his best friends, all of which would stand back and watch it all from a distance, one who would blatantly betray him and another who was going to deny him three times.

Have you ever thought about that verse in Hebrews, Hebrews 12:2?

It says look to Jesus. He is author and the perfecter of our faith. The whole faith story... Jesus wrote it. He wrote it on the cross. and then it goes on to say:

Who for the **joy** that was set before him endured the cross.  
despised the shame.  
and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Do you ever read something, and assume it says one thing... but if you just read it a little more closely you realize that it says something else?

Look at the way it is written... there is joy set before him. Joy is ahead of him. I always used to quote this verse, and I would focus on other aspects of it and never really look at what it said... so even though this is what it says... I would read it as:

“with the joy set before him.” Do you ever do that? Just read through it and let your mind assume it says one thing but if you just read it one word at a time you realize, this is saying something completely different?

I would read it like, “Jesus is happy to be doing this.”

But Jesus himself asked the Father “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me... nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done.” (Matthew 26:39)

So what is it saying?

How could there be joy set before him? How could he go into that, knowing Joy was coming?

Because he was rescuing his bride. He was redeeming us. It was just like the woman in the story, who went through birthing pains, but forgot about all of the pain when she was holding her child... when she was holding that screaming bundle of joy.

Well, we are that screaming bundle of joy. The church is the screaming bundle of joy that Jesus went through hell and back to deliver.

And we can have joy because of Jesus.

You may not always be happy, but you can always be filled with joy. How could your heart be filled with anything but joy, knowing that the God of the universe has called you by name and created you for a purpose?

You have joy because of Jesus. Because of the gospel.

The word gospel, the literal word in the greek is the word *evangelion* (*you on gelly on*)- we like to say “the good news” but the literal is actually “the joy news” - it comes from the word “messenger” and in ancient Greek, an euangelos was a person who brought a message that caused the hearer “JOY.”

For example in a war, the message may be for a commanding officer, “we have won a great battle.” or even better yet, “The war is over... you get to go home and be with your families.” Joy.

How can you not have joy when Jesus made you his joy? He set you before him and endured the cross knowing that he was reconciling you back to the Father.

How can you not have joy, when Jesus went to the communion table with thanksgiving... with joy for what it was going to bring upon our dying world. He took the bread, and he gave thanks.

“*eucharisteō*” (*you-har-estay-o*)

*Charis* (har-ese) — Grace. *Chara* (ha-ra)— Joy.

Thanksgiving. All in the same place. All in the same word.



*“eucharisteō” (you-har-estay-o)*

Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, he remembers the words of Jesus during the last supper... and he says this... He says “the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed took bread, and gave thanks.”

and then in your bibles, this is where it switches to red letters and you read what Jesus says in that moment after giving thanks, and he says “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me...” Then he goes on to the cup and he says “This cup is the covenant in my blood, do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

I was explaining this to my daughter Milly this week, we were walking through this sanctuary and I was describing to her some of the moments that are depicted on all of our beautiful stained glass... I pointed her to the picture of Jesus and she asked “Is that really what he looks like?”

and when we got to the cup I told her... “every time we take the bread and the juice and we sit down with it, we are supposed to remember Jesus, and all he did for us...” and she said to me, “really?” and I said “yes!”

She said,

“its kind of hard to remember.”

But that is the mind of a child... of someone unfamiliar with the concept of a cost... with the stress of owing a debt.

but if someone came and wiped your slate clean, paid off your credit cards, paid off your house, paid off your car payment... it wouldn't be hard to remember what that person did for you.

you would never forget. Because It changed everything about your situation.

and that is why we take communion. To remember.

Paul then concludes by saying “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” Then Paul goes on to say, make sure you don’t take this cup in an unworthy manner... let a person first examine himself... It says, if you don’t examine yourself, you are eating and drinking judgment onto yourself. and a lot of people, they hear that as they are about to take communion and they look back on their week and they think “My God, I blew it so badly... there is no way I can take communion this week...” but that is not what Paul is saying. He is not saying “examine yourself” to scare you into not taking it... he is saying it because so many people, they grow numb to what the gospel actually is. He is saying that it is the opposite... the person who blew it so badly this week is exactly who Jesus’ body was broken for. Hebrews 4:16 says that we should boldly approach the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We should boldly approach the gospel of Jesus knowing how badly we need it every single day.

because its “Joy” news.

When you come before the communion table, and you partake of these elements, it should be with great joy, because as you examine yourself there is no way to find yourself anything but guilty. And yet the verdict reads innocent. The verdict reads “Child of the living God.” The act of communion is the act of acknowledging, Jesus’ body was broken for the junk in my life. It was broken because I pursued happiness at the expense of others... rather than experiencing the joy of the gospel.

As often as we take communion, we are proclaiming that we are thankful that Jesus Christ made us his joy... and with us set before him, He endured the cross that should be carrying us, but instead cleansed us by his blood.