

REDISCOVER JESUS: COMPLETE JOY

Luke 19:29-40

Intro

It's Palm Sunday. We need to hear about Jesus riding on a donkey.

And we will.

But, especially because of the conversations about rediscovering Jesus that we have been having throughout the season of Lent, the 40+ day lead up to Easter, my hope is that we might be able to hear it through a different sort of a lens, and it is this: what fills you with joy?

What we are about to hear, in terms of the people's reaction to Jesus approach to Jerusalem, sure feels like joy...but what was filling them with joy? Was it who Jesus really was (along with the sacrificial steps that he was about to take)? Or was it the human expectations that had been draped around Jesus? What was filling them with joy?

As you think about your answer to that question, keep the corresponding question close at hand as well: what fills you with joy? The scripture reads this way.

Luke 19:29-40

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it." ' ³²So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' ³⁴They said, 'The Lord needs it.' ³⁵Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!'

³⁹Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' ⁴⁰He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

Psalm 16

Intro

So I have asked you to ponder the question what fills you with joy. Now I am going to push it further: what would make your joy complete?

Now I know that when that sort of a question is asked in a church setting we immediately go to the place of, 'what's the appropriate churchy answer that the minister guy is looking for?'

That's not the answer that I am looking for. I am not looking for the answer that you think that I (or so much more importantly, God) want to hear.

I want to know how you would answer it outside of the confines of these particular walls. Because how you answer it there guides and directs the sort of joy that you seek out regardless of the walls that you may find yourself in. What would make your joy complete?

What we are about to hear is the Psalmist's answer to that question. That answer, especially as we continue the conversation around rediscovering Jesus, needs to become our breathe in and breathe out prayer, so that we might begin to truly appreciate where complete joy really abides. The scripture reads this way.

Psalm 16

¹ Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. ² I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.' ³ As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. ⁴ Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink-offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips. ⁵ The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. ⁷ I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. ⁸ I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. ¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. ¹¹ You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

'Rediscover Jesus: Complete Joy'

The definition of joy in the dictionary is, 'the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something good or satisfying. A source of keen pleasure or delight.'

I like that definition. Feels good. It feels correct.

And, realistically, there are a multitude of things that could take place in your life that would be able to provide you joy. Each of us could probably create a list that has some overlap as well as a few unique items that bring you joy.

All of the people, experiences, and stuff that would be on your respective list is, hypothetically, ... good.

But that isn't what we're trying to talk about this morning.

No, hear the question again: what would make your joy...complete?

As I pondered that query, I went back and conducted more highly unscientific Google research and found a variety of lists of things that bring people joy. From a first kiss, to a full bank account, to your family, to getting swept up in something spontaneous, to silence, to realizing you just accomplished something you thought you weren't going to be able to do: the options of things that bring joy were as diverse as the authors who put forward their various perspectives. Some of the items that were put out there I resonated with quite a bit. Others...not so much.

But none of those items on any of those lists were able to talk about that 'one thing' or combination of circumstances that were able to make their joy complete.

Because here's the thing, and this ties us back to the Triumphal Entry passage: the people who were there outside the city gates of Jerusalem, lifting their voices...and their hands...offering shouts of, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!', they were experiencing joy! I absolutely trust that. And their joy was even derived from someone who was leading them to place their trust in the Creator of all. Jesus was bringing them joy.

But the joy that Jesus was bringing them was so far from complete, not because what Jesus was bringing was incomplete (it most certainly was complete), but because as soon as Jesus didn't measure up to their wants...the praise and adoration disappeared to the point that we can surmise that some of those who were shouting his praise on Sunday were calling for his crucifixion a few days later, and if they weren't calling for it, they, at the very least, not calling for an end to the charade of justice known as Jesus trial to come to an end.

Jesus brought them joy...but their joy was not complete.

Why?

I believe it is because of the fact that they did not, as the psalmist writes, remain in the presence of God. The people of Jerusalem walked with God willingly and readily when what they experienced was within the constructs of the blind spots that they had created either of their own accord or that had been handed down to them through the generations. Like the definition that we started our conversation with (joy equating to happiness), they were good with God as long as God led them to happiness. Once that happiness started to wane,...then walking with God really didn't work all that well anymore.

They were looking for the right now joy instead of abiding in God no matter what and in that state of faithfully abiding, being led to a place where their joy was complete.

Are any of us any different?

The abundant examples in the world around us say 'no'. The painful realities as we examine of our lives (you know, when we are willing to look beyond the blind spots), remind us that they are us, that we are them.

Which is why, even as celebrate the triumphal entry through the city gates, we must dig deeper, rediscovering Jesus...or maybe it's discovering Jesus for the first time, because it is in discovering Jesus that we are able to abide in the presence of God, allowing not only our joy to be made complete (or at the very least, get that much closer to it), but so that we are able to more fully and easily embrace the reality of who we were created to be: you are the light of the world.

What brings you joy?

Now, as you appreciate the blind spots that you have in your life, look with eyes of faith beyond those self-imposed limitations, and begin to be embraced by what will make your joy complete. Again, from Psalm 16: 'You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.'

Will you rediscover Jesus? Will you abide in God?

A few days ago, I heard someone say that, as difficult as it was to admit, and as much as they had faith in the promises from God that they know to be true, they still find themselves not going 'all in' in regard to their walk with God, their journey with Jesus.

Think about that for a moment. The faith in God is present and there is a recognition of moments when they have not gone 'all in' with their walk with God.

For what it's worth, I actually look at that statement not as a failure, but as the beginning of a greater level of faithfulness about ready to break forth into their lives. The blind spots are beginning to not only be acknowledged, but worked around and broken through as they find themselves more and more in the presence of God, thereby experiencing, at the very least glimpses, of having their joy be made complete.

Speaking for myself, there are a variety of things that bring me joy, from my family, to my calling, to the interests that I have.

And none of those things, individually or in any combination thereof, are able to make my joy complete.

We have been told that only comes when we abide in the Creator of all, as we have been led to know Him in ever more personal ways through His son Jesus, and the movement of His Holy Spirit even in the world today.

Over the past few weeks there have been a multitude of the daily readings from 'Rediscover Jesus' that have talked about how to identify those blind spots by knowing who God is in ever clearer ways, taking time to be in breathe in and breathe out communication with God, and reminding us that it will be through the denial of self that we will actually find who we were created to be all along.

Are you? Begin to make your joy complete. Knock on that door...right now.

After Sermon Prayer

Holy God, we gather here today and are able to remember and even experience the joy that was felt on that first Palm Sunday. But it wasn't complete. Lord, lead us to make our joy complete by going 'all in' with You. Rip the blind spots from our eyes so that we might know You more fully, be in relationship with You more completely, and through our denial of self, allow Your light to shine ever more brightly into the world that so desperately needs it. Lord, open the door as we knock today and embrace us as we reach out to be embraced by You. It is in Jesus name that we pray. Amen.