

john 15:4
Abide in ME



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 3 - Number 23
The week of May 13, 2018

Sermon Series: *Money Matters*
Guarding: Finding Your Joy in God
Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

THIS WEEK'S CORE VIRTUE

Joy: Disciples of Jesus Christ should experience delight in God that is unaffected by circumstances and is sustained despite of the changing seasons of life.

The following reading is an excerpt of an essay entitled "What is the Difference between Joy and Happiness" by Miroslav Volf. Volf is the Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School and Founder and Director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture. He has written or edited over 15 books and 70 scholarly articles on subjects ranging from the possibility of doing one's work "in the Spirit" to the relevance of theology in the life of the everyday churchgoer to the possibility of actually loving your enemies.

Fleshing out Joy

The claim that it is possible to rejoice in the midst of suffering will surprise nobody. Some people rejoice while others suffer, even because they suffer, and some people suffer so that others can rejoice (J. S. Bach's of Jesus' passion: "Your bitter suffering brings thousands of joys"). Suffering and joy are here divided among different individuals. But can a person who suffers rejoice? Surprisingly, the answer is, yes: we can suffer and rejoice at the same time. Of course, we don't rejoice *because* of suffering, either of our own suffering or somebody else's; such joy would be either masochistic or mean. When we rejoice while suffering it is because of some good that is ours despite the suffering (for instance, God's character, deeds, and the promise of redemption) or because of a good the suffering will produce (for instance, a child for a mother in childbirth). Put more abstractly, "joy despite" is possible on account of "joy because."

Some joys are morally neutral, but many have a positive or negative *moral* valence. Joy can be corrupt (with eyes wide open I construe an object of joy as good, but it is in fact profoundly wicked); joy can be self-absorbed (I rejoice only in my own good); joy can be indifferent to others (I rejoice with gusto over my distant friend's fortune, but am unmoved by the pain at my doorstep); joy can be perverse (I rejoice in the misfortune of others); joy can be generous (I rejoice in the good of others or, to quote New Testament, I "rejoice with those who rejoice"); joy can be attuned to the suffering of others (as when, in a period of intense joy, we continue to be mindful of those who grieve).

Since joy has a moral dimension, rejoicing can be an obligation (for instance, a command of God, as in the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament). True, we have little control over feelings of joy; as a rule, they simply well up inside us when we perceive that some un-owed good has happened to us or to those we care for. But we do have significant control over how we *construe* a situation and whether we are properly attentive to these un-owed goods. The command to rejoice presupposes a belief that objectively a given situation ought rightly be construed as good. Absence of joy can then amount to an untruthful rendering of that situation. Yet, though joy can be commanded, joy cannot be imposed. A person himself or herself must engage in a construal of a situation and positive feelings must well up inside them for there to be joy. Joy is either free or it isn't joy - and that's true even of commanded joy.

Perhaps the most surprising, joy has an activist dimension. Surprising, because joy doesn't explicitly advocate any values or social ideals; it doesn't seek to persuade others and to embody those values and ideals in social institutions. But joy wants

something; all emotions do. They project themselves into the future and motivate action. What kind of future does joy want? As it projects itself into the future, joy doesn't aim directly at changing the world; it simply delights in and celebrates the good that is and proclaims, implicitly, that it is good for that good to continue to be. "All joy wants eternity - wants deep, deep eternity," wrote Friedrich Nietzsche. Like love, joy is one of the "eternity seeking" emotions. It wills itself as a permanent state. But just for that reason it also wills all the "objects" which give it rise. In this willing, joy sets itself tacitly against features of the world over which one cannot or should not rejoice, and does so without resentment and judgment. As such, joy is both the beginning and the end of authentic personal, social, and political transformation.

Joy is best experienced in community. Joy seeks company ("come and rejoice with me") and the company of those who rejoice feeds the joy of each. Feasts and celebrations both express and nourish joy. As feasts and celebrations illustrate, though joy is irreducibly personal - nobody can rejoice in my place! - joyfulness can also be an aura of a social space, whether a household or a larger community, so that when we enter such a space, we enter into joy, and, often, joy enters into us.

Finally, joy is not a self-standing emotion, isolated from the character and circumstances of a person rejoicing. As a form of attunement between the self and the world perceived as blessing, joy is, ultimately, the emotional dimension of the good life, of a life that is both going well and is being lived well; complete and lasting joy is the emotional side of the ultimate good.

STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says
(*Read it at least three times*)

Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

⁸ If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and righteousness, do not be amazed at the matter, for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are yet higher ones over them.

⁹ But this is gain for a land in every way: a king committed to cultivated fields.

¹⁰ He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? ¹² Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep.

¹³ There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, ¹⁴ and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. ¹⁵ As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. ¹⁶ This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go, and what gain is there to him who toils for the wind? ¹⁷ Moreover, all his days he eats in darkness in much vexation and sickness and anger.

¹⁸ Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. ¹⁹ Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil - this is the gift of God. ²⁰ For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.

STEP TWO . . .

OBSERVING how the passage moves

Return to the passage and **mark key words, phrases and movements:**

- Circle all of the words in these passages that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in these passages.
- Highlight Ecclesiastes 5:8.
- Highlight Ecclesiastes 5:10.
- In Ecclesiastes 5:12, underline the phrase "Sweet is the sleep of a laborer."
- In Ecclesiastes 5:13, underline the phrase "riches were kept by their owner to his hurt."

appointed
baptized
Caesar
enemy/demons/Satan
eternal life
fathers & children [in one color different from Moses]
Gentiles
gospel
grace
Holy Spirit
in the name of Jesus Christ
Jesus
Jews
Law (of Moses)
men of the council
Moses [in different color from fathers & children]
prayer
repent (repentance)
resurrection (raised up)
salvation
suffering
the Way
the promise of the Father
witnesses
word of God

- Highlight Ecclesiastes 5:15.
- Highlight Ecclesiastes 5:18.
- In Ecclesiastes 5:19, underline the phrase “the gift of God.”
- In Ecclesiastes 5:20, underline the phrase “God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.”

STEP THREE . . .

Ask the five “W” questions and the one “H” question:

1. **WHO** is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? And, to **whom** is it speaking?
2. **WHAT** is the subject of the passage? What does the passage say about the subject?
3. **WHEN** do or will the events occur? When did something happen to a particular person, people, or nation?
4. **WHERE** did or will this happen?
5. **WHY** is something said or mentioned? Why would or will this happen? Why at this time? Why this person?
6. **HOW** will it happen? How is it to be done? How is it illustrated?

**THIS WEEK’S
COMPLEMENTARY PASSAGE**

Matthew 6:19-24

¹⁹“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²²“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means
This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.
Ecclesiastes 5:8-20

5:8-17 - Greed is responsible for many of the detrimental aspects of wealth.

5:8 - “**Do not be amazed.**” Oppression and injustice are inevitable.

5:10-12 - Greed is insatiable and robs one of sleep; contentment provides rest (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

5:13-17 - Solomon ponders the tragedies of unused and lost wealth. Whatever is not lost “in a bad venture” must be left behind at death. Earthly labor appears to be in vain.

5:18-20 - God sovereignly distributes wealth.

5:18 - “**Good.**” God intends that people should enjoy the benefits of their work as a due reward of their labor.

5:19 - “**Gift of God.**” The ability to enjoy earthly labor comes not from stoic human strength, but from God-given grace, granted to rich and poor (v. 12) alike.

Resource for Commentary: *The Reformation Study Bible.*

STEP FIVE ...

SUMMARIZING the Message

The Bible acknowledges the obligatory but tempting role money plays in our lives. We need enough of it to meet our essential needs, but if we crave more of it than we need it becomes an idol. Therefore, the Bible has a great deal to say about money matters—how to manage it, spend it, save it, give it and the clear and present danger of loving it. In fact, anyone who reads the Bible will quickly notice that it devotes an unusual amount of attention to the subject. Plainly, according to the Bible, money matters. The key to all matters related to money is a right perspective and where to get it.

As Christians, before we turn to *The Wall Street Journal* or *Money* magazine for financial instruction, we would be wise to open our Bibles. I wonder what kind of fee you might be willing to fork over in order to receive the best financial advice from the wisest and richest man who ever lived? That’s our opportunity as we seek to listen to the financial counsel of King Solomon. The good news is that his advice won’t cost us a penny! In Ecclesiastes 5:8-20, Solomon shares with us the wisdom God gave him about how to make money a blessing and to avoid it from becoming a curse in our lives.

The Book of Ecclesiastes

Before we look at the issue of money specifically, we need to consider the book of Ecclesiastes in general. At the beginning of the book, Solomon identifies himself as its author, referring to himself as a Preacher (literally, *Qoheleth*), the son of David, king in Jerusalem (1:1). At the end of the book, he suggested his words were “like nails firmly fixed” that keep us stable and move us toward God. In his preface Solomon declares life as nothing more than a vapor: “Vanity of vanities ... all is vanity” (1:2). In his epilogue, the king concludes by saying, “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (12:13). In between these two bookends, there is a recurring theme, like the cyclical notes in a grand symphony. For example, “There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God” (2:23). Also, in our text for this message, Solomon repeats himself, “Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to

eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot” (5:18). Solomon is not saying that life isn’t worth living. He is saying that we will never figure it out. Only God holds the key to unlocking the secret of life.

What does that have to do with money? Everything. God knows what we do not know. We think money, and having as much of it as we can, is the secret to life. God knows that money, while it is necessary, will never bring the kind of satisfaction for which we long. We must guard our hearts from thinking that having more will produce greater joy.

The Limitations of Money

That’s the first of four limitations Solomon wants us to know about money in 5:8-20. The first is that if we love money, *enough will never be enough* (5:10-12). We’ll never be content because we’ll always think we need more. The love of money will also cause other concerns to arise. We will lose sleep over how to make it, grow it, and manage it.

The second limitation Solomon tells us about money is that *it will always be levied* (8-9). A bureaucracy will always want more of it. Besides death, paying taxes is one of the certainties of life.

The third limitation the Preacher tells us about money is that *it can be lost* (13-15). He observed in ancient Israel what we all know too well today. People work hard for their money, save it, and then, in some way or another—whether in a failed commercial venture or a natural catastrophe—lost everything they had.

The last limitation Solomon mentions is that *it will be left behind* (16-17). We can work really hard, save and invest, but then our health fades and we can’t take it with us.

We are often told by others to make all the money we can because then we’ll have happiness, contentment, comfort and fulfillment. Yet, Solomon comes along and says, “I was one of the richest, most affluent people who ever lived. Don’t get me wrong; money is nice. But if you think that money will make you happy and fulfilled, you’re gravely mistaken.”

The Key to Life

In the final verses of our text, Solomon’s *focus is really on God* (18-20). God is mentioned four times in three verses. He’s the heart of the passage. He acknowledges that God is the Giver of good things because He is so gracious. He also warns us not to be misled by money. We must guard our hearts. We guard our hearts by focusing on God and His grace. He is the one who provides for us. The air we breathe, the food we eat, the health we have, the families we enjoy, the jobs we work, the homes we own—the Lord is the one who graciously gives us all things.

STEP SIX . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

Please try and read the entire passage before gathering with your Growth Group.

Questions

Icebreaker Question: Ice Breaker: What’s the most memorable gift you have ever given? What’s the most memorable gift you ever received?

1. Read Ecclesiastes 5:10-20. Do you find the tone of this passage depressing or promising? Why?
2. In this passage, Solomon is warning us about some of the myths people have about money. What are some of these misconceptions?

3. In this passage, Solomon is not saying that having wealth is a sin, but rather the love of money is what distorts our hearts (5:10a). What does a love of money look like?

4. Read Ecclesiastes 5:11-17. What are some of the negative effects a love of money can trigger?

Verse 11 _____

Verse 12 _____

Verses 13-14 _____

Verses 15-17 _____

5. Read Matthew 19:23-24; Mark 4:19; Mark 10:17-22. What are some other negative effects of the love of money?

6. Read Ecclesiastes 5:18-20. What is Solomon's answer to the limitations of money? What surprises you about his answer?

7. How does the gospel both shape and deepen our ability to eat, drink and find enjoyment in God all the days of our lives?

STEP SEVEN ...

APPLYING the passage to my life

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

When you apply God's Word, you are thinking about what God might be saying to you through the Scriptures. Application involves action. Application makes your reading become a reality in your own life. Make your applications specific (state who, what & when). You are encouraged to use the **S.P.E.C.K.** method to apply God's Word to your life. Remember that each passage of Scripture may not lend itself to answering all five of these questions.

S - SINS to confess and avoid (Are there sinful actions, attitudes or thoughts that you need to confess to God based upon your study of these Scriptures?)

P - PROMISES to claim (List God's promises for you from these Scriptures.)

E - EXAMPLES to follow (What examples, for right thinking or right actions, can you take for your own life from these Scriptures?)

C - COMMANDS to obey (List God's commands for you from these Scriptures and seek to be obedient to them.)

K - KNOWLEDGE of God to apply (God's character is visible throughout the Scriptures as an example to us. What attributes and/or attitudes does God display that you can apply to your own life?)

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*
Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*
An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*
Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*
Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*
An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*
Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalms 26:3*
Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*
Gentleness is power and strength under God's control. Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely *Titus 2:11-13*
The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*
Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Sermon Notes:

2018: BOOK-AT-A-TIME ONE YEAR BIBLE READING PLAN
(on LCC website)

Sunday, May 13 thru Saturday, May 19, 2018
Ephesians 4-6, Proverbs 24:1-22; 1 Samuel 1-3, Proverbs 24:23-34
1 Samuel 4-6, Proverbs 25:1-14; 1 Samuel 7-9, Proverbs 25:15-28;
1 Samuel 10-12, Proverbs 26:1-16; 1 Samuel 13-15, Proverbs 26:17-28

Memory Verse

“Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot.”

Ecclesiastes 5:18