**Authentic Faith:** How to have joy in knowing Christ

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1.10.16 | Grace | 1 John 1:1-4 | Run After Christ and You Will Find Joy Chasing You. | 35 Min |

**New Years and New Series Are New Starts**

New beginnings. We’ve all had them at least a time or two. Things like…

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| New baby New jobNew semester New teacherNew pencil New toy New rule  | New sibling New roommate New House New neighborsNew jacket New teeth New Bible  | New in-lawNew friend New computer New shoes New car New year New pastor  |

We’ve all had the experience with “new.” If we are honest, this can be a really good thing or a really hard thing. Some people love change. Other people are numb to change. Some people fear change.

Yet, when we start a new year we have the chance to seemingly reboot our life’s hard drive. We can start with a fresh perspective, doing away with what we didn’t like or what was slowing us down, and beef up the things that we want more of or want to work harder at. The book of 1 John is a great book for new beginnings.

**Think of it this way…**

The Apostle John, who we met and studies last week, is now in his later years of life. We don’t know his exact age, but we can assume that this was close to the end of this aging 94 year-old’s life. He was a faithful man who had experienced the love of God deeply. He wanted nothing more than for those who read the letter to also experience the love of God.

John doesn’t have the posture of a pushy parent speaking down to his kids. When he refers to the readers of this letter – you and I now – as “Child” or “Children,” this is not a put down, but an expression of love. As if he is saying with the wisdom and grandfather voice, *my child… I love you so much, I have to tell you to embrace these things; not to force anything upon you or to constrain you, but rather to set you free in the same love I experienced in my life.*

**He had a goal in mind: joy.**

He wanted the early church, and we can say even now, the church today, to experience joy. Not the kind of joy that comes from cheap laughs or warm-and-fuzzy feelings. Rather, he wanted them to have the joy of the Lord.

He had been with Jesus, laughed with Jesus, touched Jesus, cried with Jesus, healed with Jesus, prayed with Jesus, seen Jesus—and He wanted that same deep feeling of love, joy and life that he had with Christ to be felt by all people, especially all those who already believed.

**I imagine John was ready for life not law.**

Growing up Jewish, he was familiar with the duty of pursuing God and obeying His law. He would have seen men and women pursue God because it was a part of their ethnicity more than it was a part of the volition or desire. Once John came to know Christ, no longer was He loyal to God because He had to be to earn favor with God. Rather he saw the pursuit or loyalty to God to be out of the overflow of His love *for* God.

**He was beloved by God so that He could love God in return.** He knew the source of love for God and others in his life came because God “First loved us” (as he wrote in John 3:16). His love for God was the very thing that brought joy and turned His view of religion to a relationship. Obedience was not out of obligation, but out of desire and delight. He found joy in being loved and loving God.

**So follow me on this logic for a minute—**

In John’s time, truth and obedience was the pursuit, not love or joy. God was seen as a cosmic power, not an intimate Father.

This is not a good way to see God, nor is it the way He intended it. He had to send Jesus to show His love to the world and help us understand that it was not just about law (or religion) but it was about a relationship.

In our time, happiness is the pursuit, not truth. We do everything we can to have joy and love often at the expense of truth. So many of us are on a happiness quest not a truth quest. Our whole life is spent trying to get happier. Think about how this play out in life:

* **People get married and divorced for the same reason**: happiness. They marry a person because they want to be happy. They divorce a person because they are no longer happy.
* **We start and stop drinking for the same reason:** happiness. They start drinking because they like how they feel, they stop because it is taking a toll on their body and they don’t like how they feel.
* **We buy and sell things for the same reason:** happiness. We have something we want and are sure will make life better, so we buy it. Then we find something else that will bring us more happiness than that thing we once loved, so we sell it and buy a new something. All for the sake of (say it with me) happiness.

So on one extreme you have obedience without joy. On the other extreme you have joy (or perceived joy) without obedience. Jesus was wants give us a balance of both in our relationship with Him. He wants us to pursue Him out of love and let joy be out reward.

Let me show you want I am talking about by looking at the Bible. Open with me to 1 John 1:1-4 on Page 1021. As always, I encourage you to take notes on the bulletin outline I provided you or in the YouVersion Bible app. And listen, if you don’t have a Bible, please take one of the ones in the seats in front of you home. That is our gift to you.

I am going to read the four verses we are going to look at for the next few minutes and then pray for God to lead us as we study and apply this passage to life. Let’s read 1 John 1:1-4:

 **[1] That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—[2] the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—[3] that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. [4] And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.**

**This is God’s Word. Let’s Pray.**

* God, we want to obey you but we fail. Christ never failed.
* We want joy but we can’t find it without you. Christ was your joy for us.
* Will you please guide us to experience you more intimately so we can experience your joy and love more thoroughly and eternally.

As I said, **He wants us to pursue Him out of love and let joy be our reward.**

Verse one is a personal account of a man we experienced Christ deeply. Without a real greeting or introduction, to the letter, the author jumps right in. He says, **“That which was from the beginning…we have heard… we have seen with our eyes…we looked upon and have touched with our hands.”**

This John making it clear that we didn’t just hear something from someone else, but we saw and touched Jesus ourselves. This was not hear-say. We were as close as you could get. This was a first hand account to the truth of Jesus Christ being the Messiah. He is screaming here—we are sure He is God!

It is as if John is saying, ***“We saw this! It is true! Trust us!”***

**“The Word of Life”** — this was an important phrase for John. He mentions it in his Gospel letter and again here at the beginning of this letter. John wrote in John 1:1, “In the beginning was the word”. When John uses the phrase **in the beginning** in his gospel, he is meaning before creation or time. But here he uses it in another senses, as from the **beginning** of Jesus earthly ministry.

John has the basis to say this as he was there from the time Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. The Apostle John was there from the beginning – not of all creation – but of the time that Jesus started His earthly ministry. John knew this was the beginning of the light of the world coming into the darkness and changing everything we know.

It is as If he is saying, ***that was our beginning—the moment our lives were changed forever****.* We heard him, saw him, touched him and experienced Him. The God who was before time came into time to change all time.

John wasn’t just saying that he knew Christ as a good friend, a pal to share life with a even a wise mentor who gave good advice. John says that he was **life.** Notice how these four verses are only two sentences and one really big parenthetical statement. The parenthetical statement, the phrase between the two the two dashes, is defining what John meant when he called Jesus “The Word of Life.”

In verse two we are told that Jesus was “Eternal life” who was “With the Father.” In verse 3 Jesus is referred to as “the Son.” All this to point to the divine nature of Christ and the union God the Father shared with His Son.

The only way that you and I—or any person—could experience a life giving relationship with God is to join in on the joyous relationship God shares with His Son. None of us would concede that with enough work or self-righteous to be come equal to God. So if we can’t become like God, we have to be invited in by God to share the life that He has with His son.

That is John’s exact point—we’ve been given sweet, glorious, joyous, life in Jesus. He experienced it and wanted the same for us. His point is this:

**When I experience the presence of Christ, I find eternal life (vv. 1-2).**

Eternal life is not just what happens to us when we are dead. So often we talk about “Eternal life” as the life that never ends for us after we are dead. While this may be half of it, it is only half. We are granted eternal life with God that will not know death after we pass from this earth.

But when Jesus talked about being eternal life, He didn’t want of us just to think about what we get at the end, but what we get here-and-now. The moment we put faith in Christ, we get eternal life. This is not jut the promise of a life after death, but the joining of our life now with the divine presence God.

Listen: Nothing is too big for God to overcome to give you eternal life; nothing is to small for Him to use to point you to eternal life. God is continually calling people to himself though all sorts of means, renewing even the more wicked of sinners. He whispers through the little things calling us to faith in the greatest thing.

**The decision to embrace Christ as our eternal life is a daily choice**. He plants the seed of salvation to bring us to Him. We then respond in faith, declaring that the is the Lord of our life. Then, every day we walk with Christ, we have a choice to make: will we chose the joy of Christ by experiencing His presence, or will we seek happiness elsewhere?

Eternal life is not a temporary or conditional life. The joy of Christ does not depend on circumstances, but on the way we see our circumstances. Wen we embrace Christ we are choosing to see life through His perspective. As we experience life with Him, we receive joy from Him. The fellowship we share is the platform for peace, love and hope to be built upon in our life.

You can almost feel the joy John has as he writes verse 2, explain “Life”:

 **“[2]—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—”**

His experience with Christ mentioned in verse one drive him to the proclamation of Christ mentioned in verse two.

**The central idea here is “to proclaim” or “make manifest.”** He mentions first what God did for us. The fact that Jesus was **eternal** and intangible, but is now made **manifest** to us is key for the author. Jesus was with God the Father before time but was not injected within time to be made known by us. God proclaimed love to us through His son.

**Now we proclaim love to the world because of the son**. The idea of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ is central to the author’s intentions of this book and these verses. John is fulfilling what Jesus told him and the other disciples to do, before He ascended to be with God. They were to go forth into all the world and teach/proclaim/evangelize all that Jesus has taught them.

John was passionate to proclaim Christ, not just for the sake of forgiveness, but for the sake of fellowship. He wanted people to know they belonged first to God and second to the family of God. He knew what it was like to be adopted out of the cold-dead word of religiosity and sin into to the warm loving relationship with the Father through the Son.

This leads us to another truth for life: **When I experience the presence of Christ, I make it known to others (v. 2).**

The good news is not just a great secret. The fact that God loved me so much to give His only Son so that I can be included in a relationship with them is not something that should be kept quite.

Think of it this way (based on a true story). Let’s say you were on the donor list to get a kidney. Yours was only working at 6% and you knew that if you didn’t get a new one soon it would be the end for you. The doctor tells you that you need to find a donor, someone with your same blood type, to save your life.

You put a sign on your car—“Need kidney. O blood Type. Please call.” You post it on Social Media. You tell everyone you know. Finally, someone comes and says, “hey, I don’t know you, but I would be glad to give you a kidney to save your life.”

Most likely you would be so indebted to them. You would do more than send a thank you note and send a Christmas card. You would feel like you owed them your life because they gave you an organ and in turn saved your life.

We can get our minds around that, but we struggle to comprehend an eternal God who gave—not an organ, but His beloved only Son—to die so you could have true spiritual life. What a gift!

Verse 3 is the practical outplay of this gift; we are joining life with God and gaining joy. Look at John proclaiming that unity with God, it is the reason he writes:

**“[3] that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”**

The very reason he wants to them to know about Jesus is so that they can have fellowship with the Father. The word for “fellowship” in the Greek is *koinonia* only appearing 4 times in this letter, each time carrying great importance. *Koinonia* can also be translated communion, partnership, or togetherness. The simple meaning of the word is “commonness.” We are now invited in as a “Common” part of the family of God; not outsiders, servants or slaves, but beloved Children.

Just as children—adopted or by birth—do not chose their parents, neither do we chose to be adopted making it happen in our own efforts. God choses to bring us in the fold, making a way for us. Jesus is that way; by His blood we are counted as one with Christ.

Jesus is as close as you can come to God, because He is God. This passage says that we share with the “Fellowship” God and Jesus have as **Son and Father.** Jesus is described as the son of God, here and 22 other times in first John. John wanted to (1) show His as God first, but ours second. John then uses the term “Christ” for the first time in this letter. points to the fact that the author sees Jesus as *OUR* Messiah (2:22; 5:1), bringing us to God. The Messiah – another name for Christ – means that we can experience God through Him and Him alone.

John’s point is this: **When I experience the presence of Christ, I encounter God (v. 3).** I am now in a shared relationship with him that gives me salvation and purpose. I Get this, don’t miss it: the fellowship of Jesus Christ is not just experiential--it is positional. Positionally we are in the fellowship, therefore, we can experientially enjoy God.

Another form of the word, *koinonos*, means “a partner,” and *koinoneo* means “to be a partner, sharer, or a partaker.” The fellowship is not only a close relationship but it also denotes a partnership in the work. John wants them to keep working with God and them (the apostles or the early church) to proclaim Christ to a world that desperately needs Him.

**John got that—He was beloved so that he could love others.**

John loved those he was writing to; out of love he instructed them to love God more. In verse four we see him acknowledge that he cannot have complete joy if those whom he loves and feels some responsibility for do not also fellowship with Christ. If they depart from the truth it steals his joy.

His closing line to this introductory paragraph in his letter states in verse 4, **“And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”**

Like a spiritual grandfather, or like a biblical elder in the church, He cares for their souls above all else. His joy is knowing that those in the church walk in truth. He wants them to dwell with Christ, and by doing so have delight. The point is:

**When I experience the presence of Christ, I have joy (v. 4).**

Greater than any amount of happiness that comes from the world, joy fills our hearts when we are with God, joining with Him in His purposes.

Jesus Himself gave a sermon on fellowshipping with God. Recorded by John, in Chapter 15 of the Gospel of John, Jesus talked about remaining connected or in fellowship with God like a branch stays connected to a vine. After giving a message on staying close to God, He then says, **“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”** (John 15:11).

**When we experience Jesus and embrace joy**. We we are connected daily to God, through Jesus Christ, we are given the manifestation of eternal life. This plays out through feelings of peace, thought of care, promptings of compassion and spiritual guidance that doesn’t make natural sense.

We find ourselves living out love for other people, because like John, we have been so deeply loved. C.S. Lewis said it well**, “When we are such as He can love without hindrance, we shall in fact be happy.”**

**Joy doesn’t simply happen, it is a choice.** It is a choice by faith to pursue Christ and love others like He has loved you. Joy is not our goal; it is our reality when we receive Jesus. Most people pursue happiness with such haste they miss Christ. We can’t make happiness or joy or goal, but rather must pursue Christ and when doing so grasp the promise of joy that is guaranteed to follow.

I close with this:

**Run after Christ and you will find joy chasing you.**

The three things we pursue the most—happiness, freedom and peace. I am telling you, thee can only be found in Christ. Run after Christ and you will be surprised by the envelope of joy you find yourself in, no matter the circumstances.

**Run after Christ and you will find joy chasing you.**

**Let’s pray.**