“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

Published monthly for all those who request a printed copy by mail or one sent by e-mail attachment, as well as hard copies which are available at our church. It goes to readers in 18 states and 5 foreign countries. (All articles are critiqued and approved by one of our church deacons.)

This well-known carol we sing at Christmas came into being a few hundred years ago and applies to both the present and future. It is current in that “the Lord has come” meaning He came as a babe in Bethlehem. “Let earth receive her king,” speaks prophetically that He came to be king and rule.

His kingship is future at the time of the Advent when Jesus will usher in His kingdom, reverse the curse of sin, and creation will burst into a song of joy at His Advent. As followers of Christ we rejoice that He came and we look for His second coming.

February is the month when we celebrate Valentine’s Day, a time to express our love to others. For some it could result in a self-focus in those who are alone or lonely. Our purpose this month is to encourage ALL of you with joy.

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“Joy to the world, the Lord has come Let earth receive her King Let every heart prepare Him room And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing And heaven, and heaven and nature sing.”

“No more let sins and sorrows grow Nor thorns infest the ground He comes to make His blessings flow Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, Far as, far as the curse is found.”

Jesus – trust, time, treasures, talents

Others – learning, loyalty, love, and the lost around us

You – enjoyment, exercise, eating, ease

HIDDEN TREASURES

Last Month’s Question: Where does Scripture declare the Bible to be inspired of God?

ANSWER: II Timothy 3:16 and II Peter 1:21

This Month’s Question: What is the whole duty of man, as summed up by Solomon?
WHERE DO WE FIND JOY?

Mark Twain was a professional humorist, but his private life was one of deep sorrow. He said he never envied anyone but the dead. Jesus Christ was “a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” The Apostle Paul’s suffering was painful and unrelenting. It seemed he had absolutely NO reason to be joyous. None! Yet his letter to the Philippian church features the subject of Joy. It is my favorite book of the Bible. What was his secret? It is the word “mind.” He refers to it, and other words with the same meaning, 16 different times. In an older issue of the newsletter I quoted Hannah Whithall Smith who said “Life is not to be lived in the emotions, but in the will.” That is controlled by the mind.

Emotions are okay. After all, God made us to be emotional beings. I’ve tried with great difficulty to act my age all my life, but I feel more like a kid than who I really am - an elderly lady who should be dignified and quiet. Even as a teenager I placed little Scripture verses all over the house – “Study to be quiet.” It’s most difficult for me to always be still and serene. My dad was a clown, a practical joker, yet a positive leader.

I grew up with merriment, except when my mother was tough. My husband had a neat and unpredictable sense of humor and so I was laughing with him most of our married life.

I thoroughly enjoy Tim, Scott, and Pastor Rob’s humor. When I was in choir Scott Compton’s middle name was “just kidding.”

But I’ve shed many tears in my 90 years. Many!! Buckets, even! However right smack in the middle of all this laughing and crying is Joy. This is because Joy is a Person. Joy is Jesus!

* (“The mind is to the soul as the brain is to the body.”) Ravi Zacharias

Warren Wiersbe writes on the subject of Joy

Here are 4 thieves that can rob us of our joy:

1. Circumstances – if we look for joy in these, we’ll be disappointed because these can make us miserable much of the time.
2. People – What they are, say, and do – but we can’t be hermits.
3. Things (Luke 12:15) – Will we know joy when we lose our treasures? (job, house, savings, car, and stuff)
4. Worry – the worst thief of all! We can purchase “sleep” with pills, but not “rest.”

4 attitudes to cultivate to maintain our joy as found in Philippians:

1. A single mind – chapter 1 – one Person and one purpose
2. A submissive mind – chapter 2 – “lowliness” – putting self last, a servant’s heart
3. A spiritual mind – chapter 3 – instead of minding “earthly things” – looking at life from God’s perspective
4. A secure mind – chapter 4 – Spiritual resources: God’s peace will guard our minds (v. 1-9), God’s power (v. 10-13), and God’s provision (v. 14-23).

What are 4 things we can do:

1. Make sure we are a Christian.
2. Admit our failures – if double minded, proud, worldly-minded, or filled with worry, then these are sins that need to be confessed, repented of, and forsaken.
3. Surrender our mind to Christ daily. Are we pulled in two directions constantly? It ought not to be.
4. Look for opportunities to put our mind to work. When we’re in the Word daily, we will see what we need to do, where to go, and why.

“Those who wish to sing usually find a song.” (Some years ago a man in our Grief/Share group asked me a question. He had seen me singing in our church choir and knew that I had lost my husband through death just a few months before. He asked “how can you sing and grieve at the same time?” I told him it’s possible to have inner Joy along with sorrow because, as children of God, we have a future hope and that’s something to sing about.)
"Happiness depends on what happens. JOY does not."

"A man never knows JOY until he gets rightly related to God."

"Satan says he can make us satisfied without God, but all he gives is happiness and pleasure, never JOY."

"The miracle of the Christian life is that God can give us JOY in the midst of external misery."

"JOY is independent of circumstances."

"We can always know if we are listening to God’s voice by whether or not we have JOY."

"We cannot counterfeit JOY or peace."

"JOY is the nature of God in my blood."

"Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

"Solomon had everything. He learned he couldn’t find JOY in any of it, but only in his relationship to God."

Pastor Rob reminded us on Sunday, June 1, 2003 that “comfort and convenience” seem to be the priorities of many Christians nowadays. Preaching from Jonah 4: 5-11 he described Jonah’s anger, caring more for his own comfort than God’s plan. Instead, we are to empty our cup of complacency and allow God to fill it with His compassion for others. God provided a gourd for Jonah to shelter him from the heat. Still Jonah wouldn’t listen to God’s words, nor was He thankful for this evidence of God’s love and mercy. So God gave him a harsh object lesson to get his attention. God sent a worm to kill the gourd which was Jonah’s comfort zone. If God’s goodness won’t draw us to Himself, He’ll “turn up the volume.”

We are happy as long as things go well. We take God’s provisions of health and wealth for granted. These are not God’s priorities for us. But we find happiness, a counterfeit of JOY in these as if they are God’s choicest blessings. Instead, these are examples of pure grace (unmerited favor), not rewards for our faithfulness and godliness.

God’s priority for us is that we give to God first instead of giving Him our leftovers (Matt. 6:33). Food and clothing should be last (Matt. 6:25). God’s priorities are that we reach the lost and serve sacrificially. Instead we have bought into our culture. We give Him our leftovers. We pay our bills first and give Him a token of what’s left. We give our time and skills to our families, careers, employment and recreation first and then, if it’s convenient, and we can “fit it into our busy schedule,” we give the leftovers to God. Which is first for us – God’s program, or our comfort and convenience?

Q. Who was the greatest female financier in the Bible?
A. Pharaoh’s daughter. She went down to the bank of the Nile and drew out a little prophet.

Q. What kind of motor vehicles are in the Bible?
A. Jehovah drove Adam and Eve out of the garden in a Fury. David’s Triumph was heard throughout the land. Honda, because the Apostles were all in one Accord.

Q. Who was the greatest comedian in the Bible?
A. Samson. He brought the house down.

Q. What excuse did Adam give to his children as to why he no longer lived in Eden?
A. “Your mother ate us out of house and home.”

Q. Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?
A. Moses. He broke all 10 commandments at once.

Q. Who is the greatest babysitter mentioned in the Bible?
A. David. He rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.

Miss Jones had been giving her second-grade students a lesson on science. She had explained about magnets and other bits of iron. Now it was question time and she asked, "My name begins with the letter ’M’ and I pick up things. What am I?"
A little boy in the front row said, "You're a mother."
FOR OUR SENIOR READERS and the rest of you who might be curious about us.

I have to add that these may be true of many seniors, but surely not all. I can’t say “amen” to some of them because a few are a little negative.

- I’m the life of the party...... even if it lasts until 8 p.m.
- I’m very good at opening childproof caps... with a hammer.
- I’m usually interested in going home before I get to where I am going.
- I’m awake many hours before my body allows me to get up.
- I’m very good at telling stories; over and over and over and over...
- I’m aware that other people’s grandchildren are not nearly as cute, handsome, or smart as mine.
- I’m so cared for --- long term care, eye care, private care, dental care.
- I’m wrinkled, saggy, lumpy, and that’s just my left leg.
- I’m sure they are making adults much younger these days, but when did they let kids become policemen?
- I’m wondering, if you’re only as old as you feel, how could I be alive at 150?
- But sometimes I wonder, how can my kids be older than I feel?
- I’m a walking storeroom of facts..... I’ve just lost the key to the storeroom door.
- Yes, I’m a SENIOR CITIZEN and I think I am having the time of my life!

Prior to Christmas our church staff at Triad Baptist Church here in Kernersville, NC, ministered to many of us who are widows. A couple of ladies visited each of us and brought a special gift of love and remembrance. What a wonderful staff and sacrificial workers we have!

### Alone vs. Loneliness

Is there a difference? Webster’s Dictionary defines these two words:

- **ALONE** – solitary, unique, singular, sole, without company
- **LONELY** – lonesome, desolate, forlorn, deserted, sad from lack of companionship

The main difference here is emotional. Stated another way – it’s a matter of the heart. You can be with others and feel lonely. You can be ALONE and feel fine. Why?

Because LONELINESS is an emotion involving the need for companionship & a human touch, but it’s also a focus on oneself. It is the way we respond to our present situation, whether we are ALONE or with others.

It’s your choice. When you are ALONE and focused on others – God, your family, your work, your ministry.....even when thinking and praying about those you miss who are far away, or gone forever (till Jesus comes) you can choose God’s peace without allowing the emotion of LONELINESS to overwhelm, neutralize, depress and defeat you.

Here are some groups of those who are alone

- Being unmarried or a single mother
- Newly separated or divorced
- Just starting a new school
- Moved to a new town where no one knows you
- Husband away in the military
- New job, new co-workers
- Husband in jail

Recently been fired
- No close friends
- New church, know very few people
- A recent widow
- Suffered the death of a child
- Being rejected by a lover, friend, or family member
- Being the only believer among unbelievers
- Taking a stand against the majority
- Living with a non-supportive husband

100 years ago George Matheson went blind shortly after becoming engaged to be married. His fiancée broke the engagement. This was bitter LONELINESS. But instead of turning to resentment against the lady who had caused it, he turned to God and was transformed. He wrote the following great hymn: (next page)
O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths
its flow may richer, fuller be.

O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.

O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life’s glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.

**Blessed or Stressed - Psalm 1:1-3**

**Gems from Pastor Rob**

**DO’S AND DON’TS ON BEING BLESSED BY GOD:**

**First “Don’t”** – I will not bless you if you listen to ungodly, secular advice (v. 1a) which often stresses the worldly naturalness of life. What do we feed on? Many behaviors are learned and change what we look at and read.

**Second “Don’t”** – I will not bless you if you stand in the way of sinners (v. 1b) adopting their ways; their walk, talk, and patterns.

**Third “Don’t”** – I will not bless you if you sit in the seat of the scornful (v. 1c) by hanging out with bitter people who are always negative and/or upset and cynical; it’s dangerous.

**“DO”** – I will bless you if you study and enjoy God’s Word (v. 2,3). Some say “I’m not good at it and don’t understand it.” Instead, meditate on what you do understand. Consider your season. (Isaiah 40 esp. v. 41; also Ps. 27:13, 14; Gal. 6:7) It’s also a matter of sowing and reaping. God blesses “doing” people; those who DO things.

To be blessed means we have divine favor, protection, being fully satisfied no matter what. It’s the ability given by God to succeed over adversity. Blessed people have adversity, but they land on their feet.

Study Matthew chapters 5 – 7 including the Sermon on the Mount and much of Jesus’ teaching – the way to walk, our attitude, offenses will come. Age will increase. God promotes us to the level of our attitude toward pain; how we’re able to handle stress and problems. There will be new levels and new devils.

We are to follow God’s advice and get godly counsel. God will bless us according to where we walk and what we feed on.

We’re to change our ways, whereas some say “I’ve gotta be me.” Result: bad moods.

When God blesses us, He breaks us first. When we take offense we are to get rid of it and keep moving. God won’t bless what we won’t do. He blesses those He breaks and then multiplies us.

**“If you have no JOY in your Christian faith, there’s a leak somewhere.”**

(Billy Sunday)

The teacher wanted her high school students to give her the opposite meaning of some of the following words:

“Billy, what is the opposite of JOY?”
“Sadness,” said the student.

“And the opposite of depression, Martha?”
“Elation.”

“And you, Jimmy, how about the opposite of woe?”
“I believe that would be giddy up…”

Joe: "I know the capital of North Carolina."

John: "Oh, really?"

Joe: “No, Raleigh.”
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