

Abiding in His love – our joy made full

David Baker – notes prepared for the communion service on Sunday 24 May 2020

In the first communion meal, Jesus explained the importance of ‘abiding’ in the fellowship of His offering. He used the illustration of a vine with its branches to highlight that we will only bear fruit as sons of God if His word abides in us and we abide in Him. Notably, He described our participation in the fellowship of His offering as ‘abiding in His love’. Joh 15:9.

The love of Christ was demonstrated when He gave Himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God. Eph 5:2. Jesus said to the disciples, ‘If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.’ Joh 15:10-11.

The commandments of Jesus included His instruction to eat the bread as a participation in His body and to drink the cup as a participation in the New Covenant that is in His blood. Luk 22:19-20. If we obey the command of Christ to participate in the communion meal, we will abide in His love. If we are abiding in the love of Christ, the first fruit that will be seen in our lives is *joy*.

The joy of Christ is a unique kind of joy. It is not sourced from human emotion; nor is it influenced by external situations and circumstances. True joy is not an emotion or an act of the human will. That is, we cannot decide or determine to be more joyful. Joy is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ in us.

The joy that was resident in the heart of Jesus was seen in His face and demeanour as He endured each wounding event at the hands of godless men. Heb 12:2. This does not mean that He enjoyed the pain that He experienced. His joy was the resurrection life that He was receiving because He was walking in obedience to the Father’s will and abiding in the Father’s love.

Where the Scripture states that Jesus ‘despised the shame’, it does not mean that He was unwilling to bear the shame of our fallen human condition. Heb 12:2. He despised the shame that causes us to draw back in unbelief, and to hide ourselves from God and from one another. Even though Jesus fully identified with our fallen condition, He despised our shame by continuing to present Himself as an offering to God.

Furthermore, Jesus despised the *victim mindset* that so easily ensnares us because of our shame. It is our fear, which is based in our shame, that leads us to believe that the circumstances we encounter or the actions of others toward us are taking life from us.

A *victim mindset* is not the mind of Christ. Php 2:5. Jesus did not view Himself as being the victim of His circumstances. Christ rebuked Peter at the gate of the garden of Gethsemane when he tried to save Him from being arrested by the officers of the high priest. Joh 18:10-11. In a similar way, He gently corrected the women who were weeping for Him on the way to the cross. Luk 23:28.

Jesus did not need anyone to intervene or weep on His behalf. He knew that no-one was taking His life from Him. Joh 10:17-18. The joy of resurrection life was His portion. Jesus promised that this *very same joy* will be the portion of every son of God who abides in His love. We know that Christ loved us *right to the end* of His journey by bringing us to the Father and by making complete provision for our healing and maturity as sons of God. Joh 13:1.

Speaking of our relationship with the Father as sons of God, Jesus said, ‘And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.' Joh 16:23-24.

When the word of faith that is proclaimed to us by the presbytery is in our heart and in our mouth, we will not be asking Christ or His messengers to be our spiritual benefactors and to relate to God the Father on our behalf. Nor will we be asking Christ or others to deliver us from our circumstances. Rather, as sons of God who have a personal relationship with *our Father*, we ask Him directly for our unique participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Joh 16:26-27.

We are motivated by the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us as sons of God, to make this request to the Father in the fellowship of the communion meal. Jas 4:5. This is what it means to ask *in the name of Christ*. The name of Christ is not a formula that we can invoke to ensure that God the Father hears us and answers our request. Jas 4:3. The name of Christ is *a relational context*. Mat 18:19-20. We are in the name of Christ when we are eating and drinking the communion meal in fellowship with one another, with the presbytery who proclaim the word of life to us, and with the Father and the Son. 1Jn 1:3.

In the fellowship of the communion meal, we recognise our incapacity to live as sons of God and we continue to ask the Father for our unique participation in Christ's offering. We make this request because we desire to live by the grace of Christ's resurrection life and to be delivered from our self-centredness, and from the sin that so easily besets us.

The desire of our heart as sons of God, who are motivated by the Holy Spirit, is for the life of Christ to bear fruit in our lives. Joh 15:7. We can be assured that the Father answers this request! He answers our prayer by giving us our unique participation in Christ's offering. This participation includes a complete provision for our healing and maturity as sons of God.

Our joy *is* made full as we are finding deliverance and healing in the fellowship of Christ's offering and His life is being formed in us. On the Mount of Olives, Jesus prayed that His joy would be *fulfilled in us*. Joh 17:13. The *same joy* that resided in the heart of Jesus, as He walked the pathway of the cross, will reside in our heart as we receive His resurrection life on this same pathway. Psa 16:11.