

September 11, 2022

We Are Better Together.

FINDING JOY

If I were to ask you how your summer was, most of you would most likely speak of things that were joyful; the time spent visiting with family and friends, going to your favourite places and checking out new places. Not to forget the time many of you would have spent enjoying your gardens.

We seek for, celebrate, and cherish joyful moments – those times of pure, unadulterated feelings of delight, bliss, and happiness. The things and times that help us to de-stress and refocus.

The Bible speaks a lot about Joy. Here are a few instances:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. (Psalm 100:1,2)

The joy of the LORD is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)

In the New Testament, there are three sets of words that are translated “joy” or “rejoice.”

One set describes the expression of shouting, singing, clapping hands, lifting up praise to God - reminding us of what the psalmist says: “Make a joyful noise unto the Lord”.

The second set of words speaks of the feeling of great delight caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying – it refers to a state of happiness.

The third set of words speaks of that assurance of well-being that is not dependent on our general conditions and circumstances but on the knowledge and assurance that God is with us.

The Bible does speak a lot about joy, but when it comes to our involvement in Church, how often do we experience joy? Do we look forward to worship and service with joyful anticipation? Do we return from worship and service feeling fulfilled and with hearts overflowing with joy?

Have we lost our joy? If we have, how do we as a community of faith find joy?

Here are three things with which to start as we set out to find joy in our worship and service:

1. Let go of the past.

“Your past is not your future unless you choose to live there – and living there prevents you from learning how to find joy in the present.” Ask yourself what you can learn from the past then let go of it and press on to what is ahead.

We have the guidance of scripture:

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old.

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (Isaiah 43: 18,19)

Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3: 13,14)

2. Practice gratitude

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. (Psalm 100:4)

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Gratitude makes us more hopeful and optimistic, and hence joyful.

- It shifts our focus from the negative to the positive, from despair to hope.

It strengthens relationships and builds community.

- We learn to appreciate others more. We learn to appreciate God more.

It makes us more helpful.

- When we recognize and appreciate what others have done, we are more motivated to do our part.

3. Find your purpose

Don't be a passive spectator, be a purposeful participant. Experience the profound joy that comes from being called by God to work in partnership with God. Discover the deep sense of fulfilment that comes from being part of something that is bigger than yourself.

Ask yourself the question: What would God have me do?

These are just starters as we seek to find joy as we share in our faith community. Following Christ and being involved in the life and work of the church is not always easy; it can be demanding, but that does not mean that it cannot be fulfilling and joyful.

We are meant to be joyful and joy-filled people, serving God and our community with gladness. Let us live into that joy and offer it to others as well.

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