Galatians 5:16-26; Luke 10:17-24 // A Better Reason for Joy

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[0:00] Our second reading this morning is taken from the book of Luke chapter 10 verses 1 to 4 and then we will skip forward to verses 17 to 24.

! He told them, He told them, Skipping ahead to verse 17.
The 72 returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.
I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.
It's great to see you.
[2:41] Thank you, Josh, for praying and Tamara for reading. If you have not met before. My name is Andrew. I'm a leader in training here at the church. Now, boys and girls, do you want to come down to the front? There'll be some things to see, a couple of things to help me with this morning.

You can bring a parent. You can bring the person sitting next to you that you don't know if they're willing to come with you. Whatever works for you. This thing seems to get smaller and smaller every week, but that's all right.
I'll fix that later. This morning, we're continuing through our series, In the Fruits of the Spirit.
Normally, as a church, we work through Bible books together, But over the summer, as lots of us are away and there's different things happening, lots of you are here visiting.
It's a great opportunity to do something different. And this morning, we're on joy together, boys and girls. We're going to think about what it looks like to be joyful in all the different areas of life.
The fruit of the Spirit is found in Galatians chapter 5, As Paul writes about what the work of the Holy Spirit looks like in a Christian's life, in a friend of Jesus.
[3:45] I think we've got a photo of photos up on the screen. You see those different fruit on the tree. And Paul helps us to see how the Spirit transforms our lives. He changes our lives to produce love, joy, peace, patience, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Each of these things grow from the Spirit's work in our lives. And one aspect of that is joy. And so what is it, boys and girls, that gets you out of bed in the morning?
Well, a lot of you are on school holidays just now, so I'm sure some of our youth don't get out of bed in the morning just now. But maybe you guys do, and you guys come and wake them up. And I'm sure most of the adults are still having to get up to work.
What is it that gets you up in deepest, darkest November, when it's been wet for four weeks straight? You don't get any school holidays. It's freezing.
The sun won't rise for another couple of hours. It's often the thing that gives us the most joy in life. Well, it's either the thing that gives us joy or the fear of what will happen if we don't get out of bed that morning.
[4:58] Maybe it's the idea of being one day closer to the weekend, for being one day closer to no more school, no more work, is what keeps us going through the drab drink weeks.

But being joyful, having joy, isn't just about smiling no matter what's going on. It's not about ignoring all the hard things that go on in life and saying, I choose to be happy anyways.
It's about the bigger picture in life. It's about the posture of our hearts, of knowing what is going on in the world, knowing what God is doing, and letting us rejoice in that.

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And that being the background, the scene, the set, for which our life is played out in front of. But we often end up trying to get our joy from the wrong place in this world.
We try to get our joy from things that just don't last. And that's our first point this morning. If you guys have your service sheets there, you'll see two points on the other side. And we're going to think together about joy for a better reason.
[6:04] As we heard in our reading, boys and girls, Jesus has just sent out his friends. He sent out 72 of them to go and do his work, to join in in his ministry.

And in verse 17, Jesus tells us that they returned with joy from their mission. They came back and they said to Jesus, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.
They've had a great time. They've had wild success. They went out from Jesus and just had a blast. It's all gone well. It's perhaps a little bit like when you come home from summer camp, or you come home from being out with your parents, or you're being away with your grandparents.
You come back and you see them and you're like, Mom, Dad, you will not believe what I did. I went on camp and we went abseiling. We were really high up and it was a really steep cliff. But I did it. I was really scared of heights, but I managed. Or a granny and grandpa took me to the zoo and there was a massive spider. And I got to hold the massive spider right in my hand and I was kind of scared.
[7:11] But I did it. I did it. Do you believe what I've done? They're so excited coming back. They came back from their trip buzzing about all that they had managed to do.

Can you believe how much success we had? How cool is it that demons now submit to us? One of them maybe said, let me tell you about a great battle I had with a demon.
It was a clash for the ages. There was a titan on one side and there was just me. But you know, it wasn't really ever really a contest. You gave up a little bit of resistance, but bam, straight in there. Isn't this just amazing? This is so cool. What a time to be alive. But Jesus in verse 20 tells us that they've got their joy in the wrong order.
He says the main thing that should give us joy in this life is not power, success, adventure, or whatever else.
[8:10] Although all of these things are good things to rejoice in and to give thanks to God for. But the main thing that should give us joy is what God is doing in this world.

We can't be sure that the other things will keep us going. That they won't let us down, they won't change. Success comes and goes. Sometimes it feels like we're flying in life.
Other times it feels like we can't even face the next morning, let alone the rest of the week. And so we need joy for a better reason.
And Jesus gives us a better truth to rejoice in. He says, rejoice that your names are written in heaven. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven.
Here is a truth that stands the test of time. With every up and every down, every friend of Jesus, everyone who trusts in him, has their names written in heaven.
[9:14] And that might sound a little bit weird, doesn't it? How do you write a name in heaven? Well, it's like an image from the Old Testament in our Bibles. That is a symbol for those who have been saved.

For those who will spend the rest of their lives, eternal life, in relationship with God, enjoying him. And so Jesus says, rejoice that you know where you're going.
You know where the world is going to end up. You know where you will be. Life on this world is a short time. But eternity with God is an awfully long time. And so rejoice, you know what God is doing.
Your first joy, first and foremost, should be in God's good plan. Knowing that you will spend eternity living with him. It's the only thing that won't disappoint.
For there are many things in this world that do disappoint. To try and illustrate this, I'm going to need six volunteers. Who wants to help me out with something? Yes, great.
[10:16] Got one. Who else is up? Yes, come on, Lila. Two. Yeah, that's great. Four more. Otherwise, I'm going to have to get some adults to help. Promise you it's not scary.

I just need you to walk to the back and then walk forward with the help of God. Walk forward with as much joy as you can. Yes, here we go. Three, four, five, six. Are you in, John? Great. Right. The six of you, instead of sending 72 off, we're going to send six of you off straight down there to Kay.

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Because we don't have that long in our Sunday service. So straight down to Kay. Kay, give us a wave. The six of you straight down to Kay. And Kay is going to give you something that might give you joy.
Straight down the middle. There we go. Go, go, go. There we go. There we go. There we go. Right. Jesus' friends came back with great joy in what they had experienced.
But what if it got harder? What if their joy didn't last because the next time they tried, well, things didn't go quite as well. We need joy for a better reason.
[11:24] Because often the things that we find joy in just don't last. Right. Are we ready for people to come back? Now, boys and girls, you need to walk back with as much joy as you possibly can.

How much can you muster? John looks pretty excited. Yes, John. That's great. Great. John, what have you got for us? Can I take this?
You've got a balloon. A balloon gives you quite a lot of joy. You can do a lot with this. You can hit your brother and sister in the head with the balloon and not get in trouble often. That tends to work.
But John, what about if your balloon floated away? Are we still feeling joyful if your balloon floats away? It was fun for a little bit, but it's gone. I am not happy because I do not like ice cream.
Oh, you've got ice cream. That's great. This is fun. Brain freeze it. Okay, you may give you brain freeze, but who doesn't love ice cream at a time like this? What about, Lila? What about if your ice cream falls on the floor?
[12:23] How are we feeling now? Happy? How would everyone else feel if your ice cream falls on the floor? Look at that gorgeous ice cream. Yeah, so much joy. So disappointing.

We don't want that. What about, does someone have a bag of crisps? Who's got a bag of crisps? Yes. Look at this big bag of crisps. You'd look forward to eating them, wouldn't you?
Yeah. What if you opened up your bag of crisps and there was only that many in it? Isn't that disappointing? You buy your big bag of crisps, you sit down and ready to watch TV, and there's hardly anything in it.
What is going on? What is going on? That is disappointing, isn't it? What about a shiny new car? Has anyone got a shiny new car? What? Do you think you'd have fun with this car?
What if you parked this car outside and you were so excited to drive it, and when you came out the next morning, look what someone's done to it. You can't drive that. Just hit it and run off.
[13:26] Where is the joy in a car that you can't drive? Now, does someone have a photo of a lot of people looking very happy? Doi, is that what you have? Do you've got the Tartan Army?

Yeah? You don't look that excited about having the Tartan Army, Doi, to be honest. I think quite a lot of us find a lot of joy in the Tartan Army. But what if, Doi, this is how the football turned out.
So much joy going to America. What a time to be alive. And then, well, that happens, doesn't it? Not too much joy in there. What about the last one?
What have you got, Mary? Oh, you've got a beach. A lovely beach holiday. Who wouldn't want to go on a summer holiday like this? Would you enjoy this, Mary? What if this is what the beach looked like the whole time?
Do you think you're going to have fun in that? It rains the whole time. There's lightning. I want to see this. Ah! Ah! Ah! I want to see that next. Most of us, if we're going on holiday and this was the beach, we would not have a good time with this.
[14:32] There you go. I'm fun again. Boys and girls, thank you so much. Do you want to go and sit back down? Thank you, Lila. Often, things that we find joy in just don't last.

The things we think are going to be so good often turn out to disappoint. And that's often true for the harder things, the bigger things in life as well.
We build up some great friendships. We have a great time with them. And then they get a job elsewhere and move on. We have a fantastic relationship with our parents.
And then old age catches up with them. We have a really promising start to our career. And then it vanishes in front of our eyes. We need joy for a better reason than what the world can offer.
And that's exactly what Jesus has. Verse 21, Jesus is full of joy through the Holy Spirit. He expresses each of the fruits of the Spirit.
[15:38] And we see him doing that here in Luke. Why is Jesus full of joy? Because he knows exactly what God is doing in this world. And he knows that while other things don't always last, God's plan is certain and sure.

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And what God is doing is he is revealing his plan for the world to those who are ready to receive it. Those who are humble enough, who aren't proud of themselves too much, but are able to be disciples of Jesus.
Jesus has joy because he knows the Father's plan to reveal himself through his Son to those on earth who are willing to receive him humbly as Lord.
Jesus rejoices because he knows the Father is good. His plan is good and it's happening now. So he says to his disciples, verses 23 and 24, Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.
They have had the Father's will and revealed to them through Jesus. They are seeing God's good plan being carried out right there and then they have just partaken in it.
[16:50] And more names are being written in heaven as God saves more people to spend eternity with him. They are seeing God's promises come true. Promises that many kings and prophets longed to see come true.

And boys and girls, what a marvelous plan this is that our good God has. That he decided that while we are all sinners, that while each of us has said, shove off God, I'm in charge.
No to your ways. That means that we can rejoice all of the time. That means that we can rejoice all of the time. Today is a good day because Jesus has saved me.
Today is a good day because God is carrying out his plan to bring all things under Jesus.
We have joy today and every day because joy for a better reason gives you joy in every season.
[18:07] And that means that we can sing of God's goodness wherever we go. When we're in the mountains high, when we're in the valleys low, we can sing God's been good, good to my soul.

For the Lord is good and his plan is good and we can always rejoice in it. So let's sing together. We're going to stand up and sing and then you guys will head back to your seats and I'll speak for like five minutes more after that.
Okay, so kids, up you get. We've got some actions for this one. So loosen off. Shake your limbs. Are you ready? I think Rona is going to come and help us. And let's sing together. We're going to spend a little bit of time thinking about how joy for a better reason truly does give us joy in every season.
Knowing God's eternal plan is reason to rejoice at all times. For nothing can possibly change that. Nothing can thwart what God is doing in this world.
Nothing can change the fact that Jesus has come and saved us. Knowing God's eternal plan, including that he has saved us, is reason to rejoice at all times.
[19:21] And so let me ask you, St Silas, how is your joy in the Lord? How is it? Do you find joy in the Lord?

Do you find yourself often rejoicing in who he is and what he is doing? In different areas of our lives, in school, in uni, in work, in our hobbies, with our friends and families when we play sports. Whatever else we are doing. Are we rejoicing in who God is and his good plan to save people in that? The joy of the Lord as part of the fruit of the Spirit should give us joy in every season.
Knowing what God has done, knowing who God is, our joy is primarily in him. And then the good gifts that he gives us. There's nothing wrong with rejoicing in the things that God gives us in this world.
There are many good things that we enjoy. But our joy, first and foremost, must be in God. For it is only his plan that will last. It is only his plan that doesn't fail us.
[20:33] Because family and friendships break down. We fail exams. We lose our jobs. We have to give up our hobbies and sports. But our joy is not all gone.

All hope is not lost. And in these times, it genuinely hurts to lose these things. Joy is not just grin and bear it and pretend like nothing's wrong.
That is not joy in the Christian life. Joy is in God's good plan. It's the continuous set in which our life play out.
The constant tone of we are thankful to God, we rejoice in him. And we go through the highs and lows together. And that ought to make a real difference.
In the mountains high and in the valleys low, we have that joy by the Spirit's help. A sure and steady joy that is always there. It's not dependent on circumstances.
[21:31] It's not going to let us down. God's plan is good and it is sure. And if you're trusting in Jesus this morning, that includes the fact that he has saved you.

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Whatever comes, we always have reason to rejoice because that is still true. The Christian life isn't spared from suffering and hardship. But with God's help through his Spirit that he has given us, we can maintain our joy through them.
We can keep our eyes fixed on the eternal reality that Jesus rejoices in. Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit knowing exactly what lay ahead of him.
At this point in Luke, he has only just turned his face and headed towards Jerusalem, knowing exactly what will happen there. He knows he will suffer a horrific death on the cross.
And yet knowing all of that, he still rejoiced in God's good plan. He still suffered. He still hurt. He still had joy. Joy that affects all of life.
[22:38] And so a great question to ask is, how does my joy in God and what he is doing show in my life? Because it should show that if God is good and his plan is sure, that should affect all of our lives.

How we approach life's difficulties. How we approach life's great triumphs. Should make us distinctive in the world. People should be able to tell that we are friends of Jesus because we have real joy in him.
Joy that doesn't change. The theologian B.B. Warfield tells a remarkable story of two people who had their joy secure in God's plan.
And they could tell each other that they were Christians even though they'd never met before. He writes, we have the following bit of personal experience from a general officer in the United States Army.
He was in a great Western city at a time of intense excitement and violent rioting. The streets were overrun daily by a dangerous crowd. One day he observed approaching him a man of singularly combined calmness and firmness.
[23:49] Whose very demeanor inspired confidence. So impressed was he with his bearing amidst the surrounding uproar. That when he had passed, he turned to look back at him.

To find the stranger had done the same. On observing the strangers turning. At once he came back to him. And touching his chest with his forefinger. He demanded without preface.
What is the chief end of man? And the other gentleman, upon receiving the countersign, replied, Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.
Amidst the chaos of the city. Amidst the rioting and the danger. They had their joy in God. They knew what they were here for. They were glorifying God for his good plan and enjoying him.
They knew where they were going. They knew that they would have eternal life with God. And so, amidst everything else that was going on in that city, their joy was not disturbed.
[24:53] They had a bit about them. That said, I know what's going on in this world. And so, I can rejoice anyways. They knew God's good plan.

And their task to rejoice in him. And so, this day and every day, St. Silas, let us find joy in our good God and his good plan.
He has a great plan. And there is always reason to rejoice in him. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, you know that often we struggle to live lives of joy in response to your overwhelming goodness to us.
Thank you that you are a good God. And you are carrying out your good plan here on earth to save many souls for eternity with you. Thank you for the Lord Jesus, who rejoiced in your plan and gives us real joy in this life.
And so, we seek your Spirit's help that we may be more joyful as your people. That in every season, in the mountains high and in the valleys low, we would keep finding our joy first and foremost in you, our good God.
[26:06] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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