

What is Joy? Advent 2011

Habakkuk

What is Joy?

Joy in the Bible is associated with two things.

The first is Hardship and Suffering.

The second is Victory.

Lions started the 2010-2011 season with a dismal 0-5 record.

Quarterback Travis Lulay is sacked by the Bombers in August.

They lose again and only won one game in 7.

So imagine the joy when

Lulay & the Lions hoist the ultimate prize - the Grey Cup.

But there are more serious things that sports.

Harder suffering - more than can be imagined.

July 1st, 1916. The Battle of the Somme of the First World War.

On the first day, the allied Forces (Commonwealth) take 60,000 casualties.

The battle lasts until November 18.

In the over five and a half months, over 1 million casualties total

Making it one of the bloodiest battles in human history.

British Commonwealth Allies claim a win with about 2 miles.

That would be at a cost of 2 men for ever centimetre of ground.

2 years later after many other battles, November 11, 1918 the war ends.

The survivors rejoice.

Suffering is the first element of Joy

Habakkuk 1:1-4

¹ The prophecy that Habakkuk the prophet received.

² How long, LORD, must I call for help,
but you do not listen?

Or cry out to you, "Violence!"
 but you do not save?
³ Why do you make me look at injustice?
 Why do you tolerate wrongdoing?
 Destruction and violence are before me;
 there is strife, and conflict abounds.
⁴ Therefore the law is paralyzed,
 and justice never prevails.
 The wicked hem in the righteous,
 so that justice is perverted.

Without knowing the bitterness of loss, pain & hardship there is no Joy.

The bane of our affluent society today is that there is nothing to call us to a deeper way of life.

We have everything we want.

We can ignore the pain and suffering in our world.

We can live passionless lives.

And mark the work passion well - it mean to embrace suffering.

Inasmuch as it is good to do good, the solution for transforming our world is not found in just monetary, socio-political or military solutions.

The problem is not in the symptoms but in every human heart.

God knows this and so he sends his son.

The angels declare, "I bring you tidings of great joy!"

Why, because they needed a saviour then and we need a saviour now.

From the selfishness, complacency, apathy, disintegration, faithlessness, despair, darkness, greed, lust, bitterness, hate, and fear.

To save us from this:

To satisfy the world's sanitation and food requirements would cost only US\$13 billion- what the people of the United States and the European Union spend on perfume each year.

Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of starvation

For the price of one missile, a school full of hungry children could eat lunch every day for 5 years

1 billion people in the world do not have access to clean drinking water

and this:

The problem is most critical in Africa, where children as young as nine have been involved in armed conflicts. Children are also used as soldiers in various Asian countries and in parts of Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

Most child soldiers are aged between 14 and 18, While many enlist "voluntarily" research shows that such adolescents see few alternatives to involvement in armed conflict. Some enlist as a means of survival in war-torn regions after family, social and economic structures collapse or after seeing family members tortured or killed by government forces or armed groups. Others join up

because of poverty and lack of work or educational opportunities. Many girls have reported enlisting to escape domestic servitude, violence and sexual abuse.

and this:

- In 2005 human trafficking had annual profits of approximately US\$31.6 billion.
- Human trafficking is the third largest grossing sector of organized crime after drugs and arms.
- The majority of trafficking victims identified by states are women and children who make up 88% of all victims (66% of victims are women, 13% girls, 9 % boys, and 12% men).
- There are at least 800,000 people trafficked across borders annually, the majority being women trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation. Approximately 80 per cent of transnational victims are women and girls and 20 per cent are men and boys. This does not account for the estimated millions who are trafficked within their own countries.
- One third of victims of human trafficking come from, pass through or end up in South-East Asia.
- 1.2 million children are trafficked every year for labour and sexual exploitation.
- 5.7 million children are trapped in forced and bonded labour and that children represent half of forced labourers.

Joy grows out of a long hard fought battle.

Something worth giving yourself to.

God is interested in the big things and in the small things.

We often cannot see what he is doing but rest assured, he is doing it.

Victory is the second element of Joy

Habakkuk 3:17-19

¹⁷ Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails

and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,

¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.

¹⁹ The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to tread on the heights.
For the director of music. On my stringed instruments.

Joy come from overcoming and redeeming very bad things.

It is a sense of relief, of finally seeing what we hope for, what we long for.

It is as if all we thought lost is found.

It is the way of Jesus.

This is why he came

To bring us victory over the sin and death within each of us.

That victory had a cost as every victory worth having does.

The motto of our church is "transforming the world one person at a time."

It is the way of discipleship.

It is about having a loving and stable family.

It is about lasting friendships.

It is about your excellence and integrity at work.

It is about being gracious to people around you.

It is about being generous.

It is about being selfless.

It is about becoming a Kingdom person who lives in kingdom ways.

And the world will change if we let the passion of God be our passion.

That passion comes in very unique ways.

Never think that your passion is the same as that of others.

God is at work in every sector of society and our world.

Be faithful in what you are called to.

Here is an example:

My Friend Joy



When I think of Joy I always remember my friend Joy Gregory.

I met Joy at Regent college where she was taking courses and eventually got her Master of Divinity in 2001.

She was ministering at Joy Fellowship,

a church for people with physical and mental disabilities.

She started as a volunteer and became a full-time pastor.

I always admired her for that - her love for her church.

In 2005 she was diagnosed with breast cancer which became leukemia.

She continued to minister

and even completed her Doctor of Ministry in February of 2007.

Four months before she died.

Part of her eulogy read:

Joy loved God and loved the world He created, especially delighting in the beauty of the deserts and canyons of Utah where she camped almost every year since her childhood. Joy also loved people, music, food, gardening, hiking, camping, bird-watching, and life.

A friend of hers also wrote:

I remember a small plaque she had sitting on her dresser that so summed up her life: "Joy is not the absence of suffering, but is the presence of God." She exemplified what it meant to "rejoice in suffering." I never heard her complain even though she was in constant pain, but she was always unselfishly reaching out to others. People were always drawn to her as she was so gentle and compassionate and so obviously cared.

Joy blooms in desert places.
Joy blossoms in places that don't make sense.
Joy always comes as a surprise.
Like victory after a very long battle.
Like a long-awaited saviour.
A Love never expected.
Whose name is Jesus.

Invitation:

Advent is always a season of reflection.
It is the time when we ask where God is breaking into our world
and into our lives.
He invites you to your Passion and your Joy.
May you seek it from him and find it.