

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

**I WILL CHOOSE JOY | SET LIKE FLINT**

**RYAN BRAMLETT | FEBRUARY 9, 2025**

Traders, how are we doing? Hey, it's so good to be with you.

Before we get rolling with today's message I just want to do a quick check-in. Last Sunday we started 21 days of prayer and fasting. How are we doing with that? Are we still on?

Church, we made 8,000 of those guides to help us. We gave out 8,000 guides—8,000 people are joining us on this journey. Look at what God is doing. If you didn't get a chance to get a copy, we don't have any more, but we did create a digital copy you can download it, print it out, use it. There is still time to join us in these 21 days of prayer and fasting.

And then we are in this series we've been in called Set Like Flint. If this is your first time, you're like, "What does that mean?" It sounds so old it could almost be new. Doesn't it? Like you could almost read that in your grandparent's diary like, "She was set like flint." But you could also hear it in high school this week like, "Man, that boy is set like flint." See, it's so old that it sounds new.

But where did we get it? We got it from the prophet Isaiah, chapter 50, verse 7. Look at what he says. He says:

"Because the sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore I have set my face like flint," like a stone, "and I know I will not be put to shame." (NIV)

This is what we have been focusing on in this series saying because the sovereign Lord helps us, because we have the Holy Spirit, because we know God is at work this year, we want to be set like flint. We want to be durable disciples, so that no matter what we face we can stand firm against it. And we can take ground for the kingdom.

So, every week we've been making vows and declarations—I will statements. And this week is no different. This week is: I Will Choose Joy.

That sounds good. Doesn't it? We've had some heavy ones. This one is: I Will Choose Joy. But here's what I want to confront you with. Do you have joy? If you asked the people who know you best, if they said, "Hey, three words that you would use to describe me," would joyful be one of those words?



Take a step back. When you think about how the world views the church, if they were given three words to describe us would joyful be at the top of that list? Probably not. Why is that?

I feel like a lot of us, when we come to faith, it's almost like we come after all of our fun to be had is done. Right? It's like, "I had a great time but now it's time to settle down and get serious with God." The church is where you go to shut fun down. Holiness is over here; happiness is over there. I'm saying goodbye to it.

It's almost like some people talk about marriage. You talk about this? Like, "I had my fun. I had a blast. But now it's time to settle down with the old ball and chain." What a lucky spouse you have.

But that's not the picture we get from the Scriptures. That's not the God who we know. Does God really want a joyless family? No. He's given us so many reasons to be joyful. The church shouldn't be the place where joy goes to die. It is where it is birthed. It is the place where it only can exist because we have the source of it, God Himself.

That's what we need to get to. The spaces that, in our lives with Jesus, they've got to be way better, more fun, more celebratory, more filled with joy than our life before Jesus.

I was reminded of this as I was listening to an interview with actor Josh Brolin. They were asking him about his sobriety, how he's managed to stay sober over the years. And I loved his response. Look at what he said. He said,

"My job is to make sobriety more fun than my greatest romance of what drinking used to be."

And I thought, "That's it. That's the life I want to create and craft in Jesus. I want my life to have more joy than it did before. I don't want to romanticize my life before Jesus, talking about, "That was real happiness. That was real joy."

No, "I have the Spirit of the Lord. I have a mission. I have purpose. I have love. I have grace. I have mercy. I have joy. And that can't compete with it." Amen? That's the life that we are called to build. Not just to go through and succumb to duty and obligation. No. God wants us to have a life of joy.

Well, how do we get that? How do we choose joy? We have to start with this: Who we believe God to be. It always starts there. Our theology will shape how we act and what we value. Do we believe that God is a joyful God? Do you believe that God wants you to have a full and joyful life?

When you think about God and you hear His voice, what does that voice sound like? Is it a God who is frustrated? Is it a God who is angry? Is it a God who is yelling at you? What's His mood? Is He a God who is going to shut everything that is fun down? Or is He a God of joy?

Here's what I want us to start with. It's just the fact that God is joy. And I even have a scripture that we can reference to show. We may have a bunch of ideas of who we think God is, but I can prove to you that God is joy. Look at this. Galatians, chapter 5. It says:

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." (NLT)

What is the fruit of the Spirit? It is God's divine character that shows up in our lives. The Spirit produces who God is within us. We talk about this all of the time. God is the source of love, and He is. But He is also the source of joy. Meaning, the closer we get to Him the more joyful we will become.

If He is the source of joy that means that He is the most joyful being in the universe. Do you see how that begins to shift? If He is a God of joy, then it makes sense that He would want a people of joy.

And if you read your Scriptures, you will see that God does express a few other feelings other than joy for us. But it's because that's His response to sin. He gets angry, He gets sorrowful. He gets jealous. But there will come a time when all of those feelings are done, and they are put away. But joy will remain for all of eternity.

And even during this nasty dance where God creates us, we rebel against Him, God pursues us and brings us back—what He wants for us is joy.

What we're going to look at now is a verse that is probably the most famous verse when it comes to joy. It's one that we even sang about earlier today. The strength of God is our joy.

What does that mean and where does it come from and what does it mean for me and you today? Well, the strength of the Lord is our joy, that comes from the book of Nehemiah.

And just a little context for Nehemiah, this is happening when Jerusalem has been taken down. All of the people have been removed. Because of their rebellion, God allowed them to be dismantled. And they are sent throughout the empire. A lot of them taken over by the Babylonian empire. And that's where we pick up in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah gets word that the city of Jerusalem is in shambles—completely devastated. The walls are knocked down. So, he has this moment of faith where he says, "I want to be a part of rebuilding God's city." So, he goes to the king and because of the favor of the Lord is on him, he gets to do it. He leaves and he begins to re-establish the city. He starts to build the wall on the outside, to fortify it.

At this time God's people are coming back and they begin to build the wall, and they begin to re-introduce the things of God, like the word of God that none of them had heard in a very, very long time.

We're going to pick up with it during one of those times where Nehemiah and the priest, Ezra, pull everyone together and they begin to read God's word over them. Look at this in Nehemiah, chapter 8, starting in verse 9. It says:

"Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were interpreting for the people said to them, 'Don't mourn or weep on such a day as this! For today is a sacred day before the Lord your God.' For the people had all been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law."

They just got up and they just started reading God's word, God's Law, and people began to fall out. They responded. They were weeping and yelling. And that just gives you biblical proof that if you want to respond during the sermon you can. It's biblical. We should be moved.

But that's not what God wanted for them. They began to have sorrow, and they began to weep, and Nehemiah stops them. He says, "No, no, no. That's not what today is about." And then he begins to usher them into a moment that will begin to mark who they will be as a people. Look at what he does in verse 10. It says:

"And Nehemiah continued, 'Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks,'" if your theology doesn't include rich food and sweet drinks, I don't want it, "and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad,'" and here it is, "for the joy of the Lord is your strength!"

That's the context of how we got that line. So, what's happening? They are reading God's Law. And the people realize how good God is, how faithful He is, and how far their rebellion has taken them, how far short they fall from God's Law. And they begin to be broken and weep before God.

But Nehemiah stops them and says, "No, no, no. That's not what today is. I want you to lift your eyes and I want you to have this, to remember the joy of the Lord is your strength.

"Today is not about how far you've strayed from God. Today is about how far God has moved to get close to you. Today is about how God is rebuilding this city, how God is bringing His people together, how our faithful God will always give us a reason to have joy no matter the circumstances. That's what today is. Fix your eyes on Him and all that He has done."

That's our strength. And that is something that is not dependent on circumstance or a season. That is always accessible. And I love the way it continues in Nehemiah, chapter 12. Look at what it says. It says:

“Many sacrifices were offered on that joyous day for God had given the people cause for great joy. The women and children also participated in the celebration and the joy of the people of Jerusalem could be heard far away.” (NLT)

Think about that. What if that was what could be heard from the space at all of our campuses? A joyful sound—constant celebration. I’m telling you, as I was reading this week I began to pray that for worship night next week. That it would be so loud, such a joyous sound as we all come in under one roof celebrating who God is, how faithful He has been, and what he’s up to in this season, and what we believe that He is able to do.

That as people drove by all they heard were rumblings and celebrations and cheers like, “I don’t know what is happening in there, but it sounds like a good time.” That is my hope for our church for worship night and every single week that those are the sounds that the world begins to hear from us. Celebration. That is who we are. We are a joyful people.

That’s the message that Jesus came to bring. Do you remember when the angel came and he’s telling them, “Hey, Jesus is coming.” Do you remember the words that he used? Look at this in Luke, chapter 2, verse 6. It says:

“But the angel reassured them, ‘Don’t be afraid,’” he said, “‘I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people.’”

He said, “I’m bringing you a message. Good news to all people that will bring joy.” I can’t think of any other message, other than Jesus, that brings this great joy to all people. Right?

We’re about to have a little game later today. And there are people, based on what the message turns out to be... It will be great news for some people and horrible news for others. And for most of us, we don’t even care about either team, but hopefully there are good commercials.

But what Jesus came to bring was great joy for all people. And I want you to picture that. I want you to think about something in your life that brought you great joy. Think about how you responded, how you swelled up, how you jumped up and down. Go back to that moment.

I love watching people being filled with joy. I love catching a clip. Have you ever seen one of these where a mom and a daughter are in front of a computer? The daughter has been working her whole life, studying to become a lawyer.

She took the bar exam. She’s waiting on the results. She’s clicking the button: refresh, refresh, refresh. And then finally the results come through and she got the good news. She passed the bar.

What happens? They jump out of their seats. They are jumping up and down hugging one another, “This is the greatest moment of our lives. We just got a good message that brought us joy.”

Have you ever been at the hospital when a new baby is born? I didn’t get to deliver any of the babies, because that’s just the way it works. The women get to do that part, get to.

But what I got to do was to be the one who walked into the waiting room to tell the family the baby was here. You know the result of that. You get to be the one who brings good news to all of these people—joy. Everyone gets out of their seats. Everyone is throwing their arms around you, hugging you and it’s just a moment of joy.

The Bible says that when we receive the gospel that should be our response. This is good news. It’s the best news. And we get it every day. It is real every single day. Are we waking up with that kind of joy?

I hear a lot of people who are like, “I’m just not a joyful person. Wasn’t raised with it. It’s not my personality, not my bent, not my wiring.” Since when has our faith been about anything that is natural? I’m talking about something that is supernatural, that is a gift from the Holy Spirit. We are to be joyful for all that God has done.

We’re going to get there. I can feel it.

Jesus came to bring joy and not just baby Jesus. Not just eight pounds, eight-ounce baby Jesus. Adult Jesus came to bring the same message. Some of His last words in John, chapter 15—look at this. He says, this is Jesus:

“When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you would be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!” John 15: 10-11 (NLT)

This is what Jesus came to bring us. And He says, “If you remain in my love, if you abide in Me, if you’re in relationship with Me, in proximity to Me you are going to overflow with My joy.” He’s saying, “The fruit of a life that is dedicated to Me is going to be joy.”

It’s not just doing the right things. It’s not just going over there and doing what we are supposed to do. It should be a life marked with overflowing joy. That is the life that Jesus came to bring us. Not that we walk into church every Sunday with our heads down like, “I’m supposed to be here so here I am. I’m doing this to keep God off of my back,” with whatever doubts or guilt or shame.

He says, “No, no, no. It should be marked with joy. “Not that I have to, but I get to because the message is so good. God is so good. And I know that He is the source of joy. So, I’m going to do everything that I can to get as close to Him as is physically and spiritually possible. That’s why I do what I do, because I want to be filled with His love, and I want to be filled with His joy.”

And joy is a bigger deal than we make it out to be. We act like it's optional. Like it's great if we have it, but it's really not needed. I think the Scriptures would disagree and now even science would disagree.

There is a book that I read last year that really changed the way that I view God, the way I view discipleship and spiritual formation. It's called *The Other Half of Church*. And the guy who helped write it, his name is Jim Wilder. He is a neurotheologist working at the intersection of theology and brain science.

I don't know much but I know that guy is smarter than I am. He took two of the hardest things ever, the brain and God and said, "I'm going to figure out not only how to understand one of them, I'm going to figure out how to bring them together to the point of the intersection of how all of this comes together."

And here's what he came to say, after all of his research, "Our brains desire joy more than any other thing. Our brains scan our surroundings every single day looking for joy, desiring joy."

And here's the way he describes it, joy equals this, "I'm happy to be with you." That's what we're seeking. That is what real joy comes from. From a foundational level. Because we come from a joyful God who made us in His image, we are built to desire—we want joy. In His presence is the only place where real joy can be found.

The Scriptures testify to this. Psalm 16:11, look at what it says. It says:

"You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever. (NLT)

That's what we're doing. We want to be in the presence of God. We want His joy to overflow within us. In His presence is a loose translation. Literally, what it means is that we will find joy when His face shines upon us. When we seek the face of the Lord we will experience joy, which is a beautiful thing.

But it also says that God finds joy in seeing our face. When we go through our lives, living in such a way, searching after, "I want to be in the presence of God because when I'm there I'm seeking His face and His favor is falling on me and I'm experiencing joy, because I know through the gospel that God is happy to see me."

It is not only a call because of what God is supernaturally doing in our lives, it should overflow, it is a command to be joyful. Philippians, chapter 4, verse 4, look at this.

"Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon."

Always be full of joy. What's fascinating about that word always here in the Greek, it means always. You can't get around it. What Paul is saying is that we should always be

full of joy. How? How is that even possible? How is that a real thing? He goes on to tell us exactly how to do it. Keep reading in Philipians. He says:

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philipians 4: 4-6 (NLT)

Pray about everything. Tell Him what you need. This isn’t suppressing your feelings; this isn’t pretending that what’s happening isn’t real. That’s not what Paul is doing. Paul is writing this letter from prison. He’s very aware of bad circumstances. He’s awaiting trial. He could be put to death. He knows this.

This guy finds himself in prison more than anyone, but he also finds himself praising and worshiping in the middle of the night. He finds himself preaching the gospel to whoever is chained to him in that moment. Nothing is wasted because nothing could steal his joy. And he hints at it right there.

It’s the same thing Nehemiah did. He said, “I have to get my eyes up. I have to remember what my reality really is. And the truest thing about the season I’m in isn’t what’s happening here, it’s what God has done for me. Because of that, I have strength.

You know, I think so many of us let joy slip through our fingers because we don’t think joy can remain in a tough season. We don’t think joy and pain or joy and sadness can co-exist. We think, a lot of times, that the opposite of joy is sadness. Right? We think if there is anything in my life that is making me sad, if there is anything in my life that is bringing me pain, then there is no way that I can have joy.

But that is not the joy that is available to me and you. It is not conditional upon circumstances. It’s not conditional upon other feelings that are present or not present.

The opposite of joy is not sadness, it’s hopelessness. Which means that the only time I can’t have joy is if I don’t have hope. So, what I’m saying today, what I’m trying to say is that I don’t know your life. I don’t know your circumstances. I don’t know your trials. I don’t know your pain.

But what I do know is that no matter your circumstances, they are not bigger than the cross. What I do know is that there is a hope that comes from the cross that nothing can erase.

What I do know is that no matter the diagnosis, no matter the pain, no matter the addictions, no matter the loss there is a world of faith that you can connect to where you can say, “I know that this is true. I’m not pretending. But I believe that God is close





to the brokenhearted. I believe that I can have God's presence with me even if my situations aren't good. And the joy of the Lord will be my strength."

That is the life that we are called to. It's not waiting. We have joy right now. I love the way Habakkuk talks about it. Look at this. He says:

"Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!" Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NLT)

Fun, fact. This is also the first ever country song.

He said, "Even though I lost everything, there are no crops in the field, my woman left me, everything is going wrong. I have nothing to show for it other than this. I have faith, and I have trust in the sovereign God who is above all of it.

"And if I have Him, I have more than enough. They can take everything from me, but they can't take my faith. They can't take my God. My joy is not circumstantial. It is based on gratitude on what God has done and hope in what He will do. And since nothing can take my hope, and nothing can erase what God has already done for me, I will have joy in this moment."

One more verse. We're still going. One more verse.

"And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

Don't read this disconnected from the first line he said when he said, "Rejoice always." How? Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and honorable. Because here's the truth. We can't always fix our circumstances, but we can fix our minds. And if God is close to the brokenhearted, we can have joy in that moment. If God is joy, the closer I get to Him the more joyful I will be. And there is not a circumstance that can take that from me.

We know this to be true. I've seen this lived out by so many of you. One of my roles here is I officiate funerals. And that's where that happens. You see people losing the people who they love most, and they are just gathered around, and they are grieving, and they are sad.

But at the same time there is a joy that is unbreakable because they know this truth: to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. And there is this joy that begins to erupt through tears, through pain.

There is a stronger truth that is at play. Our God is sovereign and there is a hope that one day we will be reconciled to that person. This is not goodbye. Death does not win. Cancer does not win. Jesus has already won. That's the hope that we have.

And now me and you, what we need to do is to take that truth, God is a joyful God who has come to bring good news that brings joy to all people so that we would have joy that overflows in our lives. We have to construct our lives in a way that it becomes easy to choose joy, it becomes easy to be in the presence of God because so many things are trying to pull us away from Him.

I want to put this simple statement out there and it's one I want you to wrestle with this week and to begin to build these things into your life. Here it is:

I feel close to God when I

I like to think about these spaces where the air gets really thin between heaven and earth. That when I'm in these spaces I feel so close to God. His love is just being lavished upon me. I'm filled with joy and celebration. And it's an amazing time because I feel close to God.

What are those things in your life?

I have a few I'm going to put up here and I want you to do the hard work and begin to ask yourself what are those spaces and how do I add them to my life. Here are just a few that you can start with:

I feel close to God when I come to church; when I go to group; when I serve; when I read Scripture; when I pray and fast; when I listen to worship music; when I share my faith.

And then my personal preferences. What I mean by this is we are all a little bit different so some of us feel really close to God when we are out camping and laying underneath the stars, then we are so close to God. Others of us, not so much. All we feel are mosquitoes. So, it's okay to say, "I feel close to God with some room service."

What I'm doing is I'm crafting my life in a way that I'm putting myself in a space where it becomes so easy to be in the presence of God. That air is so thin that it feels like heaven on earth.

I know that when I'm in the presence of the Lord, when He is feeling joy from me and I'm reciprocating that joy, it will begin to transform how I live.

We will become a joyful people.

Here's the thing. We were not made to live without joy and delight. And if we don't get it relationally from God and with healthy relationships with others, we will look for it in other places. Because we are made in God's image, we are made for joy.



It's not only to say, "I'm done with joy. I don't need to feel joy. I don't need happiness. I don't need any pleasures," a joyless life is a breeding ground for addiction. You weren't made to do life without joy. If you try you will begin to succumb to lesser and lesser things that bring you false joy. They are pseudo joys.

So, what I want to ask you is this question:

I feel far from God when I \_\_\_\_\_ .

What is that? Because here's the truth. There are things that can bring us happiness but don't bring us God's joy and we have to put those things to death.

That's what is so beautiful about a time of prayer and fasting. Maybe some of those addictive things you put on your list, you began to stop doing them and now you are realizing, "Oh, that wasn't just a glass, that was my joy." Or, "That wasn't just some time I was spending scrolling, that was my joy." Or, "That wasn't just a video game, that was my joy."

And it's me and you doing the hard work to say, "We're not going to settle for these lesser things for them to be the source of our joy. And we are definitely not going to let them steal from the life that God wants to give us. So, if there is anything that is competing for God's love, we have to have faith to lay it down and to trust that the source of joy will provide. Amen?"

The thing that I want to leave you with is something that I don't know if it's ever been said in a sermon. This may be the last time it's said for good reason. But I want you to hear it and I want you to believe it and I want you to live like it is true. I want you to:

Enjoy your life.

We cannot have a joyful life if we don't enjoy the life that God has given us.

The kingdom of God is marked and described as a joyful feast. The closest God can get to try to describe to us what heaven is going to be like is a wedding. And not a lame wedding that you went to. The best wedding that you've ever been to.

I say pretty much the same prayer at every wedding that I officiate. Sorry if you felt special for the one I gave you. I always get asked right before we are about to eat, they come up to me and are like, "Hey, sorry we didn't ask you earlier. Is there any way you could bless the food for us?" I'm like, "Yeah, part of the package. Don't worry about it. I'll cover it."

But my prayer is the same.

I pray at a wedding, "God, you tell us that this is the closest we get to what heaven looks like. A feast. Rich foods. Sweet drinks. Having a good time. Laughter erupting. Just



unending celebration. So, God, I pray that this wedding mirrors heaven. I pray that it is a night that celebrates love, and it points to what eternity is going to be like.”

Eternity is not going to be boring. Eternity is going to be a never-ending celebration in the presence of the Lord.

We’re getting better, as a church, in celebrating. I’m telling you where I think we are celebrating the best is through Rooted. Rooted—if you haven’t done it yet, you need to get registered for it. Here’s what it is. It’s a 10-week experience, community based. You get to know more about who God is, sharing it with other people.

And then at the end of those 10 weeks, you’re not just like, “Well, thanks for coming. See you later.” We throw the biggest party ever. We invite all campuses under one roof. We have a feast. We’ve had walls of doughnuts. Think about that. We eat together. We come here. We worship together.

And then people get on the stage with cardboard testimonies. All that is is people standing here saying, “Hey, I showed up like this and in 10 weeks God changed my life.” Then everyone celebrates what God did. And then we go a little bit longer: 40, 60, 70 people get baptized. Everyone loses their mind. It is a feast. It is a party. It is heaven touching down on earth. It is filled with joy.

And what I was convicted of this week was, “Why doesn’t more of my life look like a Rooted celebration?”

Why doesn’t group look like a Rooted celebration?” Group doesn’t have to look like everyone just funnels in, sits down, “Open the Bible, I’m going to read it and then we’re going to have a fairly shallow conversation about what this is. I’ll ask you how you’re doing. You’ll say, ‘Good.’ I’ll say, ‘Good.’ And then you’ll pray. Too close, huh? Yeah, too close.

What if group was a feast? What if every week you saved the best meal for that moment? And everyone came in and they shared, not at just some cheap, little meal but at feast. And you had rich food and sweet drinks. And everyone gathered together just celebrated all that God had done that week. People just came in with miracles and said “I didn’t think God would do this. I was down on my knees. I began to pray and then God answered that prayer.” And then one by one, everyone celebrated what God was doing.

What if our neighbors knew what night group was? What if they would see the cars outside and all they could hear were murmurs of celebration and clapping and singing. And as they are walking their dogs they are like, ‘I don’t know what is happening in there, but it sounds like a good time.’”

What if we could be known for celebrating, known for feasting, known for having a good time? Because I’m telling you, in a world that is desperate for happiness, doing



everything they can to possibly get a touch of it, we have the source of it. We should be modeling it every single day to a watching world.

What if joy is what God uses to capture the attention of the next generation?

I want us to be a people of joy. And I want to just try to bring it all together in one definition—sermon in a sentence to capture what joy is and how it is different. Here it is:

Joy is an attitude that we choose not based on circumstances, but on gratitude for what God has done and hope in what He will do.

Happiness is based upon circumstance. Joy is set on the cross. I have gratitude because I know who my God is. My God is the source of joy, of everything that is good. My God moved heaven and earth to come get me. My God sent His one and only Son to live the perfect life that I couldn't live. And my God went to war with the devil and smashed his head underneath His foot. My God went to a cross, defeated sin and death. My God resurrected three days later proving that He has authority over heaven and earth.

So, yes. I have joy for all that my God has already done. Because if He never does another thing, he's already done more than I deserve. I have underserved joy. And I have hope that as much as God has already done, He's not done. He is transforming me from the inside out.

He is bringing a new heaven and a new earth. As good as life gets on this side, it doesn't come close to what awaits me on the other side. There is joy in the presence of the Lord. And, one day, it will never be removed from me. I will constantly be in a state of joy surrounded by His love.

I know that there are some people here today and you want to come to faith. You want to come to place your faith in God. You want to come home. You want everything that I am talking about but you're so worried because you don't know how God is going to respond. The only thing that could be worse is living a hard life—all of those things that were done to you, all of the things that you did, and thinking that if you went to God He would reject you. And that's what is keeping you in your seat.

I just want to encourage you, our joyful God has already told us how he is going to respond. In Luke 15, Jesus tells three stories to illustrate one point. And it is the heart of the Father for those who are far from Him. It talks about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. But every single one of them ends in the same way.

And the one in the middle is the one that has always stuck with me. There is this woman who had 10 coins. She loses one. It says, "Won't she drop everything, sweep the house, turnover the furniture, not stopping until she finds the coin? And when she does, she's going to call the neighbors and throw a party for the coin that she found." It was lost, but now it's found.

Look at this in Luke chapter 15. It says:

“And when she finds it she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way there is joy in the presence of angels when even one sinner repents.” Luke 15: 9-10 (NLT)

When one lost son or daughter comes home this is the reaction you can expect from earth and heaven. A party is being thrown in your name. All of heaven is rejoicing because you matter that much to God. Joy is what carries us through and will continue to carry us through.

This is what got Jesus through the most painful experience anyone has ever gone through—the cross. It was joy that led Him. Look at this in Hebrews, chapter 12. It says:

“We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.” Hebrews 12:2 (NLT)

It was the joy that was on the other side that carried Him through. He knew that that was not it.

If you want to know the secret to having joy in every situation it’s this: I refuse to believe that this is all that there is. Joy is on the other side. Joy comes in the morning. Nothing else wins. Only Jesus wins. Death does not win. Cancer does not win. Sickness does not win. Addiction does not win. Mental health or lack of it does not win. Jesus and Jesus alone has already won. So, I will have joy knowing that that’s what I stand in.

What we’re going to do now is we’re going to close in prayer and in worship. But we are not going to worship the way we started. We are going to worship like the gospel really is good news that brings joy to all people.

So, at all of our campuses, I want to ask you to stand to your feet. And I want you to stand in joy, even though you may have a bunch of stuff going on, even though you may have lost a lot, if your faith is in the Lord, you have a reason to celebrate right now. Let yourself be filled with the joy of the Lord. Let that be your strength.

I want to challenge you sing louder than you’ve ever sung before. Move a little bit. Jump. It’s okay. We have medical professionals at every campus. You twist an ankle, we’ve got you.

I’m going to lead us in a prayer and then we’re going to go back into The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength. And we want you to sing it with us. So, at every campus, close your eyes and bow your head. Let’s pray together.

Father, we thank You that You are a joyful God. God, we reclaim who You really are. You are a God of joy who gave a message of joy. You came that our joy may be complete, that it may overflow within us.



God, I pray that we would know we always have access to Your joy. Nothing in this world can take Your joy because nothing can undo what the cross has already done.

You have already adopted us. You have made us sons and daughters. You have already defeated the devil. You have already proven who You are. God, you are faithful. God we will have joy.

So, right now, in this moment, I pray that Your Spirit would fill us. I pray that there would be shouts of joy, of celebration. That we would remember that this is the kingdom of God. We stand in Your victory. And we worship under Your holy name. It is Your joy that is our strength. And the church says: Am

