

INI Hymns: Sermon 25-28

Pentecost 4 **Acts 13:52** 07/6/25

Joy is such a powerful gift of the Holy Spirit. We want to learn to make the most of it. Joy can truly transform our lives to be more Christ like. As we page through the book of Acts, there are several places where it says believers were filled with joy. We're going to focus on one in particular as our text. It is found in **Acts 13:52**, where we will see an amazing example of the power of the Holy Spirit to give joy in the lives of His people.

*"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."*

**Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

Even the World recognizes the benefits and strength found in joy. Medical researchers suggest that joyful people tend to have a Stronger Immune System, lower blood pressure and better cardiovascular health, reduced Stress, better sleep, improved diet, and increased physical activity, which all contribute to overall well-being. Some even suggest that joy may be associated with a reduced experience of chronic pain.

All of this can add up to living a longer, more productive and definitely more enjoyable life. But that's not all, if your heart is truly filled with joy, you are energized to do what you have to do. Our motivation and power to accomplish any task is greatly increased by a positive, joyful attitude and outlook. Positive, joyful people get more done. They have more energy, more focus. On the opposite end of the spectrum, when a person is depressed, it takes all they can do to accomplish simple tasks. It's not because they don't have the physical strength to do them, but their mental and emotional strength is at such a low ebb that they just can't bring themselves to do anything. This is true in almost every area of our life. Maintaining a healthy diet and exercise is much easier for joyful people. A lack of joy leads to emotional eating and drinking which can send you spiralling down even deeper. Joyful people tend to have stronger social connections and better relationships, which in turn can improve mental and emotional well-being and therefore maintain your joy.

When you consider all these things, it is easy to understand why our society puts such a high value on happiness. The pursuit of happiness becomes the most important thing in people's lives. We sometimes point out how the world is totally preoccupied with seeking happiness. But the problem is not so much the desire for a joyful life or the pursuit of happiness. The problem is the world seeks joy in physical things and pleasure. Such joy is very fleeting. When circumstances change as they always do, joy is replaced by many negative

emotions like anger, resentment, envy, worry, sadness, anxiety and stress. What we really need is a source of joy that is not dependent on the circumstances in this life. A joy that transcends everything that goes on in this world and in our life.

That is what the Spirit gives you. So as we continue to consider

### **The Power of the Spirit in Your Life,**

We will consider that the **Spirit Fills you With Joy!**

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Paul says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Gal. 5:22-23 The Holy Spirit doesn’t give joy the way the world does. It is not dependant on what is going on in our lives. It doesn’t come and go or even ebb and flow. It is constant and perfect.

Now, are you wondering if that is really being honest? Or is that just a pious statement that sounds good but really has no value? Notice, I did not say that the Christian always has perfect joy. That is absolutely not true. Christians often suffer from sadness and every negative emotion. Christians can even suffer from severe depression. So how can that be that the Spirit gives perfect joy to Christians, yet Christians can suffer from sorrow and depression? It’s like what Jesus said about peace. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.” Jesus gives us His own perfect peace. But then He says, “LET not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27. Jesus gives perfect peace, but we don’t always receive it or enjoy it. We let our hearts be troubled. So it is with the Joy of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives the gift of perfect Joy, but we do not always use it. That is why we need to learn to use this powerful tool of the Spirit.

Our text from Acts 13 is an amazing example of the Power of the Spirit’s gift of joy to transcend what is happening in our life. Acts chapter 13 recounts the very beginning of Paul’s Missionary journeys. The disciples mentioned in our text were believers in Antioch, which was the very first city where Paul preached in Asia Minor. He preached about Jesus in the synagogue. We read that “many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas” and begged them to preach to them again on the next Sabbath. Then we read, “The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.” Vs. 43 Great! The people came to know Jesus’ everlasting love for them. They received their eternal salvation.

“BUT when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.” Vs. 45. Then a few verses

later we read, “The Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.” Vs 50-51

Our text follows immediately: *“AND the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”* Think about this! These Jews and Gentiles just came to faith in Jesus as their Saviour. They were brand new believers. The only two men who told them about Jesus were just driven out of their city. They had no pastor to guide them further. Not only that, but these believers continued living in the city where Christians were not welcome. Life no doubt became much more difficult for them, yet we read, “And they were filled with JOY!” Isn't that remarkable?

They had Joy in their salvation, in Jesus, and all the hatred and persecution they faced could not diminish their joy. The joy of having Christ and the forgiveness of sins which gives eternal life can fill the heart with joy no matter what else is happening in your life. As Jesus told the Paralyzed man, “Son, be of good cheer your sins are forgiven.” Even if you are paralyzed or whatever else may be wrong in your life, you can rejoice because your sins are forgiven you. Think about it! What troubles do you have in your life that get you down? Whatever they are, every single one of them is because of sin. Sin is the cause of every pain, every disease, every heartache and sorrow. So if Jesus says that your sins are forgiven, then you are set free from sin and its consequences.

Those believers were also filled “with the Holy Spirit.” Those two go together. Filled with the Holy Spirit their faith continued to grow. Even though Paul and Barnabas were driven out, they still had the Bible and the Holy Spirit worked through His Word to keep their faith alive and growing. That in turn kept their joy alive and well. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman believers, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17).

There is another important phrase in chapter 13 of Acts. As I mentioned Paul preached to all the Gentiles and then we read, “When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and As many as were appointed to eternal life believed.” Vs. 48 That's talking about our eternal election. Talk about a reason for great Joy. God chose you from eternity to be His own special people, to love you and bring you to live with Him in Paradise. He made that possible by sending His own Son to pay for our sins so that we could live with Him. Those new believers were so overjoyed to know that God loved them so deeply and gave them eternal life that it didn't matter that the

unbelievers raged against them. That was simply proof of their unbelief and that they didn't have the Spirit like the believers had. That showed all the more how special it was that God had chosen them.

So how can we maintain a joyful life? As life continues on and the stress and worries of life continue to press upon us, we begin to lose the great joy of our salvation. We begin thinking less about how amazing God's love and salvation is, and we begin focusing more on the trials and frustrations and pressing matters of life, and we let those things rob us of that living joy.

Most of us are very conscientious about our responsibilities and obligations and we stress about getting everything done properly. Sometimes we let those responsibilities loom so large in our mind that they overshadow the joy of the Lord. We may even feel like we don't have time to worship God because of these pressing matters. Or we may worship, but our mind is still on all that we have to do. So we lose the joy of our salvation. Conflicts in our relationships have a way of taking over our mind and our emotions, we let anger and resentment drive the joy from our hearts. Then there is the guilt and shame that we feel about things we have said and done. That too can destroy our joy. That's why King David prayed, and we sing every Sunday, "Restore unto me the joy of your salvation."

When it comes down to it, there is a very simple solution but it can be difficult to follow through. It really is a mind game. It really is a matter of what you let your mind think about. If you are always thinking about the pressing things you have to do, or thinking about what someone said or did that bothers you, then the joy of the Lord will be pushed aside. So make a conscious effort to "set your mind on things above" as Paul urges in Colossians 3:2.

Remember the Lord's great mercy and love always. Remember what He has delivered you from. Paul says, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Col. 1:13. We were in the most horrible captivity to Satan which led to eternal suffering. Jesus has rescued us from that and brought us into His Kingdom of love. Remember that daily and the joy will prevail. Right before that verse Paul prays that we may be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." Col. 1:11-12 You can have patience and longsuffering WITH JOY! The joy of God's love and faithfulness and His salvation will enable you to deal with all the troubles of life with patience and longsuffering.

How do you keep your mind on these things in the face of the pressures and frustrations of life? Talk to God throughout the day. Thank Him for every little evidence of His love and mercy. Remember that none of the troubles, or enemies, or anything can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. So many psalms call upon us to rejoice. Begin your day by reading one and rehearse key phrases in your mind throughout the day. Let your focus be on Joy in the Lord. Rejoice in all God's goodness.

Do you remember that verse in Nehemiah 8:10 "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." The joy of the Lord will have the physical benefits that the world recognizes, but so much more. The Joy of the Lord truly strengthens us against all the attacks to our faith by the world. When we focus on the joy of the Lord, then we will truly "Serve the Lord with Gladness."

Amen.