

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church – Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 3  
June 10, 2018  
Sermon by Pastor Dan Pautz  
***The Holy Spirit's fruit of joy***

—Galatians 5:22-23 & Philippians 4:4

We did it every year. In mid to late July my parents and family traveled about thirty-five miles north of our farm in Wisconsin to Door County to a cherry orchard to pick cherries. The price back then was about 10 cents per pound. There is a place about 25 miles east – southeast of our church where in mid May to early June you can go into a peach orchard and pick peaches. This morning we find ourselves in the marvelous and one of a kind fruit orchard owned and operated by the Holy Spirit. There are nine different fruit in this orchard. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23) This morning we are at the tree hanging with the fruit of joy.

Do you need the Holy Spirit's fruit of joy? Are you a joyful person? If not, why not? If you are a joyful person, do you have the right kind of joy, the real and lasting joy from the Holy Spirit? There are many things in life that bring a kind of joy even to unbelievers. There is joy on a wedding day, joy on a graduation day for you and for parents, grandparents, and friends, a joy when your team wins. Both Christian Cub fans and non-Christian Cub fans rejoiced in 2016 when the Cubs won the World Series, the first in 108 years, there is joy after successful surgery, joy when on vacation.

But the fruit of the Spirit goes beyond these things. There was a man who had true joy even though he was falsely accused. He unjustly ended up in prison and was treated by many with great contempt. Freedoms were taken away. He could no longer come and go as he pleased. And to top it all off, a decision was pending whether or not to execute him. But believe it nor not, he had joy and contentment. What was he thinking? Did he enjoy misery? Not at all! The man's name is the Apostle Paul. He wrote, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4) Note the word always. No matter what the situation is – good times, difficult times, great events, horrible things yet rejoice in the Lord.

Let's stop right at this point for a bit. Do you rejoice? And do you rejoice in the Lord? Some seem to be unhappy all the time. Likely, for whatever the reason might be, they have chosen to be unhappy – and that is a sin. A mother told her teenage daughter who continued to be crabby and grouchy that she had made the choice of having that negative attitude.

Rejoice in the Lord. Many look for happiness in all the wrong places. Rejoice in the Lord. Some have changed that Word of God as if it said, Rejoice in Self. Are you among them? Instead of looking up and outside of self at the Lord, they look inside of self at accomplishments and failures. Or they might seek to find joy mostly in the approval of other people. What do they think of me? Did they say anything about me? We surely want a good reputation but our great joy is in the Lord. An honest look at ourselves reveals that we are sinners – and that is not joyful.

Strangely enough, some seem to be most happy when they are sick. Perhaps it is an attention getter – others seem to thrive when they have problems and can have that "Woe is me" attitude. Are you among them? Others seem to get their happiness out of money and material things. Are you among them? Now don't get me wrong, money and material things are gifts from the Lord. However, rather than finding our joy in these gifts, ought not our joy to be in the Giver of these gifts. Remember too that it is the love of money that is the root of all kinds of evil.

And there truly is joy in the Lord. Let's look at several reasons for joy. It's amazing that the Lord knows you. Psalm 8 puts it this way: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?" Is it not astonishing that the Creator of heaven and earth knows little old you and little old me, pipsqueaks that we are – and sinful on top of it all. Of the 7.2 billion people in the world right now, God knows you. But not only is He aware of you but also more amazingly as the Psalmist states, "He cares for you." What a joy that is!

And you know how much He cares for you. The cross says it all, does it not? When you look at the cross in our church or elsewhere, when you wear cross jewelry or see it when someone else is wearing it, let the message be that the Lord Jesus Christ loves you, your sins are forgiven. You are passing through this life and on your way to heaven. Rejoice in it.

It was at my brother's funeral that the section of the Bible chosen by the pastor for the sermon text were the words of Jesus In Luke 10:20, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." Isn't that the heart and core of joy? Sometimes following the sermon we sing words of Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit." Did you notice the close connection between the joy of salvation and the Holy Spirit? Heaven is ahead. Here is how the prophet Malachi describes the joy of when we enter heaven – and those of you from dairy or beef farms will especially like the description; "And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall." After enduring the difficulties and problems and limitations of this life we will frolic with joy entering heaven.

As we look at the fruit of joy from the Holy Spirit, there is something else that is really noteworthy. You are a Christian. You have faith in Jesus. You seek to live for Christ. But you know why you are follower of Jesus? It is because the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith. And isn't the very fact that you are a Christian a source of joy?

Yet even more in connection with the fruit of joy! God allows you to serve Him. An adult man remembered what joy it was as a little boy to help his father fixing a car. The little boy would hand a wrench to his dad when he asked for it, a screwdriver, a rag to wipe away grease and oil. And is it not a joy that God gives us the privilege to serve Him? We serve Him every day in our life with a good attitude, with our words and actions. The Bible tells us "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." We serve Him by obeying His commandments. We serve him at home, at school and through our congregation.

Yes, and then there is the joy of the blessings that God gives us in our daily life. Our food, our clothing, our abilities, our family, special events such as graduations and weddings – we Christians know these come from the Lord and we have joy, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. On top of it all God makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.

You have joy, don't you? Or do you not? If not, why not? Outside of certain neurological conditions such as depression the Christian is to enjoy the fruit of joy. A gloomy Christian is an oxymoron similar to the phrase, an objective Packer fan. But there are robbers and scam artists that seek to rob us of the fruit of joy. Have you been a victim of thieves such as robbers who broke into your house or car? Have you fallen to scam artists? Have there been unauthorized charges to your credit card or bank account? Paul alludes to some of the robbers of joy and tells us how to overcome them. These robbers for the most part are not outsiders but our very own self. We can be our own worst enemies.

One joy robber is worry and anxiety. It is hard for you to have that fruit of joy when you worry and fret about this and worry about that. Perhaps you have heard this poem,

Said the robin to the sparrow, "I should really like to know,  
Why these anxious human beings Rush about and worry so."  
Said the sparrow to the robin, "Friend I think that it must be,  
That they have no Heavenly Father, Such as cares for you and me."

Shame on me, shame on you when we are full of anxiety which in turn robs us of the fruit of joy. Paul wrote, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Paul speaks of another joy robber. It is the lack of gratitude and lack of appreciation for the blessings God gives. Do you suppose those Israelites on their way to the Promised Land were joyful as they grumbled and groused and griped about the food God provided them. Count your blessings. See how good God has been to you. Don't have the entitlement attitude. Be content with what God has given you. Stop looking at others and feeling as if God has shortchanged you in finances or talents or looks. Appreciate what God has given you. Be thankful. How about every day you think of at least one thing for which to thank our God. Paul does say, "In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

Another robber of joy is overdosing on all the negative things in this world. Indeed, there is much sinful pessimistic and negative news out there. Yes, be aware of what's going on but don't be a negative news junkie. Dwell on the wonderful and positive news along with the goodness of your God.

But just how do we get the Holy Spirit's fruit of joy? I have six citrus trees on my property. Some are young – most are dwarf citrus trees. You know how I get them to bear fruit for me? I take out my chain saw, wave it in front of them, and threaten them that if they do not bear fruit, I will cut them down. No, I don't do it that way. I take care of them, I water them, I fertilize them, I carefully prune them. When frost threatens I cover the little young ones.

How do you get the fruit of the Holy Spirit? You have to go into the orchard of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit waters and feeds our faith. He does it through His Word and through the Sacraments of Baptism and communion. As the Holy Spirit keeps us in faith and builds it up, we are given the fruit of the Spirit.

You have a fellow Christian who answers the question "How are you?" with the words, "I am fine. Thanks be to Jesus, I am heading for heaven. And how are you?" What a joyful reply that is. May you also have that wonderful fruit of joy. Amen.