

# Joy to...YOU!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Well, take your Bibles this morning and you can be opening them, not to Luke, but to Peter, 1 Peter.

And this is, as I mentioned earlier in the service, first Sunday in December. And just a few more weeks until Christmas Day, right? And as soon as I say that, it fills a whole lot of you with great anxiety because the day is coming and you've got a lot to do, right?

Purchasing those gifts and getting things ready and so forth. But this is December and so with that in mind, I've decided to postpone my preaching schedule or series out of the Gospel of Luke.

And we're going to, I'm going to bring a few messages that hopefully will help us focus biblically on this beloved season and the meaning of it and so forth.

So again, if you have your Bibles open, 1 Peter, you can find chapter 1. And I'm going to read, starting with verse 3, 1 Peter chapter 1.

[ 1 : 18 ] 1 Peter 1.

1 Peter 1.

Now I'm going to stop right there.

I'm tempted to read on, but there's really no good place to stop. And so we have to pick a segment of the passage of this first chapter in this wonderful letter.

And I'm reminded that when I first came to be your pastor, I preached through 1 Peter. And so some of this I may have mentioned then, I don't remember. But I want to take this passage and really focus primarily on verses 8 and 9, even though I will reference some of those verses I read that come before it.

[ 3 : 06 ] So I want you to allow this phrase to just kind of resonate in your mind and in your heart.

This phrase, this expression, joy inexpressible and full of glory. Joy inexpressible and full of glory.

One of our favorite, of course, favorite Christmas carols is Joy to the World. We sang that this morning, didn't we? We kind of led off with that in our worship service this morning. I didn't tell Jonathan that I was going to be preaching on this subject.

And so, you know, God just took over there. And we love that hymn, that carol, Joy to the World, the Lord has Come. And that's what we celebrate this time of the year, don't we?

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though I would have to say, sadly, it is increasingly difficult to find that celebration in America today.

[ 4 : 07 ] In fact, it seems like Christmas is celebrated in any and every other way other than to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. But we celebrate that, don't we?

The birth of Christ. So Joy to the World, the Lord is Come. And He has Come. And we go on with that great carol. Let Earth Receive Her King. And that's what the wise men revealed, didn't they?

When they came and came to Jesus to bear gifts and give gifts to Him, the wise men coming revealed the kingship of that one born in Bethlehem so long ago.

Let every heart prepare Him room, unlike the inn in Bethlehem. Of course, that did not have any room for Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus or the birth of Jesus then.

And heaven and nature sing. And that's really what happened. In all heaven, the heavenly choir, the heavenly host did sing as the shepherds were watching and listening.

[ 5 : 10 ] And just an incredible carol. We love to sing it at this time of the year. Joy to the world, joy inexpressible and full of glory. And so that's what I want to talk about this morning.

Joy to you. Joy to you. This Christmas. And this joy is founded upon, its foundation is upon a certain spiritual reality that is revealed in this passage.

A reality really that Christmas ought to remind us of every time we come around this time of the year. And if it doesn't remind you of this, then you really need to reevaluate how you are observing

it.

Maybe all of us should reevaluate from time to time how we celebrate Christmas. But you see, this spiritual reality that we're going to be talking about this morning, that we find here in the passage, this spiritual reality is what guarantees a persistent and really indestructible joy.

And that's the kind of joy that we have and ought to have. Even though, as Peter says here, for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.

[ 6 : 27 ] And we all have, haven't we? In the past, and maybe some right now, and we're going to expect that to happen in our lives until Jesus comes, certain trials.

But even though we have these trials, there is this joy that is indestructible. Sometimes those trials have a tendency to show up this time of the year.

And perhaps that's true of some of you here today. All right, so then looking at what Peter says here, let's just get right to it. First of all, he speaks of a certain reality.

A certain reality. So that's number one, if you take notes. The reality. The reality. And Peter says the reality is you love him.

You love Jesus. That's what he says, doesn't it? He's not talking about a maybe kind of thing. He's talking about a reality, as he writes to his audience there in his first letter.

[ 7 : 33 ] He's saying you love him. That's what he said there, starting with verse 7, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That, of course, is a reference to his second coming. When, or whom rather, having not seen, what? You love.

You love. Say, you love him. And so Peter is saying, I know what's in your heart. Believers, Christians, I know what's in your heart.

I know your heart for Jesus, because your heart for Jesus is the same as my heart for Jesus. I love him. You love him.

And so in this instance here, he's not asking the question, do you love him? Though we could find other places in Scripture that might pose that sort of question, Peter is just stating the fact here, you love him.

[ 8 : 43 ] And he's not even commanding us here, love Jesus. Even though, again, we could find examples in the Bible where we are commanded to love Jesus.

But that's not what Peter is doing. Peter's not even pleading with us, oh, please love Jesus. Peter is simply stating the reality of all, for all, genuine Christians.

verse 7, that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold, that perishes, may be found. That it may be found.

Do you see, this is a reality for all genuine, true believers. And it's not based upon sight, is it? Our faith is not based upon sight.

Look at verse 8, whom having not seen you love. You haven't seen him, you love him. And he goes on and adds something else there, though now you do not see him yet, believing.

[ 9 : 46 ] Believing. Trusting him. So, you love him. You believe. You trust him. That is the reality of true Christianity.

And again, Peter is simply stating this matter-of-factly, isn't he? You love him. You trust him. And so, Peter means for this reality to be an encouragement to you.

He's not commanding us here. He's not pleading with us here to have something that perhaps we don't have or to feel something that we don't feel. He's saying this matter-of-factly to give encouragement to you.

And to challenge us in a sense. And especially when life gets tough, gets hard.

I like the way John Piper illustrates this. John Piper says that true Christianity is like swimming upstream in a river of godlessness.

[ 10 : 52 ] Do you feel that way? I think we all do. And especially in the last several years.

Swimming upstream in a river of godlessness.

And we swim, Piper goes on to say, we swim strokes against the flow with the stroke of love for Christ. And the stroke of faith in Christ.

Imagine a swimmer swimming upstream in a river. Love for Christ. Faith in Christ. Love for Christ. Faith in Christ.

And with these two strokes, God enables us to keep on swimming against the stream. The stream of godlessness. Now, the Apostle Peter in this passage is acting as swimming coach. And he's on the shoreline there watching us, encouraging us, and he's following us inch by inch as we are swimming upstream.

[ 11 : 59 ] And when we are swimming well, he calls out. You know, picture, he has a little megaphone. He calls out and says, you're doing great.

Keep on swimming. Love for Christ. Faith in Christ. And he says, look here, I have put down a flag right here on the shoreline even with where you are right now in your journey in the river of life. Mark this place. This place where you are right now in your love for Christ, in your faith for Christ. That way, if you ever stop swimming momentarily, sometimes we do, don't we? You stop swimming momentarily with the strokes of love and faith and you begin to float downstream with the flow in this river of godlessness so that when that happens, you'll be able to look over at the shore upstream and notice the flag there.

That's upstream. It's a fixed point of reference that you need to keep your eye on. And that fixed point of reference will lead you back to what real Christianity is.

[ 13 : 23 ] It is loving Jesus. Even though you've never seen him. It is faith in Jesus. Trusting Jesus. Even though you do not see him now.

And now, you know, that's a difficult concept for non-believers. I hope it's not a difficult concept for any of us here. For the unbeliever, this is hard to understand.

I mean, loving without ever seeing. Believing without seeing. That's a difficult concept. In John chapter 20 verse 29, Jesus said to Thomas, who, you know, remember Thomas was having a hard time believing that Jesus was alive from the dead, that he'd been resurrected, and he's standing right there in front of him, and yet he doesn't really believe it.

And you remember Jesus said, here, touch my side, touch my hands, and Thomas then believed.

And what did Jesus say? He said, blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe.

Now who's he talking about there? He's talking about the countless millions who would come after. After Jesus died, and was resurrected, and sent it back to the Father, he's talking about you and me.

[ 14 : 40 ] A special blessing on those who believe, yet they have never seen. In Romans chapter 15 verse 21, Paul is talking about the power of the gospel, power of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles who have never heard about Jesus, and certainly have never seen Jesus, and he quotes Isaiah chapter 52, in verse 15, where the Bible says, the prophet said, to whom he was not announced, they shall see.

Now, you see, when Jesus came the first time, his birth was announced. Announced to some shepherds, announced to some wise men in various ways, his coming was announced, the prophets announced it, but to whom did the announcement come?

To the Jews, not the Gentiles. And so Isaiah is looking ahead in time, or God is opening his eyes to see into the future, to whom he was not announced, they shall see.

They shall see. And those who have not heard shall understand. Now, Paul is quoting that out of Isaiah in reference to his preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles.

He was the apostle called to the Gentiles. And the coming of Jesus was not announced to them, and they have never seen him, and yet they will see him, and they will understand him.

[ 16 : 03 ] Of course, see him in a different way than obviously with physical eyes. And that's the blessing that's extended to us today. When the gospel, you see, when the gospel is preached, and when the gospel is believed, and when it is obeyed, people see Christ in a way that is far greater in many respects than those who saw him face to face when he came the first time.

See, hundreds and hundreds, maybe thousands of people saw Jesus with their two eyes. Some believed. A few believed. Most did not believe.

And yet, even those who did believe in him did not see him in the way you and I can see him today. And why is that? Well, because, first of all, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us.

We can see with spiritual eyes, the Holy Spirit indwells every believer. But also, we have the completed word of God. We have the entire story here.

And all you have to do, really, is to read the gospels. Any one of the four gospels, or read all of the gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And if you read them with open hearts and with a heart for Christ, then you will see the true glory of Jesus Christ far more clearly than those who saw him

face to face.

[17:30] Those who saw him with their physical eyes. They saw snippets of his life. A snippet here and a snippet of it there. And they saw him before his story was finished and before the full revelation was given.

But we have seen it all and we have it all. We have the whole story. In fact, we even have the end of the story about Jesus and how that pertains to us. See, you can just read the various gospel accounts in Matthew and in Luke.

There's the accounts of the birth of Christ. And you can see Joseph and you can see Mary kind of visualize them there and they're looking into the face of the little baby Jesus, the Messiah, as he came into the world.

You can see the shepherds there and the wise men later. And you can see others who looked into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ and realized that what they saw was just a fraction of what you and I see today through the word of God.

So you love him even though you've not seen him. You trust him though you don't see him today. The reality. This is the reality of true Christianity.

[18:44] Genuine Christianity. Now Peter also wants us to see the result. Not just the reality but the result of that reality. reality. And so that's number two.

The result. The result of loving Jesus and trusting Jesus. The result, Peter says, is joy. It's joy. People are looking for joy. They want joy. And they enjoy having joy in their life. True joy is a result of loving Jesus and trusting Jesus.

The result is joy. And so you see, here is the true test on where you are in your loving and trusting Jesus and it is this, joy inexpressible and full of glory.

Now remember the flag that Peter has put on the shoreline and he tells you where you should be in your strokes of love and faith, where you should be in your journey of the Christian faith.

[19:47] And if you realize that you have drifted a little bit downstream, down the stream of godlessness, then you can look to the flag, see the flag there, and you know that you must adjust your swimming strokes in order to, so that you won't continue to drift downstream.

Remember the flag is loving and trusting Jesus. Now here's another test. Here's another way to check the reality of your Christianity. Ask yourself, and I want to be real careful here because there's certain words that carry a certain connotation, sometimes right, sometimes is not, but ask yourself, how does my loving Jesus, trusting Jesus, make me feel about Jesus?

That's the word I'm always cautious about. You know, this kind of touchy feeling. But listen, God made us emotional beings and feeling is something that we do have, we do experience, and sometimes it's good.

And so I want to ask you, how does your loving Jesus, trusting Jesus, how does that make you feel about Jesus? Jesus? I mean, what do I feel about Jesus?

In thick or thin? You know, I sound like I'm performing a wedding. In plenty or in what? Or in good times and bad times?

[21:20] How do I feel about Jesus? What's my heart for Jesus? What's going on in my heart, in my heart of hearts? What does my loving Him do for me emotionally?

And how does my trusting Him, how does that stir in my heart? How's that stirring in my heart? Look at what Peter says here. He says in verse 8, Whom, having not seen you love, though now you do not see Him yet believe, believing, you do what?

You rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. That's quite a state. You see, the result, the resulting emotion, something we feel, something we experience, something that's stirring in our heart of hearts, the resulting emotion of your heart and life is rejoicing with joy inexpressible and full of glory.

That word inexpressible is rather interesting. It's translated differently in other versions, other English translation. The Greek word only appears one time in all the Bible.

And so since it's here, this is the only place, the only place you'll find this word. But the word means literally unutterable. In fact, some versions of the Bible render it unspeakable.

[22:54] Unspeakable joy. It doesn't mean you shouldn't speak about it. It just simply means that the way the true believer feels about Jesus, that leaves the believer speechless often.

I mean, how do you describe it? Your love and this joy as a result. How do you describe it? It's difficult to articulate. There just aren't words adequate enough to really do it justice, to tell you, tell a

person just exactly how you feel about Jesus.

Inexpressible joy. Not only that, but it's a glorious joy. That's what Peter says. Peter says, a joy full of glory.

It's a glorious joy. And why is that? Because of the object of our joy. The person the glorious Lord Jesus. And so I ask the question, Peter, I'd ask you a question, but I can.

Can you say with all faithfulness, with all truthfulness, that that is the way you feel right now, today, about Jesus?

[ 24 : 13 ] Inexpressible, glorious joy. Some of you might be thinking, well, today I can. not yesterday. You know, when I went to the mall, fought the traffic, fought the crowds, feel a whole lot of joy.

Or, not last week, when I got word of a family member who was sick. Or last month, or last year, maybe this whole year has been a difficult time for you, and you might be saying, yeah, I don't always feel that way.

this inexpressible joy, and glorious joy, because life is sometimes hard. And that's the whole point of what Peter's saying.

Peter's putting the flag down, remember. He's putting that marker to let us see how perhaps we have drifted from who we really are inside, who we really are as believers, and where we should be, loving him, and trusting him, and feeling it with joy.

It's alright to feel that. You know, I can't trust emotion, can't trust feeling. Well, if you love Jesus, and you trust Jesus, then you ought to feel that way. You ought to feel a certain way, feel joyful about that relationship with Christ, and so forth.

[ 25 : 39 ] But now, we're not quite through here. For the genuine believer, the reality is we love Jesus, we trust Jesus. That's the reality. If that's not for you, then you don't really have any warrant to believe that you're saved.

But the reality is you love Jesus, and you trust him. The result of that is joy inexpressible and full of glory.

And then finally this morning, perhaps I should have started with this, but I save it for last, the reason. The reason for all of this.

The reason for it. Peter says, the reason is your salvation. Your salvation in Christ. You say, oh, that.

Yeah, that. Your relationship with Christ. Your salvation in Christ. Verse 9, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

[ 26 : 48 ] Now that, by the way, is pointing all the way to the end of your salvation. You see, you need to understand salvation in that sense, and really in that tense. There is a future tense of your salvation.

It's not a hoping to be saved someday, but it is knowing that one day you will receive the fullness of that salvation in Christ. And when will that happen? Well, the Bible says when He comes.

Consummation of all things. But this is what verse 9 is looking forward to. Receiving the end, the ultimate end, the fullness of your faith, which is salvation, the salvation of your souls, the full salvation of your souls.

See, the passage that we're looking at this morning really starts with salvation and ends with it. It starts with how it begins, and it ends with how it ends. Or really, it's ongoing reality.

So, you know, Peter describes something that really ought to fill our hearts and lives with a joy that cannot be quenched. And shame on us if we lose our joy.

[ 27 : 57 ] And shame on us if we think we have no joy. Because as a believer, there's no possibility of that. Now, we can lose sight of it, and we can forget about it, and we can get kind of, you know, overburdened by some of the things of life that we all experience.

And that's why, again, this passage puts that marker up for us to continue to look to. You love Jesus. Don't you? You love Him. What can violate that?

Nothing. And as a result of that, you trust Him. And as a result of that, your life is full of joy. Joy that cannot be quenched.

See, the Christmas season reminds us of a lot of things, but it reminds us of this. It reminds us of where all of this began.

This love, this faith, this joy. Where did it all begin? In a manger. In a stable somewhere. In Bethlehem.

[ 29 : 04 ] With Mary and her husband Joseph. And of course, a baby. The Christ child.

Through whom a gracious God would give to those, all those who believe, a new birth. Verse 3. He has begotten us. To a what? A living hope. A latter part of verse 3. Begotten us to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and also to a glorious inheritance.

Verse 4. That's kept for us. Secure for us. Kept incorruptible. Verse 4. Incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away.

Reserved in heaven for us. Verse 4. Kept how? By the power of God. That's what Peter says. Verse 5. Kept by the power of God.

[ 30 : 14 ] And again, what is it? What is this talking about? A full and eternal salvation ready. It's all ready to be revealed in its fullness when Christ comes again.

You can bank on that. I don't know when it's going to be. It's going to happen. Jesus is going to come. As we celebrate his first coming, there will be a second coming.

And we will receive at that time our salvation, the fullness of our salvation, the ultimate end of our faith. Full and eternal salvation.

What better reason? I mean, this is so logical, isn't it? What better reason could there be to love Jesus and trust Jesus?

There isn't a better reason. It really is the only one. And also to feel, feel it every day with a joy that defies earthly explanation.

[ 31 : 27 ] salvation. That's what we ought to be experiencing. In spite of, in spite of the challenges of life, which we all have, all of us.

You say, well, yours aren't like mine. Well, maybe they're not. Yours aren't like mine. Challenges of life, we all have them.

We're going to continue to have them until Jesus comes. I'm sorry. But that's the case. We're talking about a love for Jesus and a trust in Jesus that produces in us a joy that is unspeakable. We can't put in words in spite of the hassles of this season we ought to be experiencing. And this season is full of hassles. Most of them self imposed.

And in spite of the assaults upon our faith this time of the year. I did there a few times in the year where the true Christian faith is more assaulted than Christmas.

[ 32 : 36 ] Of all times, at Christmas time. I mean, if Jesus had not come, there would be no Christmas. So what's the deal?

What's all this about, about getting Jesus out of Christmas? I mean, it couldn't be anything more illogical. But it's worse than that, of course, it's diabolical.

That's an assault upon our faith. But does that rob us of our love for Jesus, our trusting Him that produces in us a joy that we don't even know how to put words to?

A joy that cannot be violated? See, in spite of all of these things, in spite of the godlessness that is all around us, I would even add, in spite of the ever-present threat of terrorism, there's probably not a single person in this room.

I've been thinking about that the last few days, especially. It's an ever-present threat. It can't rob us, even if that threat becomes a very real thing for some of us, or any of us.

[ 33 : 50 ] And I hope that doesn't happen, but even if it becomes a very real thing. Terrorists can't rob this from you. A terrorist can't cut it off of you.

A terrorist can't shoot it out of you. It is joy inexpressible and full of glory.

So, joy to you. . . Thank you.