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 Holy Humor Sunday (on video)

No One Can Take Your Joy!
John 16:20-24

In John chapter 14-16, Jesus is telling his disciples that he will be going away to his Father. Jesus promises to send them an Advocate and Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to help them, comfort them, and remind them of all he taught.

Then he talks about how their *sorrow will turn to JOY*.

He compares their pain to that of childbirth, a pain that will *result in joy*.

Now, hear this word of the Lord for you today:

*²⁰ Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your **pain will turn into joy**. ²¹ When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. ²² So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and **no one will take your joy from you**. ²³ On that day you will ask nothing of me.^[c] Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.^[d] ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your **joy may be complete**.*

There are some things *other people cannot take away from us*, right?
 Like, Love, faith, learning, and happy memories...

I was thinking about some of my *best vacation memories* this week, and by far it's a trip to Hawaii with Ed and my brother!

It's why I was inspired to give out leis to the congregation!

My brother took us on that vacation,

something more extravagant than we could ever afford.

And it was beyond beautiful. The ocean, the flowers.....

No one can take that memory from me.

It's a happy place I can go to in my heart, when times are tough.

You know something else *no one can take* away from us? **JOY**.

We can *allow people and circumstances* to take away our happiness.

We can *give into feelings* of despair, or bitterness.

But really—no one—can take joy from us.

Because Joy is so much *deeper*.
 And *joy is a GIFT--* from God.
 And it's a gift *we really NEED*, isn't it?

We walk into church with *jobs* that stress us,
marriages that test us,
kids that rip our hearts out,
illnesses that threaten us,
parents that worry us,
finances that boggle our minds,
 and *losses* that break our hearts.

And suddenly we hear God saying to us:
REJOICE!
And have joy!

Which sounds great—but how are we supposed to do that, exactly?
 Well, that's what this Sunday is all about—***Holy Humor***.
 It's the day when we celebrate the ***joy of the resurrection!***
 And you know what it takes to have resurrection?
 Well, first, ***something has to have died.***

Resurrection is about new life, after the old life is destroyed.
 Think about that.
 That's powerful.
 Jesus died, that he might live, and help us live.

When we realize this about resurrection,
 we start to see how God's word about rejoicing and joy
 really does ***apply to each one of us***, no matter what's happening in our lives.

We have all ***lost*** something or someone, right?
 So ***we can all use the power of resurrection***,
 And new life, where there has been death!

So, just in case you're a bit down in the dumps today,
 how about we start with ***something to make you smile, maybe even laugh?***

A kindergarten teacher gave her class a "show and tell" assignment of bringing something to represent their religion.

The first child got in front of the class and said, “My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is the Star of David.”

The second child got in front of her class and said, “My name is Mary, I am Catholic and this is the Crucifix.”

The third child got up in front of his class and said, “My name is Tommy and I am **Presbyterian**, and this is a **casserole**.”

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A priest, an evangelist, and a minister were in a rowboat in the middle of a pond fishing. None of them had caught anything all morning.

The *evangelist* stands up and says he needs to go to the bathroom, so he climbs out of the boat and *walks on the water* to the shore. He comes back ten minutes later the same way.

Then the *minister* decides he needs to go too, so he climbs out of the boat and *walks on the water* to the shore. He, too, comes back the same way.

The *priest* looks at both of them and decides that his faith is just as strong as his fishing buddies, so he can walk on water, too. He stands up and as he steps out, he makes *a big splash, sinking down into the water*.

The evangelist looks at the minister and says, "I suppose we should have told him *where the rocks were*."

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Sometimes we need a good laugh--- especially in *worship*!
Because isn't this where we come to hear *GOOD news*?
Where we want to *receive JOY to help us through the week*?

And Jesus promises us:

²² *you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*

That's what we need—*a joy that no one can take away!*
A joy that happens, even in the *midst of* pain.

So what if, God's words—to *Rejoice, and have joy*,
What if they *don't* apply to our circumstances or our feelings,

What if God is **NOT** asking us to just ‘*see the glass half-full*’
Or say, ‘*it’s ok, everything is fine*’.

But rather, in spite of it all,
God is bringing us the **GIFT** of joy and rejoicing?

The word Rejoice, in Greek, means to “be joyful”
It comes from the words *chara*—joy, and *charis*—grace.
So, joy is not something we do, it’s a *gift* of God’s grace.

And it’s a gift that comes *in the midst of and in spite of, pain*.
In fact, I’d argue that the gift of joy can be *even deeper, the deeper the pain*.
The *depth* of sorrow can lead to a depth of joy.

We’ve probably all heard this before, but
Joy in the Bible is different than happiness.
Happiness can depend upon our circumstances, or our feelings.
Happiness is what the *world* wants for us.
As in, **buy this**---be happy. **Do this**--feel good.

Joy is something deeper, stronger, lasting longer.
Joy is what **God** wants for us.
And it’s not based in our circumstances or feelings.
It is based ***in the Lord!***

Which is why Paul says ***rejoice in the Lord.***
Not in your situation.
Not in your feelings...because ***both of those things may be terrible!***

There’s a remarkable reading in the Old Testament, from ***Habakkuk***—
About joy coming to us,
even when everything appears hopeless.

Listen to this:
*Though the fig tree does not blossom,
and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails,
and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold,
and there is no herd in the stalls,*

¹⁸ yet I will **rejoice** in the Lord;
 I will **exult** in the God of my salvation.
¹⁹ God, the Lord, is my strength;

Rejoicing can happen---right in the middle of a hopeless situation.
 That's the gift, of joy—the gift of God's grace!

Joy comes up **a lot in the Bible**—in strange places.
Jesus mentions joy in the **context** of pain,
 When talking about his death, and when he will leave them
 The **Psalms** talk about joy in the morning...
 after weeping in the night,
 and after mourning the loss of a loved one.
Lamentations talks about joy in the same breath
 that it laments the death of children.

Apparently **God is serious** about
 Joy not being related to our circumstances, but **in spite of them**.
 Joy is **not** about knowing everything is all right,
 It's about knowing that **God is all right**.
And God is with us, all the time.

Have you ever **had to laugh**, because otherwise you'd just sit down and cry?
 Have you ever received the gift of something funny in the middle of heartache?

Mark Twain once said, **The secret source of humor itself is not joy, but sorrow**.
 The **writers of the Bible** would agree.

Another wise person said:
The sadnesses of life, far from discouraging laughter, actually give rise to it.

I believe that.
 That might be my excuse for having **a loud and obnoxious laugh**
 (I have been asked to leave a card store for my laugh),
 I don't think it comes from being happy all the time,
 I actually think it's from witnessing plenty of sorrow.
 The **depth of sorrow** often gives us a **greater capacity for laughter, and joy**.

Sometimes smiling, dancing, laughing—happens in the middle of pain!
 And that's ok.

Babies are still born in the midst of war.
 Laughter is heard in oncology units,
 Singing is a favorite pastime in nursing homes, and at deathbeds.
 God gives us *joy and laughter as a gift*—especially when we *need it most*.

Kate Bowler writes in her devotional “Good Enough”,
 That *Joy is the oxygen for doing the hard things in life*.

She writes:

When you are sinking under the weight of grief or falling prey to the fears that stalk your mind, try on joy for a change.

Turn on the music and dance...

Drop a surprise note and treat on a friend’s doorstep.

Watch a show that makes you laugh.

Ask friends to send you funny memes.

Pull a lighthearted prank....pg. 11

Joy is what helps us through the hard times.

C.S. Lewis writes about joy—in a wonderful little book called ***The Screwtape Letters*** ...about the Big Daddy Devil Screwtape writing to a Junior Devil Wormwood about how to convert humanity and bring them to hell.

It’s very funny, and true!

On the subject of **JOY**, The Big Devil Screwtape says this to the Junior Devil Wormwood:

*I divide the causes of human laughter into joy, fun, joke and flippancy. You will see the **JOY** among friends and lovers reuniting on the eve of a holiday.What the **real cause** of Joy is we do not know. Something like [this joy] is expressed in much of that detestable art which humans call **music**, and something like it occurs in **heaven**.”*

*[joy,] to us it is a meaningless acceleration in the rhythm of celestial experiences..... Laughter of this kind does us **no good** and should always be **discouraged**. Besides, the phenomena is of itself disgusting and a direct insult to the realism, dignity and austerity of hell.”*

C.S. Lewis went on to write that "***Joy is the serious business of heaven,***
 The grand truth. The ***surprise*** that happens when we discover God's love."
Now---Doesn't that sound like something we need, today?

So, when does this gift of joy happen?
It can happen **ANYTIME**—because the Lord is always with us!

Joy is often experienced *with other believers*.
Which is one reason we're celebrating Holy Humor—
We want to *experience the joy* of fellowship!

And when we leave worship,
We can go out and *make room in our hearts for joy*.

Because Joy comes when we are **AMAZED** by the glory of God,
In a child's smile, the roaring ocean, a sensational sunset
And any other kind of *God-sighting!*

Joy comes from being **thankful**...
Joy comes from being **aware** of God's presence
Joy comes **from other** believers in fellowship, worship, study, and prayer.
Joy comes when we **think** about the *good things in this world*,
So, what if we open our hearts---*right now—to joy?*

Friends, hear the *Good News* of the Gospel
Joy is one of the greatest gifts we can receive,
Regardless of our feelings or our circumstances.
Joy can come—in the middle of life's sorrows.
And Joy comes to us, as a part of the resurrection.
He lives, so we can too.
And for the gift of joy, all God's people can say together, Amen.