

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK THIRTY-FIVE: JESUS PROMISES JOY

READING

20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy.

21 It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. 22 So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy. 23 At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and he will grant your request because you use my name. 24 You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy. 33 I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world." John 16:20-24, 33 (NLT)

TEACHING

Jesus' friends were going to have their hearts broken and their dreams crushed – and Jesus knew it. Jesus knew the time was drawing near for him to go to the cross and he knew that his friends would “weep and mourn.” But he also knew the story wouldn't end there – Jesus promises joy. In this passage, Jesus teaches us three very important things about true joy.

1) True joy doesn't mean we won't ever have pain. Jesus connects great pain and great joy by using the example of birth. The pain of the giving birth is necessary for the joy of a new baby. You can't have one without the other. Jesus didn't sugarcoat it for his followers: “On earth you will have many trials and sorrows.” Living in a broken world with broken people means pain of all kinds is inevitable and constant. But the greatest joy often comes out of the greatest pain.

2) True joy can't be taken from you. Jesus knew that his friends would lose their joy when he died on the cross, but he also knew that they would find a new joy when they saw the resurrected Jesus. Abundant life, both here on earth and someday in heaven, is a joy that the world didn't give us and it's a joy that the world can't take away from us.

3) True joy can't be found apart from Jesus. Jesus told his friends that he would give them joy and that they would have peace in him. Joy and peace are the very nature of Jesus. He isn't simply giving us those things; he is giving us himself! We can't have peace or joy apart from Jesus. Only Jesus is our faithful and constant source of joy!

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- What makes you super happy (joyful)? When is the last time that happened?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, what does Jesus promise us?
- Can we find true joy anywhere other than Jesus?

CHILDREN:

- In this story, what does Jesus promise us?
- Is it possible for us to have joy even in painful times? How?
- How does Jesus' death on the cross show us sadness, pain AND joy?

TEENAGERS:

- How would you explain the relationship between pain and joy?
- There is a joy the world didn't give us & can't take away from us – what is that joy?
- What types of "joy" can the world give you and take from you?

ADULTS:

- How have you found Jesus to be your joy even in the most painful moments of your life?
- Take time this week to share that story with your children/a friend.

PRAYER

God, thank you that you give us true joy. Thank you that our joy is not found in this world, in our possessions, our accomplishments or even our relationships. Those things are all gifts from you, but they are not meant to take your place. Only you can be our sure source of joy. Help me to rejoice in you no matter what is happening around me. Jesus, thank you for enduring the pain of the cross so you could bring us the joy of salvation. Help me to live in that joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

Is Jesus promising to give us anything we ask for in verses 23 and 24? No. In this immediate context, Jesus is talking about peace and joy and those are things that God will give us if we ask. Jesus also puts a qualifier: We have to ask in his name. This means we approach God not on the basis of our performance, but on the basis of Jesus' performance in our place. It also means that we ask according to His will and in step with his nature and heart. This is not a free invite to cash in on our relationship with God. This is an invite to bring godly requests in prayer to a faithful God.