

Joy

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and sickness among the people. Matthew 4: 23

It is said that of all our feelings, none is more associated with God and God's work than is joy. Joy was present at the beginning and will be there at the end. After the six days of creation, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." It caused God joy. Joy was present in the beginning and will be there in the end.

Remember the vision in the Book of Revelation? "*Then I saw a new sky and earth, for the first had passed away... And I saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God... And I heard a voice saying, 'The home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'*" This is the coming restoration of the paradise that God originally intended for human beings back in the beginning, but we lost because of sin. And this restoration will cause us joy, just as it will bring God joy.

It was easy to be joyful in the beginning, and it will be easy at the end. What is tough is joy here and now, joy amidst the "*mourning and crying and pain,*" joy in spite of our problems and hassles. We have this incredible hunger for joy – wouldn't you just love to be overjoyed once or twice a day? – but given the way things are going, it is hard for some to experience any joy at all. This even though God's goodness breaks out unexpectedly and even though the grandeur of God's creation can catch us off guard.

John Ortberg writes, "I believe (in God) because the hunger for joy will not go away. The hunger does not prove that joy or God exists. But it is suggestive. For it would be an odd world if creatures had thirst but there was no such thing as water, or appetite but there was no such thing as food... I believe (in God) because if what Jesus taught is true, then joy is at the core of the universe. If Jesus was wrong, if unbelief is right, then joy and the hunger for it are an accident. Then the earth is a ball of dirt and water floating for a few seconds in a cosmic chamber destined to perish when the Big Bang collapses in on itself... But if Jesus is right, joy was at the beginning, is challenged here in the middle, and will be restored at the end."

Jesus, though, constantly found joy, celebrating life and taking great pleasure in God and all that God has done. Jesus himself could have written the hymn, *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*. "Mortals, join the happy chorus which the morning stars began: love divine is reigning o'er us, joining all in heaven's plan. Ever singing, march we onward, Victors in the midst of strife, joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life."

Jesus was joyous because he was confident that in spite of the bad way things so often appear that God's goodness will win out in the end. God's good rule will come fully. All things will be put right. Joy may be difficult for us at times, but don't be surprised if it catches up with you. – DJ