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Sermon Notes

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The Resurrection of Christ: Cause of Unshakeable Joy

John 16:20-22

I will never forget the morning of January 17, 1995. It was 5:46 a.m. and Christi and I were serving as missionaries in Tokushima, Japan. Suddenly an earthquake hit Awaji-shima, 7.2 on the Richter scale... the ground under our house shook vigorously side to side for the longest twenty seconds of my life... the curtains in the house swayed side to side, the water sloshed out of the toilet bowl... and I remember this distinctly: there was nowhere to hide!

The earthquake did most of its deadly damage in Kobe—5100 people died that morning. The elevated highway was toppled and many modern buildings collapsed.

I learned physically what I had already believed spiritually: in this world, there is nothing that cannot be shaken! Everything on the surface of the earth has its foundation on rocks that can move, split, and be swallowed up if the earth should open its mouth

It made me question again: WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION OF MY LIFE?

Deeper question... everyone seeks happiness; this is without exception... everyone seeks some form of joy in life... the question of the Great Hanshin earthquake: is there any unshakable joy possible in this life?

The Temporary Causes of Joy:

- Wedding day: the laughs, the smiles, the rice or birdseed thrown in the air, the happy photos and joyful celebratory music
- Birth of a baby: the quiet joy and pride that comes from the birth of a child
- Championship of a beloved sports team, especially if the championship is achieved under extraordinary circumstances, like a huge upset: Jimmy Valvano running across the court in 1983 looking for someone to hug after winning the NCAA basketball championship, or the 1980 Olympic hockey team throwing their sticks in the air in pure elation after shocking the world by defeating the Russians
- Achievement of a treasured goal, like the earning of a diploma after years of hard work... graduation caps thrown in the air
- Recovery of health, especially after a severe illness or injury

- Reunion with a long lost loved one, like a photo of a teenaged girl running across the tarmac during the Vietnam War to greet her father who'd been released from a POW camp
- Victory in war, like VE-Day or VJ-Day: huge crowds gathered in Times Square, the pulsating crowd overflowing with joy; total strangers embracing and jumping up and down together
- Victory in a political election... when a candidate achieves the office he sought to achieve for years; so also all his volunteers hugging each other and weeping at the victory

The older we get, however, the more restrained are these moments of joy; not just because people have less youthful energy. Rather it is tempered by the increasingly sad knowledge that there is no joy here on earth based on these things that is LASTING... in every case, the joy can turn to sorrow or at least indifference.

The moment passes, the calendar changes, the season moves on... and the ground for joy fades away

Even harder to accept is the fact that even the ground for joy itself can be cut out from under our feet...

Charles Spurgeon:

“I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that most of our joys, if they are of an earthly kind, are very expensive before long. You cannot delight in the creature without sorrow coming of it; you cannot love your wife, your child, with a most lawful and laudable love, but one of these days it will be a most expensive love, when the loved ones are taken away, or they sicken and suffer. The more we love them, the more they cost us.”

- A marriage can be the happiest kind there is, but always the spectre of death stands over it
- A baby can die in infancy or grow up and rebel against his parents
- A sports championship becomes dated the moment the next season begins
- A diploma can lose its luster when you become unemployed
- A significant achievement can become worthless when you are in a nursing home and no one cares to hear your story or understand how great was that achievement
- A victory in a major war can be tempered when it is followed by another war

The advance in age and wisdom can bring in some people a lingering sorrow and skepticism that there can be NOTHING that produces lasting joy... a joy that endures, a joy that actually could grow and grow; a joy that never perishes, never spoils, never fades

My friends, that is PRECISELY the joy we have come together to celebrate today

For today is EASTER SUNDAY, and we are celebrating the only certain ground for joy there ever has been or ever will be in this sin-cursed world: the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead

Context:

The night before Jesus was crucified, He had a precious time with His apostles

He was seeking to prepare them all for the most difficult trial they would ever face

Jesus was about to be arrested, condemned, mocked, tortured, crucified, and murdered.

Obviously something like that would be distressing enough if it happened to an ordinary man who was a friend, or even a beloved family member

But Jesus was far more than that

Over the three years that He had been actively ministering in front of His Twelve chosen apostles, He had proven His deity to them again and again:

- At His baptism, a voice had come from the sky, “This is my beloved Son, whom I love; with Him I am well-pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)
- John the Baptist., the greatest prophet to come to Israel in centuries, had testified to Jesus that He was the Son of God (John 1:34)
- Then Jesus had begun teaching in the synagogues in their hearing, openly claiming to be the fulfillment of all the Messianic prophecies... He was openly claiming to be the Messiah that all of Judaism had been waiting for for centuries
- And Jesus’ teaching itself was a display of supernatural power and authority:

Matthew 5:21-22 You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca, 'is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell

Matthew 7:28-29 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

- How much more astonishing were Jesus’ incredible miracles... a river of healings, such as the world had never seen before nor would ever see again: a man born blind, a man paralyzed for forty years, a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, a leper covered with putrefying sores... even a man that had been dead and buried for

four days; how spectacular also when Jesus commanded evil spirits and they obeyed Him, or when Jesus fed five thousand men plus women and children with five loaves and two fish; or when Jesus showed supernatural power over nature by walking on the water and commanding the wind and the waves and they obeyed him; there seemed to be NOTHING He couldn't do

- To top all of this, Jesus clearly claimed to be God in the flesh... He said "Before Abraham was born, I am!" Peter had made the confession for all of them, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!"
- This supernatural person, this incarnate Son of God THAT VERY NIGHT would be arrested, tried, condemned to death; then tortured, mocked, and crucified
- Jesus' deepest desire that night was to prepare His disciples REALISTICALLY to face the grief and anguish they were about to endure
- So He labored to get them ready for two things: the profound grief they would face when He died, and the unshakeable joy they would experience when He was raised from the dead

I. The Clear Warning: Profound Grief Comes First

Vs. 20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve...

Vs. 21-22 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief

A. Christ Prepares His Disciples Realistically

1. Jesus in His wisdom wants His disciples prepared for what they will really face
2. His warnings and predictions exist to give them strength for the trial they are about to undergo
3. if He had not warned them, they might have been shocked and overwhelmed and might have lost their faith in Him

B. So It Is With Us

1. We are not children... we are not naïve Pollyannas who always look on the bright side as with a kindergarten perspective, a fairy tale outlook
2. This world is filled with sorrows and griefs and disappointments
3. the bloom comes off the rose, the shine comes off the gift, the pleasure fades and trouble comes

4. Jesus thus makes us all this promise... or warning

John 16:33 In this world you will have trouble.

5. So also Peter makes this plain statement

1 Peter 4:12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

6. The Scriptures are given to help us realistically face the trials we MUST have, and to face them with faith and with joy

7. So, grief comes first

C. Grief Described

1. vs. 20: Jesus mentions weeping and mourning... bitter experiences of grief

2. vs. 21: Jesus mentions anguish, physical pain, like that of a woman in labor

3. the disciples would be locked in the upper room, utterly bewildered, shocked, speechless; they would not be able to comprehend what was happening, and why it had to happen

4. Over and over their minds would return to the grievous truth: their beloved Master was dead—this powerful, capable, loving teacher of the ways of God had been executed; the “system had won” and now He was just another hapless victim, so it seemed

II. The Cause of Grief: Jesus’ Shocking Death

A. Shocking Because of Who He Had Demonstrated Himself to Be

1. This was the One who could do ANYTHING; there was nothing it seemed He could not do

2. He had done more mighty miracles than anyone in history

a. He had changed the water into wine three years before that in Cana of Galilee

b. He had cast out the mighty demons called Legion from the demon-possessed man living in the tombs among the Gadarenes...driven them out with a simple word

c. He had cured man born blind simply by making mud and wiping it on the man’s eyes

- d. He had raised up the paralyzed man from the mat they'd lowered in front of Jesus
- e. He had cured the centurion's servant with a word from a remote distance
- f. He had walked on water, stilled the storm with a loud command
- g. He had even raised Lazarus from the dead after FOUR DAYS
- h. Huge crowds had thronged around Him from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and Galilee, and there was not a single sick person who was not healed

They had come to realize who He was: He was the Son of Almighty God... Son of the Most High God... favored one, about whom God had spoken from the cloud on the Mount of Transfiguration,

“This is my Son, whom I love... with Him I am well-pleased.”

How could the One who controlled the wind and the waves, who raised the dead with a loud command, who never met His match or was overwhelmed in any way... how could He now be DEAD??? It seemed all so impossible

B. Shocking Because of All these Men Had Sacrificed to Follow Him

1. They had left everything to follow Jesus
2. Peter, John, James, and Andrew had forsaken their fishing nets in Capernaum and followed Jesus
3. Matthew had risen from his tax collector's booth... he'd burned that bridge; he would never be able to return to it again
4. Simon the Zealot had forsaken his revolutionary cohorts and chosen to follow the Prince of Peace who was a friend to Roman centurions
5. What could their future look like now?

C. Shocking Because of the Danger It Represented for Them

1. Even more terrifying, if the leader of their group was arrested, tried, condemned and executed, how long would it be before they came for each one of them??
2. they lived in terror of the next knock on the door, the pounding of soldier's feet up the stairs, the harsh commands

D. Shocking Because they Didn't Really Understand Why He Had to Die

1. The Gospel writers said consistently that they had not understood Jesus' predictions of His death; its meaning was hidden from them
2. Peter, the very night that Jesus was arrested had tried to fight to prevent His arrest
3. John the Baptist had pointed at Him and said "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world"; substitutionary atonement was at the core of Jesus' mission and message
 - a. That His death on the cross would remove the wrath of God against them for their sins
 - b. That by His blood they could be cleansed and forgiven
 - c. That they themselves could by faith receive His perfect righteousness and stand permanently forgiven in the sight of a Holy God... these things were obscure to them, though He'd told them again and again

E. Shocking Because Jesus' Enemies Appeared to Triumph

1. especially bitter was seeing the triumph of Jesus' bitter enemies, the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees
2. to see them exult and celebrate, mock and laugh, triumphing over Jesus' dead body was more bitter than they could stomach

F. Shocking Simply Because Jesus Was Dead

1. Most shocking of all was death itself... that is shocking enough
2. Death is the final enemy... the mocking, leering tyrant, whose bloody boot stands on the necks of all our earthly joys, loves, relationships, possessions and achievements
3. Now death has conquered their best friend... their beloved friend... if the usual pattern held, they would never see Him again
4. and that was grievous enough; that is why people weep and mourn and cry out bitterly at death: because it is so final and it bullies us and seizes hostages from us and we can never deliver those hostages from death's icy steely grip
5. Jesus was gone... gone forever, as far as they knew

G. Result: Immeasurably Deep Sense of Grief

Vs. 20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve...

Vs. 21-22 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief

III. The Incredible Transformation: From Grief to Joy

John 16:20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.

John 16:21-22 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

A. Jesus Could NOT Leave them in Grief!!

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

B. Joy is the Purpose of His Mission

1. God created the world for two interlocking reasons

- a. To display His glory... the perfections of His character in everything He made
- b. To bring JOY to created beings IN HIS GLORY
- c. The two things are one and the same: Our joy in God's glory, that is the reason why God created the world

2. It is also the reason why Jesus entered the world: sin has marred the world, cloaking God's glory from our blinded eyes and robbing us of the eternal joy in Him He wanted us to have

- a. So Christ was born to save us from the sin that has destroyed our perception of God's glory and ruined our experience of JOY
- b. It was for JOY that Christ was born and for JOY that He would die on the cross

Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame

3. Jesus mentions joy again and again in this final conversation with His disciples

John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 16:24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

John 17:13 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

4. Joy is the proper response of any created being in a right relationship with the God of the universe

a. Why? Because God himself is a God of joy and pleasure

Psalm 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

b. To be in a right relationship with God is to enter forever into the joy of our Master, our Creator, our King, our Father

5. So Jesus came to give us eternal joy in the presence of Almighty God

Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

C. The Foundation of Joy: The Bodily Resurrection of Christ

1. Just as Christ's shocking death was the cause of their grief, so also Christ's triumphant resurrection will be the cause of their joy

2. Christ would come and stand among them and give them physical evidence of His resurrection from the dead

John 20:19-20 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

a. There is the fulfillment: OVERJOYED WHEN THEY SAW THE LORD!!!

b. That was the first day of the joy that Jesus mentioned... and nothing ever did take away their joy

c. So also in Luke's Gospel, we see Jesus giving JOY UNSHAKEABLE to His frightened and weak disciples

Luke 24:36-43 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.³⁸ He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as

you see I have." ⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. ⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.

3. Their reaction: they could not believe because of joy!!!

IV. The Permanence of Joy

John 16:22 I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

A. A Christian's Home Base: Eternal Joy

1. though we may be disturbed from time to time through trials, temptations and distractions, yet we always return to our home base: eternal joy
2. the joy of the Lord is our strength

Nehemiah 8:10 Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

B. Unshakeable Joy

1. by this I mean that nothing earthly can take away our joy, because it is kept in heaven for us

1 Peter 1:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-- kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God's power

2. it is founded on unalterable historical facts
 - a. the incarnation of Christ, the Son of God
 - b. His sinless life
 - c. His substitutionary death for us on the cross
 - d. His bodily resurrection on the third day
3. It is founded on irrevocable biblical promises

John 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

4. it is likened to a Kingdom that can never be shaken

Hebrews 12:28 since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful

C. Reasons for Joy

John 16:22 Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

1. "I will see you again"
 - a. Jesus Himself is our joy
 - b. If He can be defeated then so can our joy
 - c. If He can die again, so will our joy
 - d. If heaven's walls can be made to crumble, then so can our joy
2. Death has been defeated
3. Heaven is your destined home
4. Earthly enemies cannot stop you
5. Our earthly suffering HAS A PURPOSE
 - a. Jesus likens it to the birthpangs of a woman in labor
 - b. What that means is that our earthly trials and sufferings have a purpose... they work glory into us

2 Corinthians 4:17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

6. Our earthly suffering will be swallowed up in eternity

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

D. Evidence from Church History

1. from the moment of the resurrection of Christ, the world changed forever
2. death, that bloody conquering tyrant, no longer held any fear for them
3. they began a triumphant march of proclaiming the gospel to a hostile world, utterly fearless

Philippians 1:20-21 I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

4. Peter and John fearlessly stood before the Sanhedrin TWICE and testified boldly to the resurrection of Christ... their boldness and fearlessness was clearly based on the resurrection of Christ
5. Stephen boldly proclaimed the gospel to the Sanhedrin, and faced death completely unafraid
6. Perpetua, the woman martyred by the Romans, went to her death singing songs of celebration and victory; she had said during her trial to the Roman judge who hated her because she was a Christian: "While I live, I shall defeat you; and if you kill me, I shall defeat you even more!"
7. This attitude has characterized Christian martyrs throughout the twenty centuries since Christ's resurrection: Voice of the Martyrs tells the story of a nineteen year old Christian young man who was arrested by Kim Jong-Il's Antichristian police force and tortured brutally for his faith; he said to the chief of police who was ordering the torture, "If you kill me you will become a Christian." He endured two months of starvation and beatings and died just shy of his twentieth birthday with joy in his heart. He said "Only by the strength of Jesus can I endure this." That strength gave him a supernatural joy with converting power for his captors.

John 16:22 Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

V. Application

A. Is Your Joy Earthly or Eternal?

1. You were created for happiness... to delight in something
2. God made your heart for delight like he made your taste buds for flavor
3. Look at what makes you happy now... what brings you pleasure and delight
 - a. Is it temporary or lasting?
 - b. Does it come from earthly sources that can easily run out?

Illus. In my front yard, we have a gully that curves around the perimeter of my property; during a good rain, that gully runs full with rainwater and we have a little stream. My kids love to play in the stream, put twigs in it and watch them flow down the gully. But that stream, however much joy it may bring my children, is a very limited thing. It is at most six

inches deep; the water is muddy, and the source is very temporary; as soon as the rain stops, so does our little stream.

To me, this is a picture of ALL EARTHLY JOYS... they are temporary, muddy, and shallow. But heaven's joys are pictured like this:

Revelation 22:1-2 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

Just picture a stream like that!! A river of the water of life flowing clear as crystal!!! Bubbling clean and eternal; its source is limitless: the throne of Almighty God... the indication is that the water will never run out since it flows directly from the throne of God

Forever and ever we will drink with satisfaction from that river!!

God Himself is the source of eternal joy... do you know that joy today?

Do you know the joy of having peace with God through faith in Christ?

Of knowing that God is at peace with you? That all your sins are truly and completely forgiven?

Do you know the joy of certainty that, when you die, you will enter a heavenly home that Christ has been preparing for you? That you will see sights that can scarcely be described? That you will hear the most beautiful sounds that ever moved a heart? That deep, rich full peace will fill your heart, and you will be transported in a pleasure that earthly words cannot describe?

Have you seen in Christ crucified your PERSONAL SALVATION from sin? Have you seen in His bodily resurrection your PERSONAL SALVATION from death?

B. Have You Let Earthly Problems Rob you of Joy?

1. you may be a Christian... you may believe all that I've said is true; but you've allowed worldly concerns and pleasures and anxieties rob you of your heavenly joy
2. this sermon may well be a call from Christ back to joy unshakeable and full of glory
3. Ask the Lord to search your life and see if you are living for earthly pleasures and earthly joys again
4. Ask him to wean you from each one of them that your joy may be full