

# Enter The Joy Of Your Lord!

by Staff

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"We hold these truths to be self-evident," reads the American Declaration of Independence, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Happiness—everybody wants it, many pursue it, but who enjoys it for any length of time? We listen with disbelief when someone claims to know the way to lasting happiness now, in this life. Is lasting happiness achievable today? Or must we wait until the resurrection at Christ's return?

## **Joys in This Life**

So many joys of this life are oh-so-short-lived. Many things bring momentary pleasures into even the most disillusioned of lives. What might make a person happy at a particular moment in life may be a filet mignon, a cold glass of beer, an exhilarating ride on a roller coaster or just the chance to snooze an extra hour in the morning.

The trouble with all those joys is that inevitably the stomach is full, the thirst is quenched and even the roller coaster ride loses its attraction. Then one usually turns to other entertainments to furnish "happiness." And the cycle is endlessly repeated—that is, as long as one's health lasts.

But in this degenerate society, life often outlasts health by many years. And with the gradual wearing out of our bodies often comes a so-called mid-life crisis when most of us mortals either become entirely cynical or else begin to believe what we politely paid lip service to in our more youthful years: there really is more to life than wine, women and song and what money can buy.

Human experience has shown that what we search for so diligently and think will bring us happiness vanishes after a cruelly short appearance. Sometimes even we in God's church, in the midst of a sustained trial, doubt the attainability of real, lasting happiness in this life. "Restore to me the joy of your salvation," we exclaim with King David (Psalm 51:12).

Whether you need real, lasting joy for the first time in your life or a restoration of real happiness, God is the source. So allow yourself to be comforted. Not by this writer, but by your Creator!

## **We Can Have Joy Now!**

Jesus claims that He came to bring life to His followers—more abundant life (John 10:10). It is a quality of life from which pleasure and joy overflow. "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is *fullness of joy* ; at your right hand are *pleasures forever more* " (Psalm 16:11).

Those who have embarked on this way of life do find joy in His presence. Even without physically seeing Him, we can be in His presence now to a remarkable degree: "At that day you will *know* that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Do we *know* this? We should seriously consider that if we truly are in His presence ("you in me, and I in you"—how much closer can we get?), we have found the address where fullness of joy resides.

Our Father not only wants to share His joy—it is His number one preoccupation! Early in the Old Testament, He expressed His wish that we live the abundant life "with joy and gladness of heart" (Deuteronomy 28:47).

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy" writes Paul in Romans 15:13. How does He fill you with all joy? Can we know? Yes, we can. One good passage to examine in this regard is John 15:11: "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

Jesus' joy is the same as the Father's. What makes Jesus happy, also makes the Father happy and vice versa. What joy is He talking about? What has He spoken to fill His disciples, which includes us, with joy? Verses 1-10 reveal it.

### **The Vine Dresser**

The Father, like a vine dresser, prunes every branch that bears fruit, so that it may continue to bear more fruit. He diligently examines the healthy branches to work with them in anticipation of additional and better quality fruit.

"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit," Jesus says (verse 5). As we continue to produce fruit, He does not tire of us, but we remain a joy to Him and participate in experiencing His joy ourselves. Now, that is sharing! Of course, the fruit symbolizes what is produced by overcoming, keeping God's commandments, practicing faithfulness and loving one another. There is no more pleasant relationship than this.

Jesus expresses the same thought in the Parable of the Talents. Notice that only to those servants who improved on the talent given to them did their lord say, "Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25: 21, 23).

What a delightful command! Something makes our Lord so happy that he rejoices. What does He rejoice in? Above all, He rejoices in sharing what He has with others—or He would never have planned to have *so many* in His Family! He rejoices in bringing blessings to everyone who desires to be in His company.

Our Lord rejoices over every person who begins to "get the point" and repents (Luke 15:7, 10). Whenever such good things happen, there is joy in heaven.

He rejoices in cementing lasting relationships with us. Bonding with converted mortals means so much to Him that He submitted to the ultimate sacrifice. Joining others to His Family has already begun to supply God with much joy. With His spiritual creation in full swing, we can be sure that the rejoicing in heaven is greater now than on the day the foundations of the earth were laid, when all the angels shouted for joy (Job 38:7).

To "enter the joy of your lord" can only mean that He wants us to participate in His joy, in His happiness. When those things that make God happy begin to make us happy also, then *we know* we are entering the joy of our Lord. What makes God happy is what He is doing, or else He would not be doing it! He enjoys sharing His life with many others—He works on a large scale.

### **God's Joy Is Our Joy**

It follows that when we start *doing* what God is doing, then the joy of the Lord is also *our* joy. More than that, what makes Him happy brings us *lasting* happiness. Because joy comes from God's sharing of His life and His work with us, we can only conclude that happiness comes from sharing. Hence the parable encourages us to develop our talents *so that we may have something to share with others too*.

God reveals to us the secret of happiness in this life and forever:

- 1) True joy comes from Him.
- 2) We can achieve real happiness through sharing.
- 3) By developing our God-given talents, and letting God prune us so we can produce fruit, we will have something worthwhile to share.
- 4) In sharing this fruit, we produce happiness in others.

Jesus says, "These things have I spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." With joy for everyone involved, it is the ultimate win-win relationship!

As we work on increasing our talents, character and personality to make them acceptable for sharing with the rest of the Family, the Invisible God participates in our preparation: "To you who hear, more will be given" (Mark 4:24-25). If we use the tool of Christian fellowship effectively, enjoying each other's company, we will grow quickly in God's way of life.

Now we *know* how to increase His happiness and how to share in it. All that remains is the effort to produce and sustain it. Enter the joy of your Lord!