

## Sermon – 30/04/2006 am

### The Joy of Jesus

Study Text: John 15:9-13

If you truly love someone you will seek to please them, and to please them you will do what they ask. To obey such a person is not a burden. If your wife is sick you will be glad to go to the pharmacy and get medicine for her – even if you are in the middle of watching the football or cricket. If your husband needs you to pick him up from the station you will gladly put down the book you are reading – without finishing the chapter – and drive down to get him. You will feel more satisfaction and joy in doing something for someone you love, than in selfishly going on with your own thing.

*If you love me you will obey my commands* said Jesus (14:15). If you love Jesus you will be ready to do whatever he asks. You will be happy to serve Jesus wherever and whenever he asks. But it is another thing to love the brethren and serve a brother in Christ. Yet Jesus commanded us to love one another as he loved us. *In as much as you did it to the least of these my brethren you did it to me* said Jesus (Matthew 25:40).

### Obedience – Love – Joy

The metaphor of the vine fades into the background in this passage although the concept of remaining or abiding continues. Jesus in fact turns to a comparison of his Father's relationship to him and of his relationship to his disciples. *As the Father has loved me so I also have loved you* (15:9).

The love of the Father for his only begotten Son, this divine love present in the unity of the Trinity, is profound and beyond our comprehension. Yet Jesus said that he loves us as his Father loved him. This is amazing for we are unlovely, rebellious and stiff-necked – very unlike the obedient Son that Jesus was. But Jesus still loved us.

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God* (I John 3:1). 'Amazing grace' John Newton called this love in his famous hymn. 'Love so amazing, so divine' are the words of another hymn. The love of Christ is love that passes knowledge (Ephesians 3:19).

Jesus loved God the Father and obeyed his commands (14:31). Here he takes this truth a step further in telling us of the outcome. In obeying the commands of his Father he abides in the love of his Father (15:10). Put simply – obedience pays off.

Jesus goes on to speak of my joy. Jesus counted it joy to obey his Father even if it meant suffering (Hebrews 12:2). The reward far outweighed the suffering. Jesus spoke of my peace, my love, and my joy just moments before being arrested and led off to the Cross. How could he do this? Because he was obeying his Father's will.

Jesus told his disciples *if you love me you will keep my commands* (14:15). Now he takes this further and says *if you keep my commands you will abide in my love, that my joy may remain*

*in you* (15:10, 11). Keeping the commands of Jesus ensures that we abide in his love and that we have his joy in our hearts.

Keeping his commands does not bring us into his love. We come in by his sovereign choice. In any case we cannot keep his commands apart from being in Jesus. Remember he said ‘apart from me you can do nothing’ (15:5). But having had Jesus set his love upon us, having been grafted into the vine as it were, we can keep his commands and will be blessed in doing so.

Abiding in the love of Jesus frees us from fear. *There is no fear in love but perfect love casts out fear* (I John 4:18). The love of Jesus is perfect love. In this world we are all prone to fear. When something unpleasant happens we tend to fear the worst, and even when things are going smoothly we get worried because things are too good. I asked a young man who was living with his girlfriend why he did not get married. He said he was afraid of divorce!

Fear can so easily rule in our lives – and it does in many people. But when we obey the commands of Jesus and abide in his love we do not fear. Jesus commands a man and a woman to marry before living together. I told this young man he had nothing to fear if he obeyed this command and trusted in Jesus. *I will never leave you nor forsake you* says the Lord. *So we may boldly say ‘The Lord is my helper I will not fear what man can do to me’* (Hebrews 13:6).

Jesus promised his disciples ‘my joy’. ‘My love’ will abide in you and ‘my joy’ also. Jesus linked holiness to happiness. Many people think that keeping the commands of Jesus will be a burden. They say that being a Christian would take all the fun out of life. But Jesus actually promises the opposite. He promises joy, true joy; joy to the full (if by fun people mean sin then this is not what Jesus promises – sin based joy will soon turn to disaster anyway).

Jesus said *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly* (10:10). This abundant life does not mean having an expensive house, a lovely family and lots of possessions. Jesus never had any of these things and he lived the most abundant life that man ever lived. He enjoyed life to the full and his joy was complete.

But he suffered so much, and all his friends left him as he was dragged off to die on the Cross, an innocent man! What a miserable life you might say. But Jesus walked in the will of his Father every moment of his earthly life. And he obeyed every one of his Father’s commands. Every moment he was abiding in the love of his Father. Because of this Jesus knew no fear but only joy.

Jesus calls to all who are burdened by life – by worries and fears – to come to him for rest (Matthew 11:28). This is a wonderful invitation but note the paradox that follows. Jesus says *take my yoke upon you*. How can we be unburdened if we take on the yoke of Jesus? Is not life without a yoke what we want? But Jesus says *my yoke is easy and my burden light*. You must be yoked in some way. It is either to the devil or to Jesus.

Yoked to Jesus you are called to keep his commands. This yoke is easy and the burden light. His commands are not burdensome (I John 5:3). Rather they are a delight to those who love him, and in obeying them there is great reward (Psalm 9:11).

## Love One Another

*This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you (15:12 cf.13:34).* Jesus reminds his disciples yet again of this command. Is this the only command they are to obey? No it is not, but it is the one which poses the greatest problem for his disciples and for all of us. As they sat down to the Passover with Jesus the disciples were arguing among themselves about who would be the greatest. They all proudly reclined at the table expecting someone else to wash their feet.

Jesus took it upon himself to wash their feet and demonstrate what it means to love one another. He would shortly die for them (and for the whole world), the ultimate demonstration of love. *Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends (15:13).* While Peter said he was ready to lay down his life for Jesus (13:37), it seems he was not ready, nor were any of the others ready, to lay down their life for one another. But this is what Jesus commanded them. John reminds us of this command in first letter – *by this we now love, because he (Jesus) laid down his life for us, we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (I John 3:16).*

Many of us are just like Peter. We say we are ready to do anything for Jesus, but when it comes to loving our brothers and sisters in Christ it is another matter. Jesus is so kind and loving and forgiving, but other people can be so unkind, so hateful and unforgiving. Being a Christian would be so much easier if we did not have to put up with other Christians! This is exactly why Jesus is emphasising this command.

*If someone says 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen (I John 4:20).* As Jesus stressed this command so does John, because it was a difficult command for disciples of Jesus to keep then and still is today. Like the lawyer who came to Jesus asking 'who is my neighbour', we try to justify ourselves for not obeying this command.

I conclude with some wise words from J.C. Ryle. "The frequent repetition of this command teaches the vast importance of Christian love, and the great rarity of it. How one can pretend to have Christian hope, who is ignorant of Christian love, is hard to understand. He that supposes he is right in the sight of God because his doctrinal views are correct, while he is unloving in his temper, and sharp, cross and ill-natured in the use of his tongue, exhibits wretched ignorance of the first principles of Christ's Gospel. The crossness, spitefulness, jealousy, maliciousness, and general disagreeableness of many high professors of 'sound doctrine', are a positive scandal to Christianity. Where there is little love there can be little grace".

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon*