5/15/20 Devotional

In this our 17th devotional, let us contemplate the word of God.

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

*“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.” Philippians 4:4.*

What influences your mood or state of mind? We often find that our inner life is a reflection of our outer life. It reflects our circumstances. Our feelings tend to be a reaction to our surroundings. If life is going well, if our situation is basically positive, we feel good. When things take a turn for the worse, when we are faced with hardship, we become discouraged or depressed. This is a common way we experience life.

But are we slaves to such a reality? Are we prisoners to this fact of life? Is it inescapable or predetermined? Can we ever find freedom from our circumstances? Is it possible to be in a positive frame of mind even when things around us are in disarray? The Bible says yes. Our Christian faith says yes. And the concept, or even better truth, that we discover in both scripture and our Christian faith is that of joy. Have you ever experienced an inner sense of joy even when your situation was difficult?

From a faith perspective, joy is different from our popular word happy. The basic difference is that joy can be experienced even when our circumstances are trying. Happiness tends to depend exclusively on our situation in life being positive.

What does joy mean from a faith perspective? Joy is a serendipity of faith in Jesus. Jesus gives us hope and that hope is rooted in Christ rather than in the people or events of this world. Joy comes because Jesus gives us life and that life is richer than simply having a heartbeat. Joy is a gift of God. Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit within us. Joy is the conviction that adversity is not the final word. Inner assurance, inner-confidence or a contentment of the soul, is close to what scripture means by joy. Joy is knowledge, an inner-knowing, that we are through faith in Christ, in a right relationship with God. *Lewis Smedes writes: “Joy is the feeling that it is all-right with us, even when everything seems all-wrong.”*

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi about joy, not out of a context of fellowship with other believers, but from a prison in Rome. His joy clearly was not dependent on his surroundings.

Joy is the assurance that we belong God. It comes from knowing in our heart of hearts, that we are God’s child who made us and loves us. Joy arises when we experience Christ’s promises fulfilled. Joy is the evidence of God’s presence, power and hope in our life. Joy is having the confidence that our salvation is God’s free gift in Jesus. Joy is knowing that in Christ we have been accepted by God. Joy is the knowledge that we are forgiven and fully accepted by God forever.

Joy means we do not have to look to the future with dread or despair. Joy is the confidence that the future belongs to God. Joy means we live in the knowledge that the victory over sin, death and evil has already been won through Christ’s birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension. Joy is knowing that our destiny is to live in glory with God. Joy is a foretaste of the eternal joy that awaits us with Christ and those whom we love. Joy comes from knowing God, encountering God, hearing God, seeing God’s with the eyes of our heart. Joy can be a feeling of elation, gladness and delight. True. But it is more often an inner confidence, knowledge of assurance of God’s presence, purpose and love. Joy is a mark or characteristic of the Christian life.

May you experience Christ’s joy in your hearts and minds.

Blessings always,

Rev. Alan W. Deuel