



Building Wholehearted Disciples of Jesus

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**Easter 2018  
Joy Breakthrough**

## Easter 2018 “Joy Breakthrough”

### Matthew 28:1-9

***1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. 3 His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men. 5 But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. 7 And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you." 8 So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. 9 And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "Rejoice!" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him.***

- Arguably the most shocking event in human history. Everything about this story defies conventional wisdom.
  - Women attending to the tomb! Are you kidding me. In the ancient middle East, women were despised and thought to be lesser than men.
  - Indeed, the two Mary's are the first to see Jesus!
  - Fear and joy pervades our story—fear in the guards.
  - The angel says to the women **“Do not be afraid.”**
  - The angel says, **“As He said, He is risen.”** Jesus predicted at least 3 times.
  - What man in world history ever rose from the dead? Not resuscitated but risen!!

- What captures our heart is this mixture of fear and joy. Look again at verse 8.
- Gaze into the first words of Jesus: “Rejoice!” which means “happiness, pleasure, or joy.”
- Happiness and joy pervades our story!!
- The world is inconsolable in its longing for happiness, love and joy.
- What if I told you that our Creator God has put eternity into our hearts and He has placed this insatiable desire for joy within all of us?
- God has put into the mind and filled the heart with a quest, a longing. But we do not know what it is we are searching for until we meet the loving God, made known to us through Jesus Christ.
- St. Augustine once said, “You made us for Yourself and our hearts find no peace till they rest in You.”
- The great philosopher Blaise Pascal once said, “All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end...The will never take the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man.”
- God has put eternity in our hearts and filled the human heart with a longing for Him.

CS Lewis, Cambridge and Oxford professor and one of the most prolific writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century once said,

*If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when*

*infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*

- Lewis indicates that the search for pleasure through drink, sex and ambition are half-hearted attempts to truly find the real thing.
- Hedonism is defined as “pleasure seeking” and the question we must ask is this: Does God want us to seek our pleasure through seeking Him?” In other words, is a “Christian Hedonist” an oxymoron? Are they compatible? Can we simultaneously seek God fully and also desire our own joy?
- The resurrection of Christ is a breakthrough into joy! Matthew wants us to understand that the resurrection of Christ is met with “great joy.”
- The Bible even indicates that Jesus viewed his own crucifixion as joy, **Hebrews 12:2 “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

**Here is a radical, but biblical, thought this Easter: Pursuing joy in Jesus is our highest calling. For it is in pursuing our joy in Christ that we most glorify Him.**

- John Piper writes: “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him”
- Again, CS Lewis, “It is a Christian duty, as you know, for everyone to be as happy as he can.”
- The old Westminster Confession of Faith reads, “What is man’s chief end? The Answer: Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”
- Not two distinctive pursuits: the glory of God and joy, but rather one pursuit “Man’s chief end/purpose is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever”

The scriptures seem to support this notion that the more satisfied we are in Christ, the more joyful we become.

**Psalm 16:11**

*You will make known to me the path of life;  
In Your presence is fullness of joy;  
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

**Deuteronomy 28:47-48**

*47“Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; 48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things.*

**Psalm 43:4**

*Then I will go to the altar of God,  
To God my exceeding joy;  
And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.*

**Psalm 100:2**

*Serve the Lord with gladness;  
Come before Him with joyful singing.*

**Psalm 37:4**

*Delight yourself in the Lord;  
And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

**Psalm 90:14**

*O satisfy us in the morning with Your lovingkindness,  
That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.*

**John 15:11**

*Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”*

**Matthew 25:21**

*His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’*

## **Even in suffering, we are supposed to pursuit and be filled with joy!**

- Jesus said, (**Matthew 5:11-12**) “*Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- **James 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,**
- The Apostle Paul while in prison, **Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always again I say rejoice.**
- Jesus dying on the cross: And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

## **The resurrection of Christ is an invitation into a Breakthrough of Joy in your life.**

- There is this satanic notion that if we fully surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, our life will become boring, depressed and religious.
- It is as if we have this dilemma: Great Happiness by following my own desires vs. Great boredom by following Jesus.
- It was Jesus who made the distinction for us: **John 10:10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.**
  - The dichotomy of pleasure vs. boredom is a false one.
  - The dichotomy is of slavery and bondage vs. life and joy.
- St. Augustine, who in the year 386, found his freedom from lust and lechery in the superior pleasures of God, “How sweet all at once it was for me to be rid of those fruitless joys which I had once feared to lose...You drove them from me, you who are the true, the sovereign

joy. You drove them from me and took their place, you who are sweeter than all pleasure”

- Jonathan Edwards, “the happiness of the creature consists in rejoicing in God, by which also God is magnified and exalted. The end of creation is that the creation might glorify God. Now what is glorifying God, but a rejoicing at that glory he has displayed.”
- Listen to Kathie Lee Gifford in a recent broadcast after the death of Billy Graham breaks out into the joy of knowing Christ...
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=325w8p4Ywdo>

### **1 Peter 1:8**

***and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,***

### **Nehemiah 8:10**

***the joy of the Lord is your strength.***”

### **2 Corinthians 6:2**

***In the Scriptures God says, "When the time came, I listened to you, and when you needed help, I came to save you." That time has come. This is the day for you to be saved. (Contemporary English Version)***

Now, right now is the day for breakthrough, for salvation, for God’s joy to begin in your heart!

“Picture me with my ground teeth stalking joy—fully armed too, as it’s a highly dangerous quest” Flannery O’Connor