

The Rock: 05-29-2022**A special message**

Title: Finding joy in a grieving world

Scripture: Psalm 73 (Black bible Pg. 455
ESV)

Theme:

How do we keep our joy in a world full of
sorrow and grief?

Focus-confession-placement and position

Introduction:

My heart is heavy as I reflect over these
past few weeks. Three shootings, moral
failures within churches (SBC
specifically), how we respond, and the
fact that we see a wholesale moral
collapse and decay in our country.

Not an encouraging way to start a Sunday
message, but in order for us to learn how
to keep joy, we have to look, eyes wide
open at the evil around us.

It's never about ignoring the problems;
it's about remembering the solution.
Remembering the one who is the anchor in
all these storms.

The solution isn't a formula or idea, the solution has a name, His name is Jesus.

It is not often, in fact it is rare to step aside from what we are doing, and have been called to do, so that we can take a collective breath, and address current events in light of Biblical truth.

Life comes at us all at 60 seconds a minute, and sometimes, in fact more often than we do, stopping to reflect and to ponder, is good and right.

Sometimes asking the "Why?" questions in all of the madness and chaos is right. When people are hurting and overcome, overwhelmed at times with "the one more thing", what ought we to do?

Do we focus on the mess we are in and nothing else? Not able to see the light in all the darkness? We can, and often do.

For it is, at times, easier in our anger and frustration to rail against the darkness, than it is to stand against the tide -trusting God in it all.

How do we maintain joy in a grieving world? In our own personal grief? It is an overwhelming thing at times when we wake up each day to a brand-new tragedy, a new crisis.

The news cycle, rolling along at 24/7, showing, talking and stirring the emotions of those watching.

These are things we ought to be outraged over, sickened by, and driven to our knees in prayer over. Not driven to fight over, but rather pleading for Christ to save, and for human beings to see how desperately we need a savior.

Brian Fallon, another favorite song writer of mine, wrote this lyric: "In this life there will be trouble, but you shall overcome. They'll hurt you in your heart strings, they'll leave you in the dust. But you do just like I told you, stand strong and hold your own. A soft answer quiets wrath, a gentle whisper breaks a bone.

-When you're ready: Local Honey 2020

Sounds Biblical, because it is. He quotes a promise of Jesus and a challenge from King Solomon found in Proverbs.

Both tell us what to expect, as well as how to respond in a world at war with itself and with God their creator.

The Story:

When I struggle to put into words the anger I feel, as injustice happens in our

world, and sadly, when it happens inside the Church as well, I go to the Psalms.

I have found that in all of my years of walking with Jesus, there is no better place to go to find comfort and joy in the midst of the chaos and anger.

It is not a hiding of my head in the sand, for it can never be that. We are, after all, in the words of Jesus: overcomers. Jesus has won the victory, even if the world looks and acts otherwise.

In the midst of the birth pangs, as sons and daughters of the coming king, we wait for His arrival and with it, His righteousness that will be revealed.

Psalm 73 is a favorite of mine to go to when I am very angry with what is happening around me. Knowing that my anger comes from a deep seeded feeling of helplessness, and the inability to "do anything about it at all."

I find it very helpful, and I hope you will too, when I look at Asaph and his writings, because I realize that he's angry as well, and he is struggling to make sense of things.

Yet, he knows where to go, and that is where we will be for the rest of the morning. Let's try to circle our thoughts

around three things that will become clear here in this psalm.

- 1- A proper focus (verse 1)
- 2- An honest confession (versus 2-3)
- 3- A proper placement and perspective (versus 17-28)

It's all here in the text before us, so, off we go. A proper focus.

Asaph, a worship leader and poet, is also a great theologian, with an honest heart. Something is bothering him and making him really mad -we'll see that in a minute- but he starts in the right place and with the proper focus:

-Psalms 73:1 (ESV)

"Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart."

What a place to start! Even here in the Old Testament, we see the foreshadowing of the beatitudes. Jesus didn't invent a new philosophy, He simply reinforced God's written word and God's promises.

The pure in heart will see God -Proper focus.

The noise of the world, and the tragedies that seem to happen almost daily (because this world thrives on the negative):

Buffalo, California, Texas, and beginning here actually closer to home.

Let's reflect on our personal losses and struggles, because they can push us sometimes to lose our focus.

Our eyes and our hearts get pulled to, and are drawn toward the events and the circumstances and all of a sudden, we are overwhelmed with grief, anger, uncertainty. You pick the adjective, but we are drawn into the problems -real as they are and lose sight of and sometimes even forget. Forget what?

That in it all, God IS. He IS still in charge. He IS still good. He IS still on the throne. I was reminded this week after a very bad day and me having concerns over various things -I was told: "He is still on the throne, and He still knows our names."

Proper focus doesn't mean denial, it means we know and trust our Father in heaven in it all. Why? Asaph says it clearly: "Truly God is good..."

We need that, because honest confession, our second point is what Asaph is driven to in light of God's goodness. Asaph recognized that he was struggling and becoming unstable:

-Psalms 73:2 (ESV)

"But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled, my steps had nearly slipped."

Before he maps out his complaint, he confesses just how close he came to losing it. We ought to find great comfort and hope in that. Who says the Bible is not relevant to our lives and concerns today?

Because, how often have we been there? This week even, as unrighteousness and wickedness ruled. Even those who were not followers of Christ cried out. They see and know "the evil" in our time which seems to win every day, and that it is not right.

We ask, and often, I think, "Where are you God in all this mess?"

His Word promises us that He is right in the middle of it grieving along-side of us. Pained by what His creation is doing to itself and each other.

"Well, why don't He do something about it? What's wrong with Him?"

He did. He has. Jesus is His name, and the Church in this world, is His answer. We were left behind for a reason-to be a light in this world, holding out the hope of Jesus of Nazareth.

That He was born into this world, the God man, to be a light of revelation, to bring sight to the blind, freedom for the captives, and healing for the sick, binding up those who are broken hearted. He came to set the captives free. Forgiving our sin, by taking it upon Himself on the cross.

In the middle of all this mess, the Church stands as a beacon of light, declaring that Jesus is the answer to our dilemma, He is the peace-maker, He is the healer of hurts, He is the lover of the un-lovable.

Come to Him! He holds His hand out, through His Church and says: Come to me. Be reconciled to God.

Confessing our honest anger and our struggles, will keep our feet firmly planted at the foot of the cross, which is the doorway to the throne room of heaven itself .

Asaph almost lost it because he was losing focus:

-Psalms 73:3 (ESV)

"For I was envious of the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked."

He began to look at, and be consumed by, the problems and the people. Getting mad

at their pride and their arrogance, and their apparent victory in God's world.

He was struggling to reconcile what He knew to be the truth of God's word with what he was seeing happening every day in front of his eyes.

Have you ever been there and felt that way? You are not alone.

He had even gotten to the place where he was questioning why he even bothered to do right. It seemed to not matter at all and looked hopeless as evil just kept winning.

-Psalms 73:13-15 (ESV)

"All in vain have I kept my heart clean and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken and rebuked every morning. If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed the generation of your children."

"I am ticked off at all this arrogance, and this injustice, and evil! It breaks my heart and I feel like it's a waste of my time even keep trying."

Boy, oh boy, how often have we been there? Thank God, we can confess it. "Yes, I have been there, but I don't need to be, and if I am there, I certainly don't need to stay there."

Asaph started by declaring God is good. This IS our foundational truth which we must never forget. That is proper focus. Sometimes we just need to keep confessing a truth of God over and over.

God is GOOD!

He confessed that he'd almost lost it, because he had forgotten to stand on that truth. That is our challenge! To stand on the truth, even if and when it seems futile to do so.

Well, how do we do that? I'm glad you asked:

Number three: Proper placement and perspective:

-Psalms 73:16-17 (ESV)

"But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I discerned their end."

When I thought how...It seemed wearisome (a waste of time), until...WHAT?

I went into the sanctuary of God, THEN I discovered their end.

Placing ourselves and our trust in God, who is faithful, brings us joy in our grief. It doesn't not take grief and pain

away. It does not take away the things which make us angry.

It does give us joy because we know Him who holds us, who sustains us:

-Psalms 73:23-26 (ESV)

"Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Nevertheless. In other words, in spite of it all, I am with you. More importantly, YOU are with me, even when I feel as though you are nowhere to be found, you are right there in the midst of it all with me.

We are not that different that Asaph, are we? The struggle to reconcile the truth of God and who He is in this world, which day by day gets worse and more evil, is difficult. Let's stop lying about that.

It is hard because we look at the problem and too often forget who is the solution. Why? Because we are human beings and cannot see the grand picture.

But we have Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit to remind us of Jesus, and we have God the Father, who gave us Jesus.

-Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

There is a great comfort in knowing that the Bible, God's breathed out Word, told us thousands of years ago that the world would be this way, that His people would suffer and struggle because the world is this way, but that we have a savior who has overcome all the evil in this world.

That one day, He will come back on the clouds riding a white horse, who name is faithful and true and that He will set to rights all the wrongs!

This is not pie in the sky dreaming. This is gospel truth, proven to us by the empty tomb!

Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
THEN I discerned their end.

We cannot fix ourselves, we cannot fix this world. Any honest person looking at the condition of our world has to admit, humanity is not getting better with each enlightened age.

We are getting worse, and that is not a surprise. The Bible said that is just what would happen. It is the only book that declares that.

It is also the only book that offers a remedy to our problem. We cannot fix ourselves or this world from the inside. Because, every sin is an inside job!

We need help from the outside, and that is why Jesus stepped into our time and space, into His world and brought the solution to our problem.

His death, for our life. His seeming defeat for our victory, His rejection for our acceptance.

-Psalms 73:28 (ESV)

"But for me it is good to be near God; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may tell of all your works."

In this life there will be trouble, BUT you shall overcome. Why? Because you are overcomers in Christ!

Keep your focus: On Him

Confess your need: To Him

Put yourself on the proper place: Near to
Him.

Through it all -you shall overcome.