

Growing in Christ's Joy (September 22, 2019 by Rev. Anthony Menzel)

As we learned two weeks ago, true joy is based on having our names written in the Lamb's Book of Life...
It is based on being saved...

Today we are going to learn about how to grow in that true joy...

This week I got to the place where I was totally exhausted...
How many have been there?...

I was starting to lose my joy again...

The Lord revealed some things to me about growing in Christ's joy...

1) One of the main keys is from Ecclesiastes...

Scripture 1: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

To everything *there is* a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:

² A time ^[a]to be born,

And a time to die;

A time to plant,

And a time to pluck *what is* planted;

³ A time to kill,

And a time to heal;

A time to break down,

And a time to build up;

⁴ A time to weep,

And a time to laugh;

A time to mourn,

And a time to dance;

⁵ A time to cast away stones,

And a time to gather stones;

A time to embrace,

And a time to refrain from embracing;

⁶ A time to gain,

And a time to lose;

A time to keep,
And a time to throw away;
⁷ A time to tear,
And a time to sew;
A time to keep silence,
And a time to speak;
⁸ A time to love,
And a time to hate;
A time of war,
And a time of peace.

The God-Given Task

⁹ What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? ¹⁰ I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of men are to be occupied. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

¹² I know that nothing *is* better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, ¹³ and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it *is* the gift of God.

***The Lord Jesus wants us to enjoy the beauty in each season...

Right now many of us are in a season of war...

In that season, we should enjoy being used by the Lord Jesus to accomplish His purposes...

In that way, even when we are sick or tired, we can rejoice in the Lord...

We can thank Him that we are giving Him glory by staying faithful in the midst of pain...

Scripture 2: Philippians 2:14-18

¹⁴ Do all things without ^[a]complaining and disputing, ^[b] ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and ^[c]harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

¹⁷ Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Scripture 3: 2 Timothy 2:1-12

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. ³ You therefore must endure^[a] hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴ No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. ⁵ And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. ⁶ The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. ⁷ Consider what I say, and ^[b]may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

⁸ Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, *even* to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the ^[c]elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

¹¹ *This is* a faithful saying:

For if we died with *Him*,
We shall also live with *Him*.

¹² If we endure,
We shall also reign with *Him*.
If we deny *Him*,
He also will deny us.

We can thank Him that we are expanding His Kingdom, that we are lifting up His name by being faithful to Him in the midst of having so much to do for Him to support our families, remembering that evangelism is important but so is our lifestyle that ultimately supports it...

Scripture 4: James 1:26-27

²⁶ If anyone ^[e]among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless. ²⁷ Pure and

undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

Scripture 5: Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,
Before the ^[a]difficult days come,
And the years draw near when you say,
“I have no pleasure in them”:

¹³ Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man’s all.

¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment,
Including every secret thing,
Whether good or evil.

Scripture 6: 1 Timothy 5:8

⁸ But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

***In addition to enjoying each season we find ourselves in, including seasons of war, we also need to learn to have Christ’s agenda, not our own agenda or the agenda that other people want to give us...

Scripture 7: Matthew 7:21-23

²¹ “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

When we struggle with letting go of our own agenda, sometimes we will have to cry out to God so that He will bless us in the name of the Lord Jesus to let go of our own will so that we can do God’s Will...

Scripture 8: Matthew 26:38-42

³⁸ Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”

³⁹ He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.”

⁴⁰ Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “What! Could you not watch with Me one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak.”

⁴² Again, a second time, He went away and prayed, saying, “O My Father, ^[a]if this cup cannot pass away from Me unless I drink it, Your will be done.”

We also have to be careful that we don't make other people's agendas to be more important than God's Will in our lives...

Scripture 9: Matthew 10:27-39

²⁷ “Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in ^[a]hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a ^[b]copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Confess Christ Before Men

³² “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Christ Brings Division

³⁴ “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to ‘set^[c] a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶ and ‘a man's enemies *will be* those of his *own* household.’ ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not

take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

***The last key for growing in Christ's joy that I feel led to share today is that when we get really tired or too tired to function well, we need to find time to stop and rest, even if for a little bit, even if it's for a little nap...

Scripture 10: Psalm 37:1-11

Do not fret because of evildoers,

Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.

² For they shall soon be cut down like the grass,

And wither as the green herb.

³ Trust in the LORD, and do good;

Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

⁴ Delight yourself also in the LORD,

And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

⁵ Commit^[a] your way to the LORD,

Trust also in Him,

And He shall bring *it* to pass.

⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light,

And your justice as the noonday.

⁷ Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him;

Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,

Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.

⁸ Cease from anger, and forsake wrath;

Do not fret—*it* only *causes* harm.

⁹ For evildoers shall be ^[b]cut off;

But those who wait on the LORD,

They shall inherit the earth.

¹⁰ For yet a little while and the wicked *shall be no more*;

Indeed, you will look carefully for his place,

But it *shall be no more*.

¹¹ But the meek shall inherit the earth,

And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.