

Happiness Happens to Us: Join Jesus' Joy

John 20:1-18

4/5/26

Happiness happens to us: join Jesus' joy! I had a bad day on Tuesday, but I'll let you judge. I woke up knowing the family and my best-friend were going to the Penguins game that evening. Made some delicious coffee, said a prayer, delivered coffee to Hope in bed and woke up the boys. After I got the boys off to school, my first stop was weird, I didn't expect getting insulted as my first interaction of the day. Then had a riveting discussion at men's breakfast. Then two depleting events during the day-energy sucking events! But I had the Penguins game to look forward. We parked downtown and walked to the game. University of Pittsburgh students were close to PPG Paints raising money for Habitat for Humanity, so I donated to that. Next a guy was playing the saxophone near the venue, yelled something at us to give him money, I said "No thank you, we just donated to Habitat." Reached in for a fist bump. I was denied. With my back to him, he punched me in the shoulder and yelled, "Don't you even try to touch me." I kept walking telling the boys who were a few paces ahead, "I now can say I got punched by the guy who plays the saxophone at baseball games." We entered the Paint Can's security-I forgot to leave behind my little pocketknife. It has a little pair of scissors and a nailfile. I use this pocketknife every day. They had to confiscate it. The thing is teeny tiny and I begged. The security manager said, "Just hide it somewhere outside." "OK." I ran back outside. Hid it. The Penguins won 5 to 1. But no little pocketknife. Someone took it. Good day/bad day? All that stuff is pretty trivia, the ups and downs of that day. Jesus teaches joy. Jesus shows THE WAY to experience joy amid the chaos of life!

If joy depends on everything going right, it won't last. Happiness happens to us. Jesus provides joy. If joy is rooted in a risen Savior, nothing can take it, not even death!

Joy is not denial of pain; joy is anchored in a deeper reality. 2025 was a terrible year for our family. As many of you know, Hope's brother, Andy, died at the age of 49 leaving behind a beloved wife and three children. He's the one that gave me that penknife. It was right round this time last year that Hope and I were driving to the hospital each evening, visiting her brother in the ICU. He met Jesus on June 1st. Amid that horrific situation, Hope relied upon, I relied upon that Andy is recreated, redeemed, finally the person God has always desired for him to be. If joy depends on everything going right, it won't last. Happiness happens to us. But if joy is rooted in a risen Savior, nothing can take it, not even death!

John 20:19-23 & Philippians 4:4-5

The disciples were afraid, divided, uncertain-yet Jesus meets them with peace. Let's face it we're often afraid, divided, uncertain-yet Jesus meets us with peace. This word "peace" is more than rest, it's more than the end of conflict. Jesus brings wholeness, completeness, an active way for human flourishing. Jesus doesn't want us simply to avoid pain and suffering. Jesus teaches the Way to flourish, to experience joy amid pain and suffering. But first, you must believe. I know it sounds too simple, but believing/trusting/having faith is the beginning of friendship with God. You must trust that Jesus lives to live in you. Do you trust Jesus lives?

Trusting that Jesus lives is the Christian faith. Trusting that Jesus lives shapes the entirety of the Christian life. Trusting Jesus lives shapes what we eat. Shapes what we wear. Shapes what we drive. Shapes our exercise routine. Shapes our relationships. Shapes our forgiveness. Shapes our generosity. Do you trust Jesus lives? Do you trust Jesus will make all things new? Do you want to join Jesus' joy?

Newlonsburg Presbyterian Church

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Remember this isn't the only resurrection story. Not long after Jesus' calmed the storm (Mark 4:35-41), a leader of a Jewish synagogue, Jairus, approached Jesus begging Him to come to his house because Jairus' daughter was to the point of death (Mark 5:21-43). Jesus was delayed by a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for 12 years. The suffering woman trusted Jesus heal her. What she didn't know was that Jesus can make us complete, perfect, at peace. Jesus restores her when he says, "Daughter, your trust/your faith has made you well." **Trust in Jesus makes us whole: Belief in Jesus is the beginning of healing. Jesus' faith leads to wholeness.** Happiness happens to us. Do you want something deeper, richer than happiness? Do you want to join Jesus' joy?

In the meantime, Jairus' daughter died. Jesus tells Jairus, Jesus tells you this Easter morning, **"Don't live in fear, only believe, trust, have faith."** **Don't live in fear.** Do you want to join Jesus' joy?

Joy is not denial of pain; joy is anchored in a deeper reality. On this Easter morning, do you trust that Jesus lives? Do you trust that Jesus will make all things new? Or do you live in the tomb of fear?

Happiness happens to us. Jesus provides joy. Trusting Jesus lives shapes the entirety of the Christian life. Trusting Jesus lives shapes what we eat. Shapes what we wear. Shapes what we drive. Shapes our exercise routine. Shapes our relationships. Shapes our forgiveness. Shapes our generosity. Do you trust that Jesus lives?

In a culture of anxiety and outrage, resurrection joy is a steady witness. Remember this isn't the only resurrection story. Jesus good friend Lazarus fell ill (John 11). His sisters, Mary and Martha of Bethany (a town a few miles outside of Jerusalem), sent for Jesus. Jesus didn't immediately arrive. In fact, Jesus took His good old time and Lazarus died. The sisters were angry with Jesus. **You can be angry with Jesus when someone dies.** As Martha cries out to Jesus, Jesus assures her that Lazarus will rise again. And she says, "I know, I know Jesus, that he will rise again in the resurrection of the last day." Jesus says to us, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die will live, and everyone who believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" -John 11:25-26

Do you believe this? Joy is not denial of pain; joy is anchored in a deeper reality. On this Easter morning, do you trust Jesus lives? Do you trust Jesus will make all things new?

Where are you tying your joy to outcomes instead of Jesus? Are you allowing the ebbs and flows of life dictate your feelings or are you practicing steady resilient resurrection joy?

In a world marked by division, fear, and outrage, the church is called to be a people of steady, resilient joy—not because everything is easy, but because Jesus is alive, the story isn't over, God is with us, and His Spirit is at work through us. Jesus lives to live in us. Do you want to join Jesus' joy?

Happy Easter,
Pastor Curtis

Sermon Notes:

1. The disciples were afraid, divided, and uncertain—yet Jesus meets them with peace.
2. Joy is not denial of pain; it is anchored in a deeper reality.
3. In a culture of anxiety and outrage, resurrection joy is a steady witness.
4. Where am I tying my joy to outcomes instead of Jesus?