

THE WORSHIPPING CHURCH

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It was a picture of pure jubilation.

Uninhibited, unmitigated, unhindered joy

I think I shall never forget the that scene of pandemonium as the final buzzer sounded and the United States Olympic Hockey team defeated the mighty heavily favored Russian team.

There were young men running, skating, jumping, shouting,
hugging, crying, laughing - sheer unbounded joy!

There emotions were running so high that even those of us who only watched found ourselves vicariously sensing some of the same joy - we were caught up in it with them.

Even if you didn't see that event, you certainly have seen events similar to it - where the celebration was so great that even you, watching found yourself feeling some of it.

I have reminded you of that kind of joy, that kind of celebration so that you would get some sense, some feeling, of what was going on in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

In Acts 2 we are told that 3000 people responded to Peter's message and became Christians.

That's quite a crowd.

In a city of only 200,000, a group of 3,000 Jews on the same day making a profession of faith in the Jesus who had been crucified in that same city only 50 days earlier would undoubtedly make quite an impression.

In Acts 2:42-47 we are given a word picture of what these 3000 people did - what they acted like.

As I read the text try to get a mental picture of that scene and attempt to get a feel for the attitude of these people:

READ ACTS 2:42-47

What's the attitude? JOY!!

Earlier in the chapter we have learned that the Spirit of God had come upon them in an unusual way - they were, to use the language of the Bible, "filled with the Holy Spirit".

That means that the Spirit of God was working in their minds and hearts to influence their actions and attitudes.

You could even say that they were so open to the influence of the Holy Spirit that everything they did or said, or even thought was governed by Him.

And as a Spirit-filled group of believers, what do we find them doing and what do we find them feeling?

Their minds are overflowing with thanksgiving and their hearts overflowing with praise and adoration.

Look at verse 46 - Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts - the place of worship.

And what were they doing?

They would thank God

They would talk to one another:

"Were you here at Pentecost?

"Did you hear that man Peter?

"Did you too find forgiveness?

"Let me tell you what happened to me"

Tears of joy,
shouts of gladness
hands clapping in approval,
loud "amens" offered to men and God alike,
introductions of others who had become Christ's

And when they weren't in the temple area they were in their homes eating together - and what was the attitude?

"with glad and sincere hearts"

And doing what else? Praising God

And look at verse 43 to see another element of this attitude:

"Everyone was filled with awe!"

What's the picture?

They may not have been poking each other with ice skates, and maybe not thumping each other on helmeted heads like after a football game, BUT these people are HAPPY.

And their happiness is not over a fake gold medallion or the chance to be on the Wheaties box for six weeks -

Their happiness is founded on something much more substantial.

They have heard about and accepted a PERSON.

These people have met Jesus.

He is the source of their celebration/ their worship.

And folks if you haven't already caught the point of all of this-What was true of them is true of us!

We are people of JOY, people of HAPPINESS,
people who have a reason to CELEBRATE,
people with a reason to WORSHIP!
for by God's grace we too have met JESUS.

True Worship, true celebration, comes in response to information!

Genuine joy comes in response to knowledge.

Something has been revealed to us and that evokes the response.

No one, unless it is someone whose elevator doesn't go all the way to the top floor, wakes up in the morning and yells "WOW, I can hardly wait for today!" unless they have reason for that excitement - they have information, knowledge that leads them to such anticipation.

Celebration, joy, worship are responses to knowledge,
something being revealed to us (revelation).

WHAT DID THESE PEOPLE KNOW THAT MADE THEM SO HAPPY?

What had Peter told them?

The reason for the joy that is found in verses 42-47,
the source of that celebration is found in verses 22-41.

Peter told them about Jesus and it changed their lives!

We are in the midst of a Sunday morning Worship time.

We have already sung about and have heard sung about
the coming of God to earth - The ADVENT, the Coming of
Jesus to our world.

In a few minutes we will celebrate communion - a reminder
of why Jesus came to this earth.

What I want to do now is to show you the Jesus that Peter
showed those people on the day of Pentecost.

Because when you are reminded of who He is
and what He has done, and what that means

to you - you too will celebrate,
you too will worship,

Look with me at what Peter told them about Jesus:

Acts 2:22 First of all he mentions the ministry of Jesus.

"This Jesus was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him..."

Those miracles, wonders and signs of healing, resurrecting others from the grave, commanding nature itself to obey him, proved beyond any reasonable doubt that this man was unique.

Acts 2:23 Second, he mentions the death of Jesus.

"This Jesus was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to a cross."

Though you were instrumental in his death, and though it was for you he died, know that his death was determined by the express purpose of God.

His was no accidental death.

His was not the death of a political loser.

His death was by design - the design of God!

Acts 2:24 and 32 Third he mentions the resurrection of J.

"But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him...God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."

Every other person who has ever been raised from the dead by God, died again. Their resurrection was temporary.

But this Jesus rose from the dead triumphant over death itself - never to die again.

You may have heard of other resurrections but you have never heard of one like this one - This resurrection proves beyond all reasonable doubt

that this Jesus is who he claimed to be - God who had come to save us from our sins.

Acts 2:33 Fourth Peter mentions the ascension of Jesus.

"Exalted to the right hand of the Father, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."

This Jesus who has died and risen from the dead is now back in the position of supreme authority and is able to do what he has promised.

You should have no doubt about His ability to perform on his promises. He is the risen, ascended exalted God.

And in ACTS 2:38 Peter last mentions those promises.

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

This Jesus who has died for your sins and who rose from the dead and who is now exalted as supreme God offers you forgiveness of sins and the presence of His Holy Spirit who is the down payment and guarantee of your life with God forever.

That is the Jesus whom Peter presented to that Pentecost audience.

Or as it says in verse 36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this; God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ"

He is Lord - sovereign God

He is Christ, Messiah, Savior.

And all who will believe that message and accept this Jesus as Lord and Savior will be saved - they will become God's children - forever!!

Now as many times as you may have heard it - That is worth Celebrating!!

For you must understand that if this message is true, If Jesus is who He says he is and He has done what he claimed he did, then it makes all the difference in the world.

Do you know why those people were so happy?
Because when they accepted Jesus as Saving-Lord
it brought about a whole mental reorientation.

From that day forward they saw life differently.

Sometimes we find it difficult to relate to the people written about in the Bible.
We rarely stop to think about the men and women who made
up that crowd at Pentecost.

We don't pause to consider how much like us they probably
were. Or how much like them we are.

Acts 2:5-11 tells us that there were people from all over the known world visiting in
Jerusalem during the holiday called Pentecost.

These people were business men and women.
There were homemakers there
there were laborers there, and students there.

These were people who earned wages,
worked long days,
had to shop for things,
worried about their children,
cleaned houses,
paid bills,
visited the relatives,
worried about sales,
got sick and went to doctors,

And I have to believe that they became just as hard and
cynical as people today.
These people didn't just fall off the turnip cart,
they weren't gullible and naive.

But on that day when they met Jesus and
in the days that followed as they learned more about Him
from the apostles' teaching, their whole perspective on
life was changed.

Like us, these people worried about the things of life:
They worried about jobs and income,
food and homes.

But now they had met Jesus who told them in Matt 6,

that their heavenly Father knows exactly what they need and is watching out for them.

The God who could calm the storms,
draw money from a fish's mouth,
clothe the lilies of the field,
and feed the birds of the air,
could and would certainly care for them.

It changed their perspective.
They were no longer on their own to make things happen. Their God is watching out for them.

Like us, they picked up from their culture that life consists of the abundance of possessions.

They would break their necks to get more.

But now they had met Jesus who told them in Lk 12, that the real issue of life is richness toward God.

It changed their perspective.
Instead of giving themselves to always get more, they now were giving themselves to get to know Him.

Like us, they were tempted to think of themselves as victims.
"Why does everything bad in life have to happen to me?"

They often thought of their lives as out of control -
if it wasn't sickness, then it was no job,
if it wasn't an accident, then it was bad news from
back home.

Their lives were in shambles.

But now they had met Jesus who told them through Rom 8 that their God was working all things together for their good. They were not victims, they were conquerors through Jesus Christ.

That changed their perspective:
Their lives were not out of control but were within the perfect control of God.

Like us, they were tempted to think that nothing really changes, that injustice prevails -

the bad people of this world truly do get by with their
illegal, unethical and immoral actions;
that life is just a senseless circle of birth, life and death,
birth, life and death.
the best you can hope for is to grab a little happiness along the way.

But then they met Jesus who informed them through I Peter
that history is linear not cyclical and that at just the
right time Jesus is coming back again and justice will prevail - wrongs will be
set right.

That changed their perspective:
There is hope - It is worth it to be obedient to God.
It is worth it to struggle for justice - Jesus is coming.

And like us, when they buried their loved ones, they were tempted to think that it
was all over -
and they grieved as people with no hope for a future with
that person.

But then they met Jesus who informed them through I Thess
that those who died trusting Christ would be resurrected from the grave
when Jesus comes again -
and all who are trusting in Christ will be reunited
to live together in the presence of God forever.

Now that will change your perspective:
death is not the end.
We do not grieve as those who have no hope.
Resurrection and eternal life are in our future.

Is it any wonder that these people were celebrating?

Their whole mindset about life had been reoriented!

They had a whole new perspective on living.
Jesus had pulled them out of darkness and given them light.

Jesus had taken them out of hopelessness and given them hope

Jesus had taken them out of the rat-race of life that
in their hearts they knew was getting them nowhere -
and had given them a reason for life.

And the more they were taught about this Jesus
and the more they thought about Him,
the greater became their worship, their celebration.

According to the Bible, sometimes worship is loud:

The thanksgiving is uncontainable and it erupts into hand-clapping, arm-raising, amen-shouting times of great celebration.

It's like when your child is born.

You stand there in that hospital and you can't contain yourself - nothing but a "whoop" can express the emotion of joy.

And then you pick up that child and you look in awe - and then nothing but reverent silence and tears can adequately express that same joy.

Sometimes our worship is soft:

the joy is so deep that it results in knee-bending, head-bowing, and silent tears.

The adoration of our Lord is so great that sometimes silence is the best expression of worship.

Do you know Jesus?

Are you willing to continue with us in a time of worship of Him?

Let your mind dwell on what He has done and who He is so that your heart can overflow in worship.