Joy Through Christ's Example

Us to him, him to us, and a joy that is not the same as happiness

SPEAKER	Lisette Espinosa
DATE	Sunday, September 18, 2022
PASSAGES	Hebrews 12:2-3; Revelation 7:9-10; John 1:29; Romans 8:18; Isaiah 55:10-13; Nehemiah 8:10
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:16:47 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus went to the cross "for the joy that was set before him" — the joy of being our God and having us as his people. That joy is not the same as happiness, and it is not produced by circumstances or by rallying our feelings. The Holy Spirit sustains it in us, especially when we remember that we are his beloved.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Jesus' sorrow was the gateway to our joy. The suffering that brings us to him is the very thing that fulfils his joy.
- Lisette's formula, "not magic, but supernaturally life-changing": us to him equals his joy; him to us equals our joy.
- From the beginning, through Gethsemane and the cross and the resurrection, the goal has been the same: that he would be our God and we would be his people.
- Joy is not happiness. Happiness is good, but joy sustains us through hard times when we do not feel happy.
- We cannot muster joy by our own efforts. It is a fruit of the Spirit, and our doubts do not scare God or put him off.
- Like John, who called himself the beloved disciple, we find joy following when we accept our identity as God's beloved.

▶ 1:16:47

Where these notes pick up, Lisette Espinosa had put a list of reference verses on the word of God on the screen and urged everyone to photograph it, go home "and just chew on that." Then she turned to the heart of her message: the joy Jesus himself carried to the cross.

For the joy set before him

"Jesus' sorrow was the gateway that brought, and continues to bring, us joy." His sorrow is also what brings us to himself — and bringing us to himself fulfils his joy.

▶ 1:17:24

> "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. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted."
>
> HEBREWS 12:2–3 ↗

▶ 1:18:03

"For those of you who wish there was a magic formula — there's not." But she put one on the screen anyway, "not magic, but I do believe it's supernaturally life-changing if you believe it":

> *Us to him equals his joy. Him to us equals our joy.*

That he would be our God and we would be his people: it was on his mind from the beginning, in Gethsemane, at the cross, when he rose again in victory — "and right now it is in his mind."

The Lamb who was slain

▶ 1:18:45

Lisette turned to John's vision — the same scene the congregation had just sung about:

> "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"
>
> REVELATION 7:9–16 ↗

▶ 1:19:19

People from every nook and cranny of the world, every language and tribe, declaring that God saves. And who is the Lamb? The Lamb who was slain — Jesus. She went back to John the Baptist seeing Jesus coming toward him: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The final sacrifice, the only sacrifice that made a way.

▶ 1:20:06

Why? For the joy set before him. In the garden Jesus sweated drops of blood (Luke 22:42–44) — not only an emotional response but a physical one to what lay before him. He knew that shedding his blood, however hard, meant it would be finished, sealed, done: victory over death, and his people from every tribe and tongue his own. The prophets foretold it hundreds of years before it happened.

Joy is not happiness

▶ 1:21:33

Someone might object: you are talking about joy from Christ's example, but you are describing Jesus in agony. "Remember, we're not talking about happiness. We're not talking about what is happening." It was the joy set before him that sustained him — the joy that said to the Father, "not my will, but yours, be done," and looked in hope to what was coming.

▶ 1:22:10

"It's always been about God being God and us acknowledging that. That brings him joy, and it brings us joy to be his people." Paul put it this way:
the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us — and he wrote it as a man who would be beaten, imprisoned, mocked and eventually killed because no one could change his mind about who Christ was.

How do we hold fast to this joy?

▶ 1:22:51

It is hard not to give our utmost attention to what we feel and what is happening around us. "Joy is not about what you feel. That's happiness. Happiness is good, it's not a bad thing — but this morning we want joy that sustains us through the hard times, even when we don't feel happy."

▶ 1:23:39

So how? "Hope Chapel, we hope." We do not give up; we endure. And not by our own strength: not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit. Our attempts to rally ourselves only last so long. It is good to rally one another, and sometimes needed, "but that's not what sustains. It's the activity of the Holy Spirit" — the Spirit of the living God, sent to live inside those who belong to Jesus.

▶ 1:24:22

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). So we ask the Spirit within us to rise up and not be silent; we stay connected to God and to each other; and we do not grieve the Holy Spirit. And we admit our doubt.

▶ 1:25:01

Thomas walked with Jesus and saw him face to face, and still they call him the one who doubted. "Your doubt does not scare God." When circumstances look like a monster truck crushing our lives, maybe even our bones, we ask for belief where there are shadows of doubt. "God is not afraid of your doubt, my friends. It doesn't put him off." The joy of the Lord is beyond this flesh, our feelings and our emotions, and it meets our present with the supernatural.

▶ 1:25:50

We have not yet seen God face to face. But with the Spirit's help we can hope and believe despite feelings and turmoil — on the strength of a promise:

> "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose… For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands."
>
> ISAIAH 55:10–13 ↗

You are his beloved

▶ 1:26:56

While preparing, Lisette kept finding herself back in the Gospel of John, and paused to ask what the Lord was showing her. John was one of the Twelve, one of the three Jesus asked to pray with him in Gethsemane. Jesus entrusted his mother Mary to John at his death (John 19:26–27). And John boldly called himself the beloved disciple.

▶ 1:27:40

Carefully — "and if I need to be corrected, Mr. Ryniker is right there" — she offered what she believed was a prophetic word for the church: "Beloved, the bride of Christ — this morning God wants you to remember that you are his beloved. When we accept that we are his beloved, joy follows." John understood his identity. The joy of the Lord, she suggested, is a confident assurance that he still looks at us as his beloved, abundantly beautiful creation.

Renouncing the lie

▶ 1:28:31

With the formula back on the screen, she asked: has the enemy of your soul lied to you? Has the deceiver told you that you do not belong to God, that he is not good, that he has stopped pursuing you, that you are too much, that he has left you? "We all mess up. We all have moments. We don't have to put on a show — that's not what Hope Chapel's about."

▶ 1:30:06

Maybe it is not you this morning, but the brother or sister beside you. So together the congregation repeated after her: *I renounce the lie that God does not want me, and I declare this morning: God wants me. He's always wanted me. He will always want me.*

Sorrow turned to joy

▶ 1:30:48

The joy of the Lord is our strength. Jesus knew he would suffer, and he looked past it to the finished work: he would be our God and we would be his people. His sorrow was turned into joy. "He's the perfect example." "I didn't come this morning to make you giggle," Lisette said. "I came here this morning to say there's hope for us through hard times, through changing times."

▶ 1:31:36

We look to the cross, to the resurrection, to his promise that he is coming again, and to the truth that he is our God and we are his people — "and in that we can find great sustaining joy." She prayed for the

Spirit to take down our walls and our helpless attempts to manufacture a feeling of joy, and to fill the new wineskins he has made with his oil of gladness.

▶ 1:33:01

Then, bravely, she closed by singing over the church an Evie song her mother used to sing, one that has stayed with her for years: *Give them all, give them all to Jesus — shattered dreams, wounded hearts, broken toys — and he will turn your sorrow into joy.* "He never said you would only see sunshine," it goes; "he only promised us a heart full of singing." And she asked that no one leave without prayer if they needed it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE

- Hebrews 12:2–3
- Revelation 7:9–16
- John 1:29
- Luke 22:42–44
- Romans 8:18
- Zechariah 4:6
- Galatians 5:22
- Isaiah 55:10–13
- John 19:26–27
- Nehemiah 8:10

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Hebrews 12:2 says Jesus endured the cross "for the joy that was set before him." How does it change your view of the cross to know that we were that joy?
2. How would you explain the difference between joy and happiness from your own experience of a hard season?
3. Lisette said our efforts to rally ourselves only last so long. Where have you been trying to manufacture joy instead of asking the Spirit for it?
4. What lies about your belonging to God have you been tempted to believe, and what truth answers them?
5. What would it look like this week to live as God's beloved, the way John did?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Lisette Espinosa preached this message on the joy Jesus modelled at the cross, built on her own study in the Gospel of John and offered, in her words, carefully and open to correction from Hope's senior pastor. She closed by singing "Give Them All," an Evie song she grew up hearing her mother sing, and invited anyone needing prayer to come forward before leaving.

Watch the full message:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ5NrOlGcVU&t=4607s

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.