

Title: The life of joy.

Theme: All people are motivated by the search for joy and happiness, but the route to real joy is through the shadow's valley and into the wide open arms of your Lord.

Text: John 15: 9-11 9“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

I. The Hero's Journey

- A. There once was a wonderful kingdom with a good king who was wise beyond understanding. And in the castle lived a handsome prince who was as brave as he was fair. And everyone in the kingdom was happy and healthy. The end.
- B. Even a 5 year old knows that's not a good story.
- C. The redemptive story. The need to end the story better and stronger than when you started.

II. The Life of Pleasure

- A. Pascal on every person's search for happiness.

“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”

- B. Epicurious - background and philosophy
- C. Today's Epicureans
- D. Stoicism and the reaction to Epicureanism
- E. Paul at Mars Hill (Acts 17) and the dominance of Christian thought for the next 1,400 years.

IV. The Rise of the New Philosophers in the 18th and 19th Centuries

- A. Nietzsche's contention that God is dead and so are the moral underpinnings of Christianity.
- B. Nietzsche's influence
- C. The devastating result of Nietzsche's philosophy - 20th century atrocities

IV. Evidence For the Rise of the New Epicureans

- A. Woody Allen - “If God exists, I hope he has a good excuse.”
- B. The repudiation of personal responsibility.
 - i. The failure to launch
 - ii. The marriage rate

- iii. The birth rate
- iv. 125,000 abortions each day
- v. The grievance culture

V. The New Stoics

- A. Jordan Peterson and the new Stoic movement.
- B. The Stoic search for happiness is found in facing the suffering and building virtue.

VI. The Christian Alternative to the Epicurean and Stoic Approaches to Happiness

- A. Paul at Mars Hill offers good news, not just good advice.
- B. Jordan Peterson's *Maps of Meaning* and 12 rules for life is good advice.
- C. Jesus and the resurrection are good news.
- D. The good news of Jesus brings real joy.

9 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

- E. The Christian answer to the Epicureans — happiness doesn’t depend on your circumstances, but on your faith and hope in Christ.
- F. The Christian answer to the Stoics - you don’t have to be crushed when you realize you can’t live up to your own standards.

VII. The Question of Death

- A. Epicureans ignore it.
- B. Stoics strive to leave a legacy.
- C. Woody Allen on death ...

“I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work; I want to achieve immortality through not dying. I don’t want to live on in the hearts of my countrymen; I want to live on in my apartment.” Woody Allen

- D. Jesus’ response to death. The tomb of Lazarus.
- E. Epicureans say eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.
- F. Christians say, tomorrow we die, and then we will eat, drink and be merry
- G. What the contrasting views of death mean for our future hope and our present actions

VIII. The True Story that Brings Redemption and Joy

- A. There is a good king, but we’ve betrayed Him.

- B. We've aligned ourselves with the dragon of chaos and wickedness.
- C. The Prince goes on the hero's journey to rescue you from the dragon and from yourself.
- D. The Prince conquers to bring you home and makes you His brother.

IX. Application

- A. You've received the most important invitation you'll ever get, how will you answer?
- B. C.S. Lewis and the dance of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

God is "a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance. The union between the Father and the Son is such a live concrete thing that this union itself is also a person. It is as if a sort of communal personality came into existence."

"The whole dance or drama or pattern of this three-personal life is being played out in each one of us: or putting it the other way round, each of us has got to enter that pattern, take his place in that dance. There is no other way to the happiness for which we are made."

"Keep back Nothing. Nothing that you have not given away will really be yours. Nothing in you that has not died will ever be raised from the dead. Look for yourself and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair, rage, ruin and decay. But look for Christ and you will find Him, and with Him everything else thrown in."

- C. Joy, pleasure, and happiness are always the end, but they can't be the means.

"Take delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4.

"Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy..." Psalm 34:5.

"whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he." Proverbs 16:20. "

- D. Aim for Christ, and you get redemption, happiness, and joy. Aim for happiness alone, and you get neither Christ nor happiness
- E. Christ beckons, "follow me." Will you heed His call?

X. Prayer and Benediction

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy — ²⁵ to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. Jude 1:24–25