

12/15/24 - Isaiah 25:8-9 - "Joy Between Two Advents"

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[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 25, verses 8 and 9. That's Isaiah chapter 25, verses 8 and 9.

Isaiah chapter 25, verses 8 and 9. And he will swallow up death forever, and the Lord will wipe away tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God. We have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God. Praise the Lord. I'm going to ask you a question today as we think about joy in this Christmas season.

Why is it easier to feel genuine dismay rather than genuine joy?

[1 : 25] Why is it easier to find genuine dismay? Dismay that it seems like it just comes natural, right? But joy, it's difficult.

Now, living in a fallen world, obviously, it's tempting to attribute too quickly this struggle solely due to the pervasive nature and influence of sin in our lives.

We are true in that. That is definitely correct. But I think the challenge goes deeper than just saying, well, we live in a fallen world and here I am in dismay.

That doesn't really provide a solution, right? I think it's interesting because not only does dismay surround us, but dismay is easy to find.

You can find it in everything. And often dismay finds us. However, joy requires quite a bit of effort, right?

[2 : 31] It's strenuous at times. It doesn't make sense. Often you don't feel joyful when you're sitting there like, ah, happy, joyful.

It's unnatural at times when you're in dismay. It's difficult to obtain. Well, finding joy is a climb. And dismay is a slide.

Dismay finds us almost effortlessly, right? It finds us effortlessly. Dismay found Job. In Job 3, verse 11, he lamented his birth and wished for death to escape suffering.

Dismay overwhelmed the psalmist in Psalm 88, verse 3. He says, I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.

Dismay consumed Solomon, King Solomon. In Ecclesiastes 1, 2. Where he says, meaningless. Meaningless. Everything is meaningless.

[3 : 42] Meaningless. These raw truths resonate deeply with us, don't they? That dismay just finds us. And it has its way of being so raw, so genuine, that it's like, it seems natural, like we should be in dismay.

It echoes sometimes our negative thought patterns. Our chronic stress and chronic anxiety that we have.

Just marinate in it. We see this. It echoes into our unresolved trauma in our lives. Unresolved pain. Into our depression.

Our unforgiveness and resentment towards others. And maybe just an overall disconnection from our relationships from each other. And while dismay pulls us downward.

And while dismay pulls us downward. Just as sure as gravity will pull us to the ground. Joy requires intentionality, church. It requires efforts.

[4 : 49] It requires faith to pursue it. And I want to persuade you in the next 25-ish minutes. I want to persuade you to realize the hill that you are on between the two advents.

And guide us on this trek. The sermon title is Joy Between Two Advents.

Joy Between Two Advents. And what we'll see by the end of our time. That joy is a climb. Dismay is a slide.

And only seeking Christ. Will joy abide. And I made it rhyme. There's my bonus points. Let's pray as we enter into the text today.

And look at our situation here in this life. Let's pray. Father, thank you for giving us something to anchor us in hope of the future when things look bleak.

[6 : 03] Thank you for giving us your word that is so tangible to hold in our hand. And often so challenging to believe. Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, we can find joy in this life.

And let us see what that looks like today. As we're caught between two advents. Of the birth of Jesus. And the second coming of Jesus. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Amen. So the first section is joy in light of the incarnation. Incarnation is just when Jesus came in the cradle.

And his incarnation in the flesh. He was made flesh. And so the chapter that was read this morning is a song of praise to God.

Thank you, Micah, for reading that. It's a praise to God for his power. God's justice. God's salvation. And it looks forward, as it was read, to a future where God will triumph over sin, over death, over evil.

[7 : 22] When peace will righteously reign. And now, at first glance, this verse, maybe if we cherry pick it.

We live in a cherry picking society. We'll cherry pick that. This might evoke celebration, right? It might make us be like, amen.

But I believe with those two verses stripped out of their context and their family of verses around, that rejoicing and that celebration would be quite superficial.

Quite superficial. Because God's people were not in a season of joy. They were not in a season of celebration. They were sliding into dismay.

The Assyrians loomed as the superpower in this time period in history. They threatened Judah and all the surrounding nations. They were a powerful nation. And the northern kingdom of Israel was nearing destruction in 722 B.C.

[8 : 34] And Judah was facing similar external threats. And in such turbulent times, joy felt unattainable.

Wouldn't you imagine that? As you're seeing family members split from each other, you're seeing mom, dad killed by the sword. Again, through the prophet Isaiah, God called his people to rejoice.

Why? Well, the king is coming. Isaiah 25 verse 8 says, He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces.

And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth. For the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Behold, this is our God.

We have waited for him. That he might save us. This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

[9 : 45] What a climb for the nation of Israel. God's people were called to rejoice in anticipation of a promise yet to be fulfilled.

And as we scroll through the news feed of redemptive history, We're all thumb scrollers, right? As we scroll through the news feed of redemptive history, We see that upon that arrival of the baby in a manger, The king came.

He came. Jesus was born of a virgin, Lived a sinless life, And was perfectly obedient to the father. Even to the point of death upon the cross.

And even the horror of the cross was soon eclipsed by the rejoicing of the resurrection. Right? Just as Paul says to the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 15, 54, Death has been swallowed up in victory.

Christ is that king. Rejoice. Amen. Amen. But, The joy of the resurrection Never erased the ongoing struggle to come.

[11 : 15] From the early church under Roman emperors like Nero or Diocletian, To the persecutions, To the heresies, Divisions of later centuries, And the tensions remain.

We look back to Isaiah. We look back to the cradle. We look back to the cross. Yet dismay is still a slippery slope.

You see, joy is a hill to climb. Even Jesus himself endured the cross for the joy set before him.

I feel like John Piper up here. He's a joy guy. In Hebrews 12, 2. For the joy that was set before him, And Jesus called every Christian To pick up their cross And to follow him.

We follow Jesus Christ up that hill Of symbolic suffering. And now sharing The assurance Of the truth of Isaiah That our king came, yes.

[12 : 28] But our king is coming again. Amen. Amen. Church, This tension that we feel In what we have In what we have in this life Should have been expected.

I don't know when you came to Know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, But It's a lie If you thought that your life Was all of a sudden Going to be Sorrow free.

Stress free. That coming to Jesus Is kind of like living life 2.0. You see that often in the prosperity gospel. And it's a lie.

A lie from the pit of hell. It is. This tension we feel Is what we should have expected.

The struggle And the effort It takes to find joy Comes at quite a high cost Of discomfort. It's strenuous. And at the moment Of such discomfort We meet the fork in the road Don't we?

[13 : 40] Travel down The road of cultural Innovations of finding joy Up into a new forward. Right? Yeah, that's what you need To be joyous.

New Ford. I'm personally a Chevy guy Who drives a Ford But we won't get into that. Anyhow Point A to point B That's all I'm looking for.

Now we can go down That cultural narrative That cultural path Of these innovations To find joy. Or we can see the bigger picture In the other road.

Where joy is fixed And steady And sure Regardless of any External condition That comes upon us. And now for some of us Today If you're living apart From a relationship In Jesus Christ And you know it You walked into church Wondering if you were Going to get struck By lightning.

Right? It doesn't happen. But If you're here today I've got to ask you Where your joy is If you're not living In relationship With Jesus Christ And you're following These cultural narratives Yeah, you've got to afford You've got all this stuff Yeah, you think you have Everything you need But still Late at night You lay your head On the pillow And you still Sense that disconnect Where is your joy?

[15 : 13] Now for that You have a lot in common With the people of Israel Right? They were enslaved By the Assyrians You've got to admit That apart from Jesus Christ You are enslaved By sin That separates you From God You don't have The promise Of Isaiah 25 And so if that's you Here today I hope by the end Of this sermon That it piques the curiosity That you need something Greater Than a Ford Greater than a Chevy Greater than a Cybertruck But though for some of us today Christmas Everyone's supposed to be happy At Christmas What's wrong with you Christians If you're not happy On Christmas?

And Christmas can amplify The pain that we have Of missing loved ones Especially grieving recent losses Spending your first Christmas Without a family member Family traditions And gatherings That you think back on Looking at pictures And time hops And things like that Seem to only twist the knife In our hearts Of the despair That we're feeling In this life In this tension And now some of us Don't even need to Lose a loved one To feel such pain Because they've Maybe it's you Been growing spiritually Into this rut Just not knowing How to get out of it You just can't shake it Well Modeling the perfect Footsteps of Jesus Christ We carry our cross

In tension with the world Up that hill And we anticipate The consummation Of the end Upon the hill Of the new creation That has been spoken Through God's word In Revelation And let's go there In the second section Joy and light Of the consummation In Revelation 19 We're reminded Of this fulfillment As John states In this vision This prophecy Then I heard What seemed to be The voice Of a great multitude Like the roar Of many waters And like the sound Of mighty peals Of thunder Crying out Hallelujah For the Lord Our God The Almighty Reigns Let us rejoice And exalt And give him The glory For the marriage

Of the Lamb Has come And his bride Has made herself Ready It was granted Her To clothe herself With fine linen Bright and pure For the fine linen Is the righteous deeds Of the saints And the angel Said to me Write this Blessed are those Who are invited To the marriage Supper Of the Lamb And he said to me These are the True words Of God What has the power To keep us Climbing The hill Of despair Toward joy Not only the sole fact That Jesus Conquered death As we see In Isaiah And the promise Fulfilled in Isaiah But there's still Something waiting We get a glimpse Of something That supersedes Our greatest despair

In life The consummation Of Christ's kingdom That's where we're Climbing That's where we're Going This is a time When the triumphant Christ Returns with his church When the church Attends the wedding Feast of such a union And Christ The king Conquers His enemies His enemies Are thrown Into the lake Of fire And now It doesn't really Matter Your personal Interpretation Of revelation 19 You could be A pre-millennialist Am-amillennialist Or a post-millennialist Or a pan Pan Pan What is it Pan Everything's gonna Pan out in the end Right Whatever your End-time views This is how It's gonna pan out This is a source

[20 : 08] Of joy From all these Perspectives Joy is here Whether this is Literal Or symbolic In church Our joy Is an expression Of something That our hearts May not feel Did you hear that Our joy Is an expression Of something Our hearts May not feel But our minds Certainly Know It is an external Rehearsal Of this future Celebration That's joy And now even Sorrow Can rejoice Through the expression Of lament How many churches Are talking about Lament During Christmas Lament is the Often Forgotten Discipline Of the Christian

Life To lament Even our sorrow Can rejoice Through lament You see If we lack Joy It seems as if We actually lack Perspective Right And if we lack Perspective How essential It is For us To cling Tightly To God's Promises That we find Here in Scripture Fulfilled Through Isaiah 25 Anticipated In Revelation 19 Here And only Here Can joy Be Found Upon this Trekking Of our Hill Therefore We don't Need A little Pep Rally And pep Talks Right To just Pick up Your boot Strapped You're A Christian Be joyful We don't Need Rationalization Of our Sorrow We don't Need Volume We don't Need Hype We don't

Need Dismissive Cliche Sayings Like Well God's Going to Make it All work In the End Thanks But I Still Feel Like Crap Right You don't Need That No God Has not Called us To be Liars And to Put on A happy Face Because we Should be Joyous You see What we Need Then Is for The Unmovable Fortified Word Of God To Reshape Our Perspective In light Of the End We need His Word We don't Need It Volume It could Be Whisper To Us And it Can Transform Our Entire Sense Of Joy Let's Consider John Piper In this Since I'm Talking About Joy You Gotta Quote John Piper If You're Preaching On Joy He Says Don't Close Your Bible Until You Find Your Heart Is Exalting In Something You've Seen Of God In His Word For Many Of Us That

Might Be Quite A Long Read Quite Long Read You Want To Be Honest He Says Don't Close Your Bible Until You Find Your Heart Is Exalting In Something You've Seen Of God In His Word The Word Alone Was The Source Of Joy To Suffering People In Isaiah's Day And It Remains The Immovable Force That Awakens Our Joy Today See But An Uphill Climb It Is And It Always Will Be An Uphill Climb Until Jesus Returns Upon Our Profession Of Faith Coming To Jesus Christ In Faith By Trusting In His Work His Work On This Earth And His Life His Death Burial And Resurrection And He's Coming Again Trusting In That God Gave Us All Climbing Gear

He Gave Us Climbing Gear For That Hill And It Has Nothing To Do With Ropes Has Nothing To Do With Clips Or What Other Little Trickets You Have To Use For Climbing God Gave Us A Book He Gave Us A Book For This Climb Do You Have The Proper Climbing Gear Church For This Truck Between The Two Advents We Find Ourselves Toiling In This Tension Of Joy Sorrow And I'm Here To Remind You That It's Okay It's Okay To Feel That Tension It's What's Expected Of This People It's Okay To Feel That Tension This Christmas Perhaps

[25 : 12] God Isn't Calling You To Ignore Your Sorrow Just Pass It Off Like It's Nothing But Maybe God's Leading You To Rejoice In Sorrow This Year We Must Remember That Joy Is Not About Smiling Joy Is Not About Laughing Joy Is Not About Skipping Around Singing In The Rain Joy Is A Condition Of The Heart Upon What Our Minds Must Comprehend In other Words We Can Rejoice With Tears In Our Eyes Knowing That While Everything Seems Wrong Now God Will One Day Make It Right That That's

Joy Keep Climbing Church Rejoice In God's Way Knowing That Nothing In This Life Has The Authority To Distort The Promises Of His Word Grab Your Climbing Gear That We Have In His Book And Here We Rest And Remain Joy Is A Climb Dismay Is A Sly But Only Seeking Christ Will Joy Abide Let's Pray