

# **LUKE**

“Reasons for Rejoicing”

*Luke 10:17-24*

Sunday, July 8, 2018

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<sup>17</sup> The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” <sup>18</sup> And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

<sup>21</sup> In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>22</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

<sup>23</sup> Then turning to the disciples he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! <sup>24</sup> For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.” <sup>1</sup>

*Heavenly Father, we rejoice before your Holy Scripture. Though you are high and holy and glorious in every way, you have graciously revealed yourself through your word and through your Son, so that we might truly know and commune with you. So I ask this morning that we would do more than simply learn about the Bible. I pray by the power of your Spirit we would be able to encounter your presence. For in your presence there is fullness of joy. We pray this in Jesus’s mighty name, AMEN.*

## **Introduction**

Yesterday, my two oldest sons decided to watch the World Cup quarterfinal match between Russia and Croatia on TV. For reasons utterly unknown to me Solomon, my six-year-old decided to root for Russia and Samuel, my four-year-old, decided to root for Croatia. They each cheered when their team did well, they rejoiced when their team scored, and Solomon wept when Russia lost, even though he only decided which team he was rooting for literal minutes before the game.

This is the type of hysteria that sports in general and the World Cup, in particular, can create.

Growing up, I never thought that much about soccer (because I’m American). However, the summer after my senior year in high school, I took an art history college course that traveled across Europe. And this trip just happened to coincide with the World Cup tournament. As we were preparing to board the “chunnel” train from France to England, I vividly remember witnessing an old French man weeping in the train station when news came out that France had lost their game and been eliminated from the tournament. And it amazed me. I mean, I’m used to fans being disappointed and frustrated and angry, because I’m a Cowboys fan. But I had never seen an old man weep for a game. I didn’t know people took soccer that seriously.

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016), Lk 10:17–24.

Then, we arrived in England at the same time England was playing Denmark. And still, to this day, I've never seen anything like it. As we were walking through the streets of London, all anyone cared about was the game. Every restaurant and pub overflowed with people watching the match. Cabbies and bus drivers listened to the game on their radios as they drove. Even street vendors didn't care about passerby's but sat glued to little personal-sized, battery-powered TVs. And whenever England scored, the entire city of London shouted in unison. Every driver honked their horns. People on the streets high-fived and embraced total strangers. And when the 3-0 victory was finally won, people suddenly poured out of buildings into an impromptu parade and marched toward the various city squares to celebrate.

It may not be totally rational, but this is something humans do. We look to teams and celebrities that we admire, and we root for, and we become so attached that we live vicariously through them. Their greatness becomes our greatness. Their victory becomes our victory. Their joy becomes our joy. We wear their jerseys, with their colors and their names.

There is a reason for this. The Bible teaches us that we are created beings. And as created beings, we were created for joy; specifically, joy that is beyond ourselves. But no team or celebrity will ever be able to give us the eternal joy that our hearts were created to crave. As the famous Westminster Shorter Catechism teaches: "*Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.*"<sup>2</sup>

If this is true, and I believe with all of my heart that it is, then why are Christians not often known for joy in our culture. We worship the Creator-Redeemer God who is the fountain of all goodness and joy. However, I think if you were to ask the average non-Christian in our culture what Christians are known for, they would know us for we are outraged by and what we are against.

But if you are a Christian, despite your circumstances or challenges, you have reasons to be filled with joy. We as a church have reasons to be filled with joy. And I believe that our text will show us today what those reasons are.

## **Exposition**

### **1.) Our Enemy is Defeated**

Last week, we saw Jesus continue to multiply his mission as he travels toward the city of Jerusalem. He appointed seventy-two of his followers to go before him two-by-two into various communities to display the power of God and declare that the kingdom of God has come.

As today's text begins, the seventy-two are now returning to Jesus, and they are in astonishment with what they just saw. The power they received is beyond anything could have expected. More than just healing diseases, which would have been amazing in itself, they have seen demons tremble before them at the name of Jesus!

This is a valid and understandable reason for rejoicing. Now, of course, Jesus directly says in verse 20: "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

However, most New Testament scholars that the grammar behind this statement means something like: power over our spiritual enemy isn't the greatest or primary reason to rejoice in Christ – but it is

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<sup>2</sup> Westminster Assembly, [\*The Westminster Confession of Faith: Edinburgh Edition\*](#) (Philadelphia: William S. Young, 1851), 387.

a reason to rejoice (see Hughes<sup>3</sup> and Marshall).<sup>4</sup>

As the seventy-two return and recount their victory over demonic forces, Jesus has a vision of what is happening in the spiritual realm. He sees Satan fall from heaven like a bright lightning strike. In scripture, to be located in heaven or the heavens means to be in a position of authority and power. And every since Genesis 3, Satan had been in a position of authority and power. He has been at war with God, at war with creation, and at war with humanity. But as Jesus works through his people, Satan is being dethroned and defeated, in a way that is as sudden and violent as a bolt of lightning.

The Bible is teaching us that the concept of Satan is very much a biblical reality.<sup>5</sup> Satan and demons are personal, active forces of evil. They torment and oppress individual people and are at work in wicked and unjust social systems and structures. And up until this point in history, Satan and demons have always won.

But now through Jesus (and Jesus working through his followers), we are witnessing a reverse of the curse on creation. God is restoring the dominion of humanity. And Satan is now destined for destruction. Jesus is saying, “Evil is real. Evil is dangerous. But evil is doomed.” And this is cause for rejoicing.

You need to know that if you are a Christian, you have been given the resources to defeat our spiritual enemy. Just because we have been given that power, does not mean that we are using those resources well.

Notice the demons aren’t trembling before the seventy-two. They are trembling before the name of Jesus. The key to spiritual warfare is realizing that we can’t defeat Satan, but Jesus has defeated already. We win our spiritual war when we rest and stand in what Jesus has done.

When the allies invaded Normandy, France during World War 2, that one battle was the decisive battle of the war. That’s why we call it D-day. If the allies lost that battle, Germany was sure to win. If the allies won that battle, Germany was doomed to defeat. So when D-day was won, the destiny of the war was determined.

You need to know that the day Jesus rose from the grave, your spiritual war was won. The full reality of the war isn’t over just yet. But the enemy is doomed. We can rest in that victory now!

You can see this very clearly in Ephesians 6. It is perhaps the most famous passage on spiritual warfare in the Bible, and the one common refrain is not to fight, but to “stand”: ***“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”*** (Ephesians 6:10–13, ESV)

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<sup>3</sup> “He was not saying they should not rejoice in spiritual power, but that there is a *primary* rejoicing, a rejoicing that takes precedence over it—namely, that their names were inscribed in God’s book in Heaven.” R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 378.

<sup>4</sup> “The saying should probably be interpreted in terms of Semitic idiom to mean, ‘Do not rejoice primarily that ..., but rather that ...’” I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 430.

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Luke*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark International, 1896), 278.

Make no mistake. The gospel going forward is an act of spiritual war. And if you participate in this spiritual war, the powers of hell will come against you. But we can walk in victory and power over our spiritual enemy, because, in Christ, our enemy is defeated.

This is a reason for joy. But there is an even greater reason for joy.

## **2.) Our Eternity Is Secure.**

In Verse 20, Jesus commands his followers to rejoice because their names are “are written” (ἠγγέγραπται) in heaven. This refers to a concept in both the Old Testament and New Testament known as the Book of Life, in which the names of God’s people are already recorded in heaven (see Exodus 32:32; Psalm 69:28; Isaiah 4:3; Daniel 7:10; 12:1; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 20:12, 15; 21:27).

I imagine that if we were casting out demons and healing diseases, it would be pretty easy to get a big head. We might be tempted to become overly impressed or fascinated with ourselves.

Jesus is saying what should bring us to a place of fascination and joy is that when you believe in Jesus, your name is already written in heaven; that God has loved you and known you and called you to be his; there is nothing you could ever do that could ever be as impressive as what God has already done in you. As Eugene Peterson says, “...*the great triumph is not in your authority over evil, but in God’s authority over you and presence with you. Not what you do for God but what God does for you—that’s the agenda for rejoicing.*”<sup>6</sup>

The words “are written,” in verse 20 come from the Greek word “*eggegreptaí*” (ἠγγέγραπται). It is a verb that contains a lot of meaning than an English translation is capable of conveying. It is a perfect verb (it has already happened). It is a passive verb (it has happened because of God’s doing; not ours) And it is an indicative verb (meaning it is not conditional or hypothetical; it is reality).

This means, that if you are a believer in Jesus, there is nothing we can do to make God love us more; nothing we can do to make God love us less. Because of Jesus, we can rest in the infinite security of God’s love.

Now, contrary to popular belief this high of a view of God’s love and grace will not cause us to live any way we want. Rather, it will compel us toward lasting transformation and righteousness.

Beating ourselves up with shame is a terrible long-term motivator. It always fails us. But when we behold God’s love it changes and transforms us.

Thus, so much of the Christian life flows from remembering the love of God and remembering who we are because of the love of God. That’s one of the reasons why we receive the Lord’s Supper every week here at Redeemer Christian Church. We are remembering the love of God. We are remembering the cross, by which our names are written in heaven.

The old Puritans had a phrase that referred to experiencing the glorious security in God’s perfect love. They called it “blessed assurance.” As the old hymn says:

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene H. Peterson, [\*The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language\*](#) (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2005), Lk 10:20.

*“Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine  
O what a foretaste of glory divine  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God  
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood*

*Perfect submission, all is at rest  
I in my Savior am happy and blessed  
Watching and waiting, looking above  
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.”*

### **3.) Our Salvation is Revealed.**

We’ve seen the reason the seventy-two are rejoicing. We’ve seen the reason Jesus tells them they should be rejoicing. Now we will see the reason Jesus is rejoicing.

And it is the theme of rejoicing that unites this section of Scripture. In verse 17, the seventy-two return with “joy.” In verse, 20 Jesus uses the word “rejoice” twice. And in all three of these cases, these words are all derived from the same Greek word. That word is “*chara*” (χαρά). It is the most common word for “joy” in the New Testament.

However, in verse 21, when Jesus rejoices, there is totally different used. It is the Greek word “*agalliao*” (ἁγαλλιάω). It is a very rare and powerful word that means, “to be exceedingly joyful, exult, be glad, overjoyed.”<sup>7</sup>

And here Luke says that this joy is a joy that Jesus has in the Holy Spirit. In fact, this is a deeply Trinitarian passage. Here we see God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all together in this one passage rejoicing.

What is the reason for this joy? That at long last the mystery of the gospel of salvation is being revealed. And God is not revealing this salvation to the high and mighty, but to the meek and lowly. This shows that the salvation of the gospel is not something we earn through human achievement or power, but rather by the sheer sovereign grace God.

To rightly understand why the gospel is so astonishing, we must understand the utter holiness of God. He is infinite. He is eternal. He is transcendent and glorious and perfectly righteous in every way. But we are not; we are in bondage toward a worship of self that brings destruction to ourselves and all of creation. The Triune God has conspired to bring about salvation to people who are broken and bruised by sin. He has made a way to end the power of evil without ending us. At the cross God the Son will endure and defeat the power of death. And in his resurrection, he will make a way to truly know and share communion and life with God!

Truly, blessed are the eyes that have seen this salvation. Kings and prophets of old desired to witness this truth. But now we have the privilege of beholding it.

The Apostle Peter says it this way: *“Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that*

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<sup>7</sup> William Arndt et al., [\*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature\*](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 4.

*have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” (1 Peter 1:10–12, ESV)*

The word translated as “long” in this verse is elsewhere translated as “lust.” It is an intense longing and yearning that angels of heaven have toward the truth of God being revealed.

The angels are long to marvel at the mystery of the gospel. May we marvel and rejoice as well!

### **Conclusion**

I think it is important that these reasons for joy appear as Jesus is traveling on the road to Jerusalem. The road to Jerusalem, after all, is a road to suffering and death. And Jesus knows this very well.

But these reasons for joy are not based on temporary circumstances but on eternal realities. Jesus knows, and we can know, suffering will be endured. But the victory is sure. The cross is coming, but so is the resurrection.

To embrace these truths is to know an eternal rock of joy that is above our circumstances that change like the shifting sand. We will suffer in life, but our reasons for rejoicing are unshakable. If you are in Christ, know this: Our enemy is defeated. Our eternity is secure. Our salvation is revealed. These are reasons for rejoicing.

### **Community Group Discussion Starters**

- 1. Summarize Luke 10:17-24. In your own words, briefly describe what is happening and what is being taught in this passage.*
- 2. One theme that unites this passage is “joy.” In fact in the ESV, some version of the word “joy” or “rejoice” is used four times in a mere eight verses. What are the various reasons for joy in this passage?*
- 3. Why do you think many Christians today are not known by their joy?*
- 4. How might we proactively cultivate Christian joy in our daily lives? What habits or ways of thinking help us to have more joy?*

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