

The Church is a Body of Joy

“One day, two guys were talking at work and one of them began telling the other about all the problems he was having in his family.

And after awhile the other guy said, ‘Oh yeah? You think you got family problems? Well, that’s nothing! Listen to this.

A few years ago I met a young widow with a grown-up daughter and we got married. And after that, my father married my stepdaughter. So that made my stepdaughter my stepmother and my father became my stepson, and my wife became mother-in-law of her father-in-law.

But that’s not all! One day, the daughter of my wife, who is now my stepmother, had a son. Well, this made him my half-brother because he was my father's son. But it also made him the son of my wife's daughter and at the same time my wife's grandson, which now made me grandfather of my own half-brother.

Oh but that’s still not all! One day, my wife and I had a son, which made the sister of my son his grandmother and at the same time my mother-in-law. But not only that, it also made my father the brother-in-law of my own child, whose stepsister is now my father's wife.

And because of this, I became my stepmother's brother-in-law, my wife is her own child's aunt, my son is my father's nephew and now I’m my own grandpa!”

Now folks, depending what part of the country you come from, I know some of you may be thinking, “Hey Preacher! You’ve gone too far this time. That ain’t funny at all!” But besides that, I bet you’re also thinking that that family was just a **little bit mixed up**, you know what I’m saying? But folks, believe it or not, did you know there’s a family even more mixed

up than that one? And can anybody guess who that family is? Hey, that's right! It's the Family of God when we act like we've got **practical amnesia!** Talk about being mixed up!

Oh, we say we know who we are as the Church, but half the time, with our lips and with our lives, we act like we've forgotten who we are. And it's not only detrimental in our walk with Christ. It keeps others from believing in Christ. Therefore, to avoid this **atrocious** of Christian's living like they got practical amnesia by not knowing who they are, we're going to continue our study from the Word of God on the people of God entitled, **"Will the REAL Church Please Stand Up?"**

And we've already seen the **first thing** we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we've got practical amnesia is that the Church is the **Body of Christ**. The **second thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Brides**. The **third thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of One**. And last time we saw the **fourth thing** we need to know is that the Church is a **Body of Hope**. And there we saw, believe it or not, how the American Church is actually looking hopeless when the Bible says we should be hopeful. **Why?** Because we've forgotten that we've been given a **stable life**, a **super afterlife**, and an endless supply of **second chances in life**. And because of that, we're not only ceasing to be a Body of

Hope, we're actually turning into a Body of **despair** and **dum dums**. And I don't think that's the kind of Church Jesus came to die for, how about you?

But people, believe it or not, did you know that's not the only thing we need to know about the Church if we're going to stop acting like we got practical amnesia? The **fifth thing** we need to know is **The Church is a Body of Joy**. But hey, don't take my word for it. Let's listen to God's.

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

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. When you and I are obedient in our walk with God, we're not only filled with the love of God, we're filled with what? We're filled with **the joy of God**, right? And notice it wasn't just a little joy. It's so much joy that we're **completely filled with it** for all the world to see, right?

And here's my point. Surely, we all know that, right? I mean, surely every Christian who's ever lived knows that the Church is to be a **Body of Joy**, where people look at us and say, "Wow! Now there's a group of people who never get depressed and are always full of smiles," right? Well, you'd think so, but we've got some problems. **Why?** Because if you look at most Churches it doesn't look like we're shouting for joy for all the world to see.

Are you kidding! It looks like we're singing "gloom, despair, and agony on thee!"

So why in the world would Christians **look so joyless** when the Bible says we should **be so joyful**? Hey, great question. I'm glad you asked. It's pretty simple. The **first reason** we look so joyless is because we've **Lost the Joy of Our Salvation**.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 "Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vine; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the LORD! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. Even if our whole world is falling apart and crumbling all around us, we can still what? We can still rejoice in God? **Why**? Because our joy's not based on what happens to us **externally**. It's based on what happens to us **eternally**, right? It's based upon our salvation in God.

And people, **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we'd never lose the **joy of being saved**, right? I mean, surely being saved from eternal destruction in hell is enough to keep us smiling for the rest of our lives, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see Christians excited about their future place in

heaven. Are you kidding! It looks like **they're already planted six feet under!** Don't believe me? Just ask Oliver Wendell Holmes. He said this. "Hey, I might have entered the ministry if so many Christians didn't look and act they were undertakers."

But you might be thinking, "Okay, so I'm not the most positive person in the world. And maybe I've gotten a little down in the dumps over the years since I got saved. So what? What's the big deal?" Big deal? I'll tell you what the big deal is. What did we read in our text? It's the **joy of God's salvation** that keeps us positive no matter the negative, right? **Therefore**, if we lose that joy, guess what's going to happen? We'll become negative no matter the positive, right? And people, the next thing you know, you're going to end up like this one guy.

"Jim Smith went to Church service on Sunday morning. He heard the organist miss a note during the prelude, and he winced. He saw a teenager talking when everybody was supposed to be bowed in silent prayer. He felt like the usher was watching to see what he put in the offering plate and it made him boil.

He caught the preacher making a slip of the tongue five times in the sermon by actual count. As he slipped out through the side door during the closing hymn, he muttered to himself, 'Never again, what a bunch of clods and hypocrites!'

Ron Jones went to Church service one Sunday morning. He heard the organist play an arrangement of 'A Mighty Fortress' and he was thrilled at the majesty of it. He heard a young girl take a moment in the service to speak a simple message of how her faith had made a difference in her life.

He was glad to see that the Church was sharing in a special offering for the hungry children of Nigeria. He especially appreciated the sermon that Sunday—it answered a question that had bothered him for a long time.

He thought as he walked out the doors, ‘How can a man come here and not feel the presence of God?’

Both men went to the same Church service, on the same Sunday morning. And each one found what he was looking for.”

Now folks, I know this might be a rough question, but how many of you would say that first guy probably lost the joy of his salvation? And because of that he got just a little bit negative, right? ? Uh huh, slightly! And people, **the point is this**. A life of negativity will not only ruin you’re reality, but it’ll give a rotten impression of Christianity! **Why?** Because when we live like that, we’re not just ceasing to be a Body of Joy. We’re acting like a **Body of Depression**. And I don’t know about you, but if that’s all I ever saw from Christians, I’d never want to be one, how about you?

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second reason** we look so joyless is because we’ve **Lost Our Trust in God’s Provision**.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. We can not only be full of joy once in a while but what? We can be full of joy **all the while**. **How?** By not only giving up prayers to God, but what? In giving up thanks to God, right? **Why?** Because our joy’s not based on **external**

circumstances. It's based on God **Who's in control of our circumstances,** right?

And people, **the point is this.** Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that God is faithful to give us **not necessarily what we want** but certainly what we need and so were always joyful and thankful no matter what, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You don't see Christians full of excitement over the way God orders their life. Are you kidding! It looks like they've been sucking the end off of an exhaust pipe! Don't believe me? Just ask Billy Sunday. He said this. "To see some Christians you'd think an essential to being one is to have a face so long you could eat oatmeal out of the end of a gas pipe."

But you might be thinking, "Okay, so I'm not the most thankful person in the world. And maybe I've gotten a little bit ungrateful over the years since I got saved, so what? What's the big deal?" Big deal? I'll tell you what the big deal is. What did our text say? It's a **trust in God's provision** that keeps us what? It keeps us joyful and thankful no matter the circumstance, right? **Therefore,** if we lose that trust, guess what's going to happen? We'll become thankless even though we should be **thankful,** right? And once we do that, our joy goes right out the window! And to show you

how easy it is for us to slip into this **unhealthy mode of thinking**, we're going to take a little test. Let's see if we can remember just how to be thankful.

1. If you find yourself stuck in traffic, don't get upset. Think of the people in the world where driving is an unheard privilege.
2. If you have a bad day at work, then think of the person who's been out of work for years.
3. If you despair over a relationship gone bad, then think of the person who has never known what it's like to be loved in return.
4. If you grieve the passing of another weekend, then think of the woman in dire straits, working twelve hours a day, seven days a week to feed her children.
5. If your car should break down, leaving you miles away from assistance, then think of the paraplegic who would love the opportunity to take that walk.
6. If you should notice a new gray hair in the mirror, then think of the cancer patient in chemotherapy who wishes they had hair to examine at all.
7. If you find yourself the victim of other people's bitterness, ignorance, smallness or insecurities, then think about it. Things could be worse. You could be one of them.

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say **if you stop to think about it**, there really is no reason to be ungrateful and lose our joy is there? In fact, I'd say God's doing a pretty **good job** providing for us after all, right? And people, **the point is this**. A life of ungratefulness will not only ruin you're reality, but it'll give a rotten impression of Christianity! **Why?**

Because when we live like that, we're not just ceasing to be a Body of Joy. We're acting like a **Body of Whiners**. And I don't know about you, but if that's all I ever saw from Christians, I'd never want to be one, how about you?

Oh, but that's not all. The **third reason** we look so joyless is because we've forgotten we've **Lost Our Sense of Celebration**.

Acts 2:44,46-47 "And all the believers met together constantly and shared everything they had. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity. Everyone liked them, and each day the Lord added to their group others who were being saved."

Now folks, according to our text, the Bible is clear. The early Church not only shared good food with each other, but they shared what? They shared **great joy** with each other, right? And because of this what happened? Every single day God was saving tons of people, right? **Why?** Because stop and think about it people! Who in the world wouldn't want to be a Christian if **you not only** saw them full of joy here and there, but you saw them full of joy everywhere, right?

And **the point is this**. Surely the American Church knows this, right? I mean, surely we know that when we gather together it's a time to **celebrate** and sing for joy, right? People, are you kidding! I mean, you've been there. You go into the average Church service today and what do you see? You

don't see the Family of God celebrating His salvation and control in their life. Are you kidding! You see them cold and stiff as if they had no life!

But you might be thinking, "Okay, so I'm not the most enthusiastic person in the world when I go to Church services. And maybe I've lost a little bit of that excitement I had when I first got saved, so what? What's the big deal?" Big deal? I'll tell you what the big deal is. Have you ever been in a Church service that's devoid of joy? It doesn't look a praise service. **It looks like a funeral service!** Therefore, in order to make sure that doesn't happen to us, I'm going to share with story a Christian and his day in the world and you tell me if they still have their **sense of celebration** in life.

"I got on an elevator in a high rise apartment in New York City and it was filled with dead people! Did you ever get on an elevator with dead people who are just standing there dead?"

As the elevator doors closed I said to myself, 'Who are these dead people? Maybe I'm dead. If we're dead, where are we going?' I was relieved when the elevator went up!

When the door closed, I did what you're not supposed to do. I turned and faced the crowd. Now, people are used to getting on elevators and turning to face the door and looking up to stare at the numbers. So the next time you get on an elevator, get on, turn around and face everyone and smile. It blows them away. They do not know how to handle this.

And I said to these people, 'Lighten up! It's a seventy-fifth floor express and we're going to be traveling together for a while.'

And these sophisticated New Yorkers started to back up away from me so I said, 'What do you say...we sing!' And these suckers were so intimidated by

me...they did! I mean you should have been there. They started singing, 'You are my sunshine, my only sunshine.'

I got off at the seventieth floor and this guy got off with me and I asked, 'Are you going to the same meeting I'm going to?' And he said, 'No...I just wanted to finish the song!'

Please people. Please understand. The world is dead and I consider it my God-given responsibility to resurrect the dead wherever I go!"

Now folks, I know this might be a tough question, but how many of you guys would say that Christian still has their **sense of celebration** in life?

And by the way, how many of you guys are going to try that the next time you get on an elevator? Uh huh, sure. But people, stop and think about it.

Isn't that the way we should walk around in life? I mean, shouldn't we be full of so much joy that God uses us to raise the dead wherever we go?

Why? Because we've got reasons to **celebrate!** We're not going to hell.

We're going to heaven. And God's not only in control of our afterlife, He's in control of this life! **Therefore**, we should be celebrating twenty-four

hours a day, right?

But people, let's be honest. How many Christians do you know like that? Or worse yet, how many Church services have you been to that **celebrate** like that? And if you still don't think **losing your sense of celebration** is a big deal, then maybe you should hear what Phillip Brooks said. He said, "The religion that makes a man look sick certainly won't cure

the world.” **Why?** Because stop and think about it! Who in the world would ever want to be a Christian if all they ever saw were Church services full of dead people?

And people, that’s why if we can’t stop **playing Church** instead of being the Church then maybe it’s time to **get out of the Church? Why?** Because being a Christian is not a game. What we say and do literally affects the eternal destiny of people around us. Therefore, it’s high time we get rid of our **practical amnesia**. We’ve got to remember who we are! We’re not a bunch of lifeless dead people. Are you kidding! We are the Church of Jesus Christ. We are a **Body of Joy!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God’s Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”
