

The Gospel According to Luke / “Joy at the Bottom of it All”

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In the massively popular video game, Minecraft, which my youngest son Ezra is a big fan of, the world is made of blocks. If you don't know what Minecraft is, imagine a world made of legos. Blocks that fit together. Blocks of dirt, stone, diamond, gold, coal. You build block houses and mine in block caves and avoid block lava. The people, the animals, the monsters you fight. They are made of blocks too.

And in Minecraft, you can build a world and you can tear it apart. With the correct block shaped tool in your blocky hands you can tear apart everything.

Except one thing: Bedrock.

At the bottom of the world there is one thing that separates you from falling into an endless video game void of nothing where there is no world. At the bottom there is a layer of indestructible bedrock, 5 blocks thick. Everything else can be destroyed, but the bedrock cannot.

Today in our passage we encounter a joyful Jesus who, for the sake of his disciples and us today, reveals the bedrock of a life of Joy.

The foundational element that cannot be destroyed and upon which every other aspect of our ability to worship and work, coming alongside God in his gospel mission, is established.

It's found in v.20 of our passage today. Jesus says this:

20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

For followers of Jesus, this is the reordering idea for every success and failure. This is the given, the assumption, the foundation, the bedrock. At the bottom of everything, through Jesus, we have joy and joy that goes on forever in salvation.

And this is our big idea for today:

Because Jesus Rejoices Over Our Salvation, Nothing Will Stand in the Way of Our Rejoicing Forever

And in the three sections of our passage today we're going to see three things:

1. The Foundation of our Joy is Salvation
2. The Foundation of our Salvation is God's Gracious Will
3. God's Grace is Most Clearly Seen In Jesus

Let's read our passage in full one more time and see how all of this builds together and see what might God might have for us here today.

Luke 10:17-24

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” 18 And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 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. 20

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

21 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. 22 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."

23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! 24 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."

So last week as Jonathan preached the seventy-two were sent out and now they have returned. By all accounts, it appears that their mission trip to go ahead of Jesus towards Jerusalem proclaiming the King and the Kingdom of God was a great success. All they say about it is: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"

This was obviously the capstone of the trip. The most exciting thing in their minds that had happened. But let's go back for a second and see what their mission was. Because if the demons are subjected to them at the name of Jesus and that's like the pinnacle of their success, then it's reasonable to assume that every other part of their trip was a great success as well.

So what were they asked to do?

Luke 10:1-11

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. 2 And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. 4 Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. 5 Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' 6 And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. 8 Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.'

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So they go, they tell people about God's kingdom and heal people to show what that kingdom is like. When they come back, they return rejoicing. There is a lot about the trip that they were probably anxious about before they went. Jesus didn't sugarcoat what might be difficult. But by putting these disciples in the position where they had to trust in him, rely on him to accomplish their task, Jesus has shown that he knows what he's doing and that he understands the power of his name and the Kingdom of God. And in the midst of their joy, Jesus rejoices with them.

Luke 10:17-18

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

As the Kingdom of God was being proclaimed, the Kingdom of Satan is falling. As the Good news of the gospel goes forward, the bad news of sin and all its effects are losing their power. And while claiming victory over the spiritual powers of darkness is exhilarating, Jesus in this section takes the opportunity to point to the bedrock of where the disciples joy should rest. This is our first point for today.

1. The Foundation of our Joy is Salvation

Mission and ministry success is good, Jesus agrees, but Salvation is even better. Satan losing is good, but our gain of an eternally restored relationship with God is better. Jesus thinks that the object of our focus is important. Again, here's how he puts it in v. 17-20.

Luke 10:17-20

17 The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" 18 And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 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. 20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Think again about the trip this disciples are coming back from. After an experience like that it would be really easy to begin to think that what is really important is all of the things that we can do for God. Jesus wants to gently correct focus. When we compare the things we do for God vs. the things that God has done for us, there's not contest.

- The 72 were obedient to go despite the danger - But it was God who protected them and promises to still protect them in the future from both spiritual attack and earthly attacks from venomous creatures on the road.
- The 72 left with no provision - But it was God who provided for their needs with homes to meet in and food to eat.
- They proclaimed the coming Kingdom of God - God revealed what his kingdom is like through, miracles and healing in Jesus name.
- And in Jesus name the 72 had authority over the demons and the power of the enemy - But it is God who has written their names in heaven and delivered them from hell.

We will try to find rest in someone's achievements. We don't have an option not too. We will try to have our longings and needs satisfied by someone's achievements. The question is will we depend on Christ's achievements or our own. How is your heart hoping to be satisfied? By what you have accomplished or by what God has accomplished? Are we more impressed by what we do for God or the things God has done for us? What are you more amazed by: Results or by Grace?

It matters where our greatest hope is found. It matters that the foundation of our joy is salvation. Jesus thinks that the greatest miracle is that unworthy and unrighteous sinners can become righteous children of God. He wants us to think the same. So as you are tempted in mission and ministry to let your focus shift to results based pragmatism, rest that Christ in his salvation, offered as a gift, has done more for you than you will ever do for him.

When we evangelize, when we meet to disciple others, when we have the hard conversation or patiently help the difficult person, we can do it all in light of an unfading joy that isn't dependent on whether or not we can point to an immediate success. Christ has been successful and because he is sovereign over all he will continue to be successful according to his intentions and purposes. And he graciously calls us to labor with him not to earn joy and approval but because of joy and approval.

As we move on in our text today, we're actually not moving very far. Everything in this passage is happening at a single moment in time. Our next section begins "in that same hour". And the joy continues. The 72 returned with joy and now we get a glimpse into mind, the prayer life, the inner thoughts of Jesus. And Jesus rejoices because:

2. The Foundation of our Salvation is God's Gracious Will

Let's pick up at verse 21 and see what Jesus is thankful for as his followers return.

Luke 10:21-22

21 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. 22 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."

So the disciples have come back rejoicing but now Jesus rejoices. This is a beautiful passage where we see a couple really cool things. We see the trinity in this moment of prayer, Jesus is filled with joy by the Holy Spirit and he prays to the Father. In his prayer we have Jesus thanking the Father for both hiding and revealing the Gospel to people and saying that "no one knows who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." So while the sovereignty of God is present in multiple places throughout the scriptures, here we have it very clearly articulated by Jesus himself and Jesus' response to God's sovereignty over revealing salvation is a bubbling over Joy. Lastly this part concludes much like other passages we've read recently where Jesus over and over again is instructing us that to know him is to know the Father. That if you know Jesus you know the Father.

My prayer as I've been preparing this sermon for the last couple weeks has been that we would rejoice over what Jesus rejoices over. And I don't mean in a passing way or fleeting way. I mean in way that might change the level of joy that we have when we read the Bible, pray, evangelize so we might follow Jesus with grateful hearts in every area of our lives.

I mentioned earlier that my son loves the game Minecraft. He builds and he creates and he rejoices over his creations. And I can rejoice with him. I can enter into his joy as he opens his heart to me and I can become joyful as I see what brings him joy through his eyes. Alternatively, I could say "That's nice, but I'm busy. Please stop bothering me you little nugget."

So when our Lord and Savior rejoices over something, especially when we consider that the reason he's heading towards Jerusalem is to die, when Joy is produced by the Holy Spirit, Joy that is not dependent

on circumstances - we should take note - because we will need this kind of joy. Maybe you don't need it now, but you will. When the Lord Jesus opens his heart to us and invites us to enter into his joy, we would be foolish to not. We would be missing out.

My primary role here at the church is as the Worship Pastor and something I think about a lot is that the songs that we sing should help us to know right things about God. More than that, at their best, they help us to feel right things about God. They help us to rightly express our sorrows over sin, our longing for heaven, and our joy at being restored to God through Jesus as he took the punishment for our sins and covered us in his righteousness. So like good song, I want us to rejoice with Christ today as he rejoices in God's gracious will being worked in salvation. I want us to rejoice that God is sovereign over salvation. Because it will make our hearts grateful to God in a profound way and provide a fuel for worship that will not burn out.

Let's turn again to verse 21

Luke 10:21

21 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."

Now anytime Jesus prays and it's been recorded for us, it's important. And this is not only for our knowledge of its content but, in a practical sense, for how we should pray ourselves. Let me ask you a question, how did you learn to pray? Did you learn at home with parents who prayed with you? Was there someone in your life who disciplined you or mentored you in the faith? Are you really new to the practice of praying and you kind of don't know where to begin?

After being around the church for most of my life, I have become aware of the fact that people pray like the people who taught them how to pray. So if you learned from someone who was really casual in their prayers, you probably are pretty casual with your language as well. If you learned to pray from someone who used reverent and majestic language in their prayers that maybe made them sound like they had come from a different time, you're probably praying in an elevated style of language as well.

If the person who taught you to pray said "um" or "just" a lot as they were thinking about what to say next while praying, you just might, um, pray just like, um, that. And, yes, I'm making fun a little, but I say just and um. We're all learning this together.

But isn't it wonderful when we can learn about how to pray from Jesus himself. What I see here and in other places in scripture is that one good way to pray would mean that we pray to God the Father, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, in the Holy Spirit, through Jesus our savior.

It's such a simple thing, but praying to God with a thoughtfulness about his triune nature, (that he is One God but three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) will produce in us greater wonder, thankfulness, and even worship as we meditate on how each person of the trinity has worked in our salvation and in our knowledge of God. And God's work in Salvation is exactly what Jesus is praying about here.

Luke 10:21b-22

"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."

22 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."

Remember, Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to die in the place of unworthy sinners and this is what he calls God's gracious will. Sin separated us from God. We all suffered under its effects. We all were destined to die. We all were under God's wrath. As Romans 3:10-12 puts it

Romans 3:10-12

*10 "None is righteous, no, not one;
11 no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
12 All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."*

We can only be saved by grace if no one deserves to be saved. For if someone could be saved by their own efforts, there would be no need for grace. There would be no need for Jesus to die in our place. But no one is righteous. No not one. And those who think they are, the wise and the understanding that Jesus is talking about here are in great danger. Anyone who thinks that they do not need God's grace is in great danger. Those who are proud of their self-righteous works will be judged by them. Those who live as if there is no God will not be rescued by him. Those who believe there is no need to be saved from the eternal consequences of sin will not be.

As I was preparing for today I read in a commentary a very sobering thought:

"When men are eternally lost, it is because they have chosen to reject God's revelation and His provision for salvation in Jesus Christ. Why do lost sinners go to hell? They perish because they have not chosen God. They also perish because God has not chosen to rescue them from their sin and rebellion. In the simplest terms, men go to hell not only because God decreed it, but because they deserve it."

The truth is that without the mercy of God, we all deserved this. That's how bad the situation is. We have all been proud. We have all lived like there is no God. And we have all believed in one way or another that we could save ourselves. If we only had enough money, or comfort, or education, or sex, or power, status, influence - we'd be happy, satisfied, safe, secure - without God, the Lords of our own lives.

When Jesus rejoices that "these things", that the Salvation of God through Jesus, is hidden from the wise and understanding, he's rejoicing that sin will be punished. He is rejoicing that God is just.

So think about the injustices in the world. Maybe think about the ways that our legal systems can get things wrong. Think about all of the situations where no judgment, no sentencing will do. When a child is murdered, when a woman is brutally raped, when people are kidnapped and trafficked. When the verdicts come in, do they bring back a life, or innocence or years?

On the flip side, what about the injustice of a life being irreparably harmed by a wrongful conviction. Can you imagine the injustice of that?

Thank God that he is just and that sin is punished.
In this world our systems can fail to bring justice, but he will not. He is perfectly just.

Now the wise and the understanding in this passage refer most directly to the Jewish leaders and legal experts of Jesus' day. The scribes and the Pharisees. We hear about them a lot in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These were the ones who everyone thought had it all together and who used their false righteousness to influence and control others through spiritual abuse and manipulation for the sake of monetary gain, power and even how it made them feel. They really did think they were better than everyone else and that people needed to be like them to come near to God. These are also the very people who will plot and succeed in a plan to convince the Roman government to execute Jesus so that his message of salvation might be silenced.

And Jesus thanks the Father that the gospel is hidden from them.

And yet, in the same breath, Jesus thanks God for hiding as well as revealing. For such was the Father's his gracious will.

Though we all deserved God's wrath, Christ rejoices that there are names written in heaven. The names of his "little children". These are the disciples, the 72 followers who just came back from their mission trip, those who responded to the Gospel in the towns and villages along the way to Jerusalem. This includes us today. The word "Christian" means little christ. And the scripture often call followers of Jesus "children of God".

And Jesus is rejoicing because the children are getting the Father. Those who know their need and who see Christ as their only hope, to those people, Jesus is revealing the mercy of God. This is the least being the greatest. The ones who need God, get God. Jesus rejoices over being the revealer of God's grace.

The author of Hebrews says in

Hebrews 12:2

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.

What is Jesus' Joy there? It's doing the will of the Father and saving you because of his great love for you! And if Christ has revealed salvation to you, why? Why you? There are a few reasons.

A) The first reason is that it brings glory to God. God is glorified in salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

We can't save ourselves and God has chosen us to show the glories of his mercy, his power, his sovereignty, his love, his wisdom, his authority, and his goodness.

B) If you're a believer, the second reason that Jesus has revealed salvation to you is that Jesus loves us. God has always chosen a people for himself and he calls the church his bride. He has pursued us. He has wooed us. He lays down his life for us. He dies in our place for the will of the Father and because of

his love for us. Why does he love us? Because he does! Just as a man and a woman choose and commit to love one another in a marriage, Christ has chosen the church as the object of his love.

Ephesians 5:25-29

25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.

Romans 5:8

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:9-10

9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Thanks be to God for his choosing love. We have done nothing to deserve it. If you think you have, think again. We don't obey God for the sake of receiving blessings. We obey because we are already blessed. God doesn't owe you something for your good behavior. He's not a genie we can conjure with our works or the right incantation. We love him because he loved us first. You've got to get the order right. There is great joy in obedience, discipleship, giving and service but it will only be there in a way that lasts if those things are done in light of and response to the salvation you've already received.

C) And lastly Jesus reveals Salvation to us because without his intervention we could not be saved. Ephesians 2:4-5 says we're dead in sin. Incapable of turning to God.

Ephesians 2:4-10

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Jesus himself says in

John 6:44

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.

No one can come unless the Father draws them. Praise God if he has or if he is. Our prayers for the lost should include praying that our merciful God would draw unbelievers to repentance.

And again Jesus says

John 6:55

65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

Lastly in

Philippians 1:6

6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Who began the good work in you? Who will complete what he started? If our salvation depended on us, on our works and our faithfulness, we would always be looking over our spiritual shoulder wondering if an angry God is behind us. Jesus is the one who began the good work of faith in your life and he is the one who will bring it to completion. He has already taken all of the wrath of God for those who put their trust in him. There is no wrath left. We can grow in our relationship with the Father, stumbling like children towards the goal with faith instead of fear because of Jesus.

Jesus is the founder and perfecter of our faith because like it says in Luke 10:22

Luke 10:22

22 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."

The Father reveals the Son, the Son reveals the Father and we are blessed because to know Jesus is to know the Father. To be restored through Jesus is have your name written in heaven by the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Praise God for his mercy to us. This language may seem familiar. Language like this has come up two other times in our study of Luke.

In

Luke 9:48

And he said to them "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

Those who receive Jesus get the Father, because Jesus and the Father are one.

In

Luke 10:16

The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

To reject Jesus is to reject the Father, because Jesus and the Father are one.

And again in our text today

Luke 10:22

22 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."

To see the Son is to have the Son revealed. And if the Son is revealed to you, you know the Father. You know his heart. You know his mercy. Today is the day of salvation. Every time the gospel is preached people are either amazed by the grace of God or they think that they would do things better if they were in his position. Through Jesus, God is both just and the justifier. All sins are dealt with as they must be and yet the Father shows mercy to everyone who humbles themselves, confesses their sin and trusts in Christ to be their righteousness. This is what faith is, and it is a gift from God.

Today the joy of having your sins forgiven and being restored to God has been set before you. And I want to encourage you, if a message like this is hard for you, before you worry about all of the hypothetical ways that you don't understand or may not like the idea of God's sovereignty in salvation, understand this:

To walk away from what Christ offers would be your choice and your desire. While I would plead with you and say that your decision has eternal consequences that are far more serious than you might have thought through, it is really you that is making this decision. You are not a robot nor are you or a pawn in a game. Trusting in Christ for your salvation is something you actually have to do.

On the other side, if you come to God in repentance, convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit, trusting in your heart that Jesus has died and paid the penalty for your sin and that in his name you can be forgiven and restored to God; that is a miracle of the highest order, orchestrated by the gracious will of the Father himself because of his love for you, and this was Jesus' joy as he laid down his life on the cross in your place.

And that should bring us a joy that lasts forever, because God has done something in our hearts that we could not do on our own.

Let's finish our passage for today.

Our last part of text today follows Jesus' prayer and is an encouragement to his disciples and to us today.

Turn to

Luke 10:23-24

23 Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! 24 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."

And our last point for today is that

3. God's Grace is Most Clearly Seen In Jesus

Have you ever been in the right place at the right time?

Some seemingly random events came together and it has had an impact on your life from that moment on.

Maybe it has to do with meeting your spouse or the person you are dating. Maybe it has to do with your own story of salvation and a single conversation with a friend, co-worker or parent that changed everything for you.

For me it has to do with not having my two front teeth in fourth grade. Because fourth grade in the New York City public school was when you took a test to see if you had enough musical aptitude to be in a part of band classes. Somehow I passed the test. What happened was that the band teacher, Mr. Caspari, had everybody write down on a piece of paper the three instruments that you were most interested in playing. The first being the one you wanted to play the most, to the third being the one you were least interested in. My first choice was saxophone. Which, I mean, our worship band would be a whole lot cooler and weirder if I played the saxophone. My second instrument was trumpet and my third pick was drums. With no front teeth in fourth grade I simply could not play any instruments you had to blow into. My mouth wouldn't have formed the right shapes.

From that point on, I played drums in concert bands, jazz bands, marching bands, garage bands, and worship bands for the next 11 years. My love of music grew and I went to a music college on a partial scholarship and while I was there I understood the Gospel clearly and was saved, like immediately and indelibly changed and after getting saved the Lord put a desire in my heart to minister in churches. So I changed schools to receive training and got a full scholarship, I met my wife at the new school (on a blind date no less) and now 15 years later we have three kids and somehow I ended up in Montana, preaching, which is something I never thought I'd ever be doing and somehow it's all because I didn't have my two front teeth in fourth grade.

God's sovereignty is weird. I'm sure you have your own stories of how he's taken you through situations you never imagined to bring you to where you are today.

And the point of my story is that the Jesus rejoices because the disciples were at the right place at the right time. You cannot forget that these are, for the most part, a bunch of uneducated fisherman. These people are no different than you or me and yet here they are, walking the earth with God in the flesh seeing Satan's kingdom crumble before their eyes, and seeing the kingdom of God and all its majesty break into the earth. To know Jesus is to know the Father and these guys got to walk and eat and talk with him daily. Jesus tells them "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! 24 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."

Prophets and Kings. In the Jewish tradition there is literally no more of a privileged and revered class of people than the prophets and the kings. Yet, who does the good news of salvation come to? Peter, John, James. A bunch of fisherman, Matthew, a tax collector, Simon, a religious zealot. There are no prophets or kings in this group.

There are no prophets or kings among us today in the room, but I can tell you, full of faith in the power of God and in the message of new life that is held out for us in the Gospel of Jesus, we are in an even more privileged position than the disciples today. We know the whole story. We see how God's grace is most clearly seen in Jesus. We know that Jesus really does conquer sin and death and we know that all that he requires of us to enter his kingdom is faith.

My application today is simple: Believe and rejoice.

For those who have been believers for a long time, believe again and rejoice. Believe all the more and rejoice. Marvel and see Jesus for who he is. God's grace to us is most clearly seen in Jesus. Our lord and savior, and the only one who could make things right between us and God by living the perfectly obedient life we could not live, taking the punishment that we deserved and, in love, granting to us his righteousness so that we might draw near to God and enjoy him forever. However you feel about God's sovereignty in Salvation, understand that today you have an opportunity to turn to Christ. You've heard that trusting in Jesus is the solution for our problem with sin and that through him we can live lives that

are pleasing to God and full of Joy. Turn to Christ and find him faithful. Turn again and again and renew your joy again and again. If you turn to Christ, Jesus promises he will never turn away from you. Jesus rejoices over our Salvation and he will carry us through every trial and struggle so that we might arrive at the destination of joy forevermore.

We all need help with this. Not only does the living God want to help you grow in your relationship with him, promising that his very spirit will be with you, every member of this church does. If you need help or have questions, I or anyone else who has been a believer for a while would love to talk with you.

If you are tired and weary: Rest and rejoice.

Rest in knowing that Jesus has done everything required to save sinners and restore us to God. Don't compare your growth to anyone's. Your story will be different than everyone else's and the only thing that will be the same between all of us is that God will get all the glory for the salvation he accomplished.

Jesus rejoices over our salvation and he is the sovereign God who has written our names in heaven from before the foundation of the world. When we remember this, live in light of it, it provides an indestructible bedrock of Joy. Because of God's sovereignty in salvation we can be completely sure that one day, everything will be made right. One day, we will see Jesus and our struggle with sin will end. While this life will take us to wonderful and difficult places we would have never expected to go, there is nothing that catches our Heavenly Father by surprise and bit by bit, he is using it all to conform us more and more into the likeness of his Son for our good and his glory as he prepares us for a life of endless joy in eternity with him. Amen.