

Hope Christian Church
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Sermon Series: *Jesus Said What?*



Ask...That Your Joy May Be Full

Magnifying Your Joy in Jesus Through Persistent Prayer

John 16:22-24 (ESV)

²² "So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Opening Prayer

Father, please awaken us to the full meaning of these words. Give us understanding so that we can walk in the truth of what Jesus is teaching. Remove any doubt within us that would keep from believing this promise and then acting on it. Remove any sinful selfishness that would keep us from having our prayers answered. Give us a holy hunger for the fullness of joy that is offered to us in these words. Give us ears to hear the call of God to find our joy in Jesus. Give us a passion for the kind of prayer to which you are calling your people through these words.

Introduction

It is part of our spiritual rhythm here at Hope church to begin each new year by focusing on the topic of prayer. This remains our intention this morning. Prior to Advent and Christmas we were in a sermon series entitled, "Jesus said what?" This morning we return to that series by blending our annual spiritual rhythm with some of the shocking statements Jesus made about prayer. We will primarily focus on John 16:23-24, in which Jesus says,

John 16:23-24 (ESV)

²³ *"Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."*

The words 'truly, truly,' alert us to the fact that what Jesus is about to say is a solemn fact. By these doubled words, he intends to seize your attention. He's verbally grabbing you by the lapel and looking into your eyes. He's asking you to put down your cell phone and stop texting while he's talking. He's inviting you to put away all your doubts and worries and focus your mind on his words and his teaching.

These are breathtaking words. Whatever we ask the Father in the name of Jesus, will be given to us. The reason God will answer the request made to him in the name of his Son is so that our joy may be full.

This is a stunning command,

"Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Are you prepared to obey this command this year?

When I hear these words, my soul cries out, "Jesus said what? You're telling us to ask for anything in Your name and we'll get it so that our joy will be full?" This is my aim in the sermon this morning. I want you to believe this statement with all your heart and let it be the foundation of your prayer life in 2016. The goal toward which I am shooting is *magnifying your*

personal experience of joy in Jesus by awakening within your soul a fervor for persistent prayer.

I yearn for 2016 to be for you, and for me—and for our church, a fresh, new chapter in our prayer lives. I dream of knowing and experiencing a joyful and sweet life of prayer such as I and you have never known. This is not a pipe dream. It's God's expressed intention for prayer. He intends that his answering our prayers, offered to him through the name of Jesus, should make us full of joy. This is what we see in the Scripture passage that was just read to us.

Setting Up the Context

Lets get a little of the context of these words before us. Jesus spoke these words just a few hours before he would be arrested by a mob and then brutalized and murdered on a cross. He was preparing his disciples for the most painful day in their lives. In preparing them to endure this intense time of grief and sorrow, he fortified them with an incredible promise of fullness of joy. At the same time, he was instructing them about one of the purposes of prayer and he was commanding them to pray. *The way to be sustained through sorrow and to be filled with joy is to pray to God the Father in the name of Jesus.*

Four Observations from these verses:

- 1) Jesus intends that his disciples experience fullness of joy.
- 2) Fullness of joy comes through the doorway of sorrow.
- 3) Fullness of joy is delivered down the pathway of persistent prayer.
- 4) The kind of prayer that brings fullness of joy is prayer in Jesus' name.

1) Jesus Intends His Disciples Experience Fullness of Joy

Jesus wants his disciples to experience fullness of joy. Notice the prevalence of joy in this passage. Jesus mentions joy five times in these eight verses (16:16-24) alone. He mentions it a total of seven time throughout the discourse. Just a few minutes before this, Jesus had said that everything he was teaching them in these moments was in order to fill them with his joy.

John 15:11 (ESV)

¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

This was part of his final prayer which he prayed with them on that night, just before he was arrested.

John 17:13 (ESV)

¹³ But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

Jesus intends for his disciples to be filled with joy. Fullness of joy is God's eternal will for all his people.

Psalms 16:11 (ESV)

*¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

It is the will of the Lord that his disciples experience fullness of joy. He communicated this desire repeatedly in his final words with them.¹

2) Fullness of Joy Comes Through the Doorway of Sorrow

We enter into fullness of joy through the doorway of sorrow. Jesus is explaining to his disciples that something was about to happen which would bring them great sorrow and yet would cause the world to rejoice. However, this painful situation would shortly be turned around when something else would happen which would cause the disciples to rejoice and the world to experience sorrow.

Jesus was talking about his death and resurrection. As Jesus was crucified and died, the disciples would be filled with sorrow while the world would be filled with joy. However, upon seeing him resurrected—"in a little while"—the disciples would be filled with joy, while the world would be filled sorrow.

The kind of joy that Jesus offers his people is not the kind that only exists in the absence of sorrow. It is the kind of joy that is intensified through the experience of sorrow. The disciples were joyful and secure with Jesus while he was alive. Yet, when they saw him resurrected, their joy was intensified a 100-fold because their comprehension and experience of his power and ability was magnified by the fact of his victory, not just over the human enemies who put him to death, but over the most powerful enemy anyone will ever face—death itself. The joy in Jesus that they experienced after his resurrection far surpassed the joy they experienced in him before his death.

I believe this is the testimony of all of God's children who have experienced the power of his presence through suffering. There is one kind of joy in Jesus that we experience when there are no problems in life and all is well. However, there is a much deeper and sweeter experience of joy in Jesus when we discover his sustaining grace and power to carry us safely through the valley of the shadow of death. Even if that means losing our lives.

¹ Jn 15:11, 16:20, 21, 22, 24; 17:13.

I am reminded of the words of a 24 year-old terminal cancer patient named Troy Turner who said as he lay dying, "I would rather have cancer and Jesus, than a cancer-free life without Jesus." The fullness of joy that Jesus gives to his children comes to us through the doorway of sorrow.

3) Fullness of Joy Delivered Down Pathway of Persistent Prayer

The fullness of joy that Jesus desires that we experience, is delivered to us down the pathway of persistent prayer. When Jesus talks about experiencing fullness of joy, he notes that it comes through "**asking the Father.**" We see this in both verse 23 and 24. This "asking the Father" is prayer. Jesus is talking about praying.

Prayer is the means to experiencing fullness of joy. Jesus says in verse 24, "*Ask, and you will receive, so that your joy may be full.*" Anyone who yearns to experience this fullness of joy must first "ask." Prayer is the prerequisite for fullness of joy. Without praying, there will be no fullness of joy.

We should recall that Jesus also taught his disciples to pray persistently. Luke records a parable Jesus told about an unrighteous judge and a persistent widow (Lk 18:1-8). At the beginning of the parable Luke explains its purpose.

Luke 18:1 (ESV)

¹ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

There's no doubt about why Jesus told this parable. He intended to teach his disciples to be persistent in prayer and not give up. The unrighteous judge cared nothing about justice nor about this poor widow. Yet she kept coming to him repeatedly and asking him to give her justice against her adversary. Finally, the unrighteous judge becomes so weary of her requests that he grants her justice. Jesus summarizes: if a unrighteous human judge will grant a just request, then how much more will a righteous God give justice to his elect, his own children, "**who cry** [i.e. pray] **to him day and night**" (Lk 18:7).

(Luke 18:7 ESV)

⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

God expects his chosen people to cry out to him, to pray to him day and night. We are to persistently pray. The point is we are never to give up praying for just causes. God is a just God. He is not lacking in moral character such that he needs our encouragement to "do the right thing." The difference comes down to timing. God's timing for doing some just thing might be different from ours. The question is not *if* this or that just thing ought to happen, but *when* this or that just thing ought to happen. It is through prayer that we become convinced of

God's timing over against our own. Jesus teaches us to pray always and not to lose heart. We are never to give up praying for just causes. Jesus said a very similar thing in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:7-11 (ESV)

⁷ "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹ Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him."

The point is the same. Don't stop praying. God will give you what is good for you, so don't stop asking him for it. And along the way, through continual prayer, you might change your mind about what is good for you and what is not.

If evil people know how to give good gifts to their children, then how much more does a good God know how to give good gifts to his children who ask him. He does know how and he will give good things because God has wonderfully good intentions for his children.

God wills that his children experience fullness of joy and he wills to deliver that fullness of joy through persistent prayer. So, *"Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."*

And here we begin to doubt. Does Jesus really mean what he is saying here?

John 16:23-24 (ESV)

²³ "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

Whatever we ask, he will give it? Is that what he is saying?

Almost. But not quite.

4) Fullness of Joy Comes Only Through Prayer in Jesus' Name

Actually, what Jesus is saying is, "Whatever you ask of the Father **in my name**, he will give it to you." The key to asking, then receiving, and then experiencing fullness is joy, is how you ask. The key to experiencing fullness of joy is making your request to the Father **in the name of Jesus**. Fullness of joy comes to us through prayer offered to God the Father *through the name of Jesus*.

But what does it mean to pray in Jesus' name? Does it mean merely adding the phrase "in the name of Jesus" at the end of every prayer? There is no prayer in the New Testament that includes at the end of it, the phrase "in Jesus' name, amen." It is not necessary to say that phrase at the end of every prayer.

However, it is a good habit to get into so long as you understand and remember what it is and what it isn't. The phrase is not some magic formula that forces God into action. Saying, "in Jesus' name" at the end of a prayer does not obligate God to affirmatively answer any and all prayers. That is not what this means.

Praying in Jesus' name means essentially two things. First, it means praying in his authority and authorization. Second, it means praying in accordance with his character and his will.

In Accordance with His Authorization

First to come in someone's name, means to come under their authorization and in their authority. For example, a United States foreign ambassador may approach the president or the leader of the host country and say, "I come to you in the name of the president of the United States." When an ambassador says that, it means he comes as the one who has been uniquely authorized by the president of the U.S. to represent U.S. interests in that country. Furthermore, he carries the full authority of the executive office. He has authorization to represent and authority to execute his commands. So *praying in the name of Jesus means praying under the authorization and authority of Jesus*. When we pray we should ask ourselves, "Would Jesus authorize this prayer I'm about to pray?" Would he approve this prayer?

In Accordance with His Authority

Praying in Jesus' authority means understanding that we have no authority or right on our own apart from him to ask God for anything. We only have a right to approach the throne room of the Creator of the Universe based upon the name and authority of Jesus and not our own name. The holiness of God and sinfulness of man renders us completely unworthy to approach God for any reason. However, because Jesus is fully man and fully God, and because he lived a sinless life, he has the ability to bring us to God.

Jesus has invited us to come to God through him, i.e. in his name. We then can approach "the throne of grace to find mercy and help in our time of need."² This is why Jesus was in these verses teaching his disciples a new way to pray, to pray in his name. He knew he would rise from the dead and his resurrection would change everything about how men prayed to God. Jesus became the "lamb of God which took away the sin of man." Because Jesus is the one

² Heb 4:16.

who removed our sin and thus took away God's wrath³, it is only through his name that we can have authority to make our requests to God.

For example, when Peter and John healed the lame beggar at the temple, Peter said, "...in the name of Jesus rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). Peter was quick to tell the crowds that it was not by his own power or authority that the man was healed, but it was by the authority of the name of Jesus (Acts 3:12, 16).

In Accordance With His Character and Will

In the New Testament, the 'name' of a person represented all of who that person is and what he or she lived for. The 'name' of a person stands for the identity of a person and the mission for which he or she lived. We see this still today. For example, when buildings or institutes are built or established in the 'name' of a certain person, it means that the building or institute has been established to continue the work and the mission of the person whose name it bears. Or if I were to say, "I come in the name of peace," I would be coming in accordance with the character of peace. So praying in Jesus' name means praying in accordance with his character and his mission or his will.

1 John 5:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

Praying in the name of Jesus means praying according to his authority and his authorization, and in accordance with his character and his will. If whatever we ask the is based upon his authority and not our own, is under his authorization, and in accordance with his will and his character, then we will receive what we ask for and our joy will be full.

Praying in the name of Jesus—in accordance with his character and will—keeps us from praying anything that is contrary to his will and character. For example, we ought not to expect him to answer any of the following prayers.

- 1) God, would you please get rid of my boss so I can have his job?
- 2) Father, will you please let me land the Johnson & Johnson contract (so that I will be partnered with the hot blonde in graphic design)?
- 3) Father, give me a massive bonus and big raise so I can buy a bigger boat than neighbor Watson next door?

³ Jesus only removed God's wrath from those who put their faith in him and believed in him. God's wrath remains in place against all those who refuse to believe in his name. See Jn 3:18, 36.

- 4) Father, please let my husband have an affair so I can divorce him and marry the hunk who works at the coffee shop?
- 5) Father, will you please bring about a revival in this region and let it start with this church (so that my name will be remembered throughout history)?

To the Glory of God the Father Through the Son

There's one final consideration that should guide our prayer life. We should ask, "For whose glory is this prayer being prayed?"

John 14:13-14 (ESV)

¹³ "Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."

Jesus lived for the glory of his Father. His entire life and ministry was aimed at glorifying the Father. In his final prayer before his crucifixion, Jesus summed up his ministry life like this,

(John 17:4 ESV)

⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.

The glory of God should be the goal of all our prayers. Prayers offered to God the Father in accordance with the name of Jesus will be answered so that the Father will be glorified through Jesus. The prayers that God answers, whatever they may be, are the ones that are offered to him through the name of his Son and are intended to magnify his glory.

Conclusion

So what do we need to hear Jesus saying to us today?

- 1) I want you to be full of joy (v.24).
- 2) Entering into fullness of joy may mean passing through the doorway of sorrow.
- 3) The pathway to fullness of joy is persistent prayer...
- 4) ...offered to God the Father in the name of Jesus, the Son.

If you knew that Jesus intended you to be full of joy, would you not do everything you could to experience it? If he told you that the way to experience that joy was through persistent prayer, wouldn't you want to begin to make that kind of praying a habit?

- 1) **Believe** that God intends to fill you with joy if you would only persistently pray to him.
- 2) **Plan to pray.** Decide on a time and place to pray. Yes, pray at all times, but decided today to make room in your life for dedicated times of prayer.
- 3) **Pause to pray.** Just do it. Turn off your cell phone and pray. Consider writing out your prayers. Leave room to record when they are answered.
- 4) **Pray Scripture.** Incorporate Scripture into your prayers. As you read the Bible, pray what you read (See Eph 6:17-18).

A few months back I was struck with an idea that I thought might be good for this church. To bring it about was humanly impossible. I thought about praying about it. But in the end, I didn't because I could not conceive how it could come to pass. It was an idea that was not selfish or for my own glory. Yet I couldn't begin to pray for it because I didn't believe it could happen. This week the Lord showed me a way that it could happen. When He showed me that He has the power to bring it about, I was so filled with joy that I nearly wept.

Later as I was praying about this, it seemed to me that the Lord was saying to me, "Todd, why didn't you talk to me about this? Why didn't you ask me for this?" The answer is "I didn't have the faith to believe that it could be possible." Then I was reminded of James.

(James 4:2-3 ESV)

² You do not have, because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

One of the reasons we think God doesn't answer prayer is because we're praying all the wrong kinds of prayers. "God I need a bigger this or a better that or more of the other thing so that my life will be filled with ease." Someone I deeply respect once said, "Prayer is not intended to be a domestic intercom to notify God when you need another pillow to make life soft and comfortable." God doesn't answer prayers aimed satisfying our sinful passions.

Another one of the reasons we do not have is because we don't ask. We fail to pray because we fail to believe that God has the power to answer. Remember what Jesus told the woman at well?

(John 4:10 ESV)

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Jesus is saying, "If you only knew who I am and what I have to give you, then you most certainly would have asked me." "If you knew... then you would ask..." Some of us don't pray

because we don't really know God, we don't truly know his power, and we don't believe God will deliver what is good for us.

I didn't pray for what I thought might be good for us because I couldn't imagine how God would answer it. I don't want to make that mistake again. Folks, in 2016 please believe that Jesus intends to fill you with joy. And the way he will do it, is through persistent prayer offered to God the Father through the name of Jesus.

John 16:23-24 (ESV)

²³ "Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."

In 2016 pray. Pray big, God honoring prayers. Pray massive, life transforming prayers. Talk to your heavenly Father often. Pray to him persistently. Don't give up. Tell him what great things you want to happen this year in your life and in this world for glory of his great name, for the good of his people, and for the advancement of his kingdom. If your motives are wrong, he'll reveal it to you. If your praying in a direction that he doesn't want you to go, he'll show you. But pray, pray, pray.

Pray to the Father in the name of the Son and you will find fullness of joy. Ask him for anything that accords with his character and his mission and he will give it to you. And when he does, you'll be filled with joy.