



# grow. pray. serve.

Reveille UMC Weekly Guide

November 16-22, 2020

Sermon by Lead Pastor Pete Moon

Sermon Title: *“Whatever Happened to Joy?”*

Notes from sermon on 11/15:

Things For Which to Pray This Week:

### Family Focus Question:

When was the last time you laughed so hard that your insides hurt? In the words of Psalm 100, when did you last “Shout for joy to the Lord...”? Has it been too long?

### Questions for Small Groups

1. Describe the difference between happiness and joy.
2. How is it that we can find joy even though circumstances don't go our way?
3. Our reading from Hebrews speaks of the way that Jesus could endure the cross because of the “joy set before him”. Describe that joy.

### Monday, November 16: Read Psalm 100

Five hundred years ago, St. Teresa of Avila famously said, “O Lord keep us from silly devotions and sour - faced saints.” Sometimes the challenges of life can steal our joy. We can even feel guilty for feeling joy when circumstances in our world are so obviously imperfect and so many people are hurting. As we approach Thanksgiving and Advent, we wonder what there is to celebrate, especially those of us who are facing the loss of traditions and the presence of family members due to the pandemic.

As we make our way to this holiday season, perhaps we need to be reminded that biblical joy is not dependent upon life circumstances. While it has been a tough year for all of us, there is still much to be thankful for and to which we can look forward. Today's psalmist tells us to “shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth.” There has never been a time in history when “all the earth” was at peace and free from want. There has always been disease, isolation, instability, fear, hate, and injustice. But there has also always been God and God's kingdom.

This week we will foster a spirit of joy and thanksgiving through prayer and scripture. What is one thing about which you will “shout for joy” today? How will you do it?

**Tuesday, November 17: Read Hebrews 12:1-3**

During parent/teacher conferences this year (done over Zoom meetings, of course), a schoolteacher at Maggie Walker high school shared the advice that for after every 20 minutes spent on the computer, a person should spend 20 seconds focusing their eyes on something 20 feet away. It turns out that where we “fix our eyes” can have a significant impact on our energy, outlook, and health. Where are we “fixing our eyes” right now? Are our eyes glued to the evening news, the daily COVID report, the angry social media scrolls that vilify the other political party and proclaim impending doom for our economy, relationships, and “life as we know it?” Is our vision of the future focused solely on the remainder of the school year, causing us to lament the loss of our foreseeable plans and our historical pastimes?

Today’s scripture gives us a more excellent way to live. Even the shadow of the cross could not distract Jesus from fixing his eyes on the “joy set before him,” the writer of Hebrews proclaims. Therefore, we should “fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” How much easier can it be to expect joy when we also recognize Jesus as the pioneer who goes before us, preparing the way for it?

**Wednesday, November 18: Read Psalm 37:1-4**

Not only is there pain in our world, there is evil. We see it on the news, in our social discourse, in ourselves. How can we be happy when there is so much evil to overcome? Today’s psalmist says, “Do not fret because of those who are evil...trust in the Lord and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.” While we must stand up to evil and injustice, we don’t have to fret about it. While we fight for good, we can also be enjoying God’s abundant gifts. We can constantly dwell in the kingdom while working to bring others into it. Where has God shown you “safe pasture” this year? What could you do to spend more time there, delighting in God and trusting that God will give you the desires of your heart?

**Thursday, November 19: Read Isaiah 9:2-3**

We have heard this analogy before, but the deeper the darkness, the more brightly a single light shines. Darkness can be beautiful, centering, and focusing when we are given a single light upon which to follow. Instead of viewing ourselves exclusively as “people walking in darkness,” can we instead recognize ourselves as those who “have seen a great light”? Where has God increased our joy, and what harvests have we been able to reap? The Bible never denies the existence of pain and hardship, and neither will we. Rather, it says we can live in abundant joy, hope, and thanksgiving in the midst of it, guided by the incredible, eternal light of God that continually leads us to the kingdom and all its promises ahead.

**Friday, November 20: November 20: Read Luke 15: 1-7**

Following a wonderful week reading many of Jesus’s parables, we end this week with one more: The parable of the lost sheep. Here, Jesus describes the incredible joy felt by a shepherd upon finding the one sheep that was lost amid his flock of 100. What kind of joy will we be able to experience when things we have lost are returned to us? How much more will we appreciate them, having lost them for a while? As we gaze into the upcoming year, we can be joyful for what we have now, secure in our joy regardless of what we still may lose, and confident in the joy that is yet to come. Yes, there is much to celebrate this Thanksgiving, and many joy-filled moments we will experience, more than ever, in 2021.

**Saturday, November 21: Scripture Memorization: Romans 15:13**

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

**Sunday, November 22: Let us prepare our hearts and minds for worship in praying our Prayer of Common Confession:** *Almighty God, we confess that we all too often have lost our joy. We let the circumstances around us define us instead of living by and through our relationship with you. Our frowns and frustrations offer a poor witness to who you are. Forgive us for losing our perspective. Reignite the fire and the laughter within that we might yet testify to the love that you have for all of us. Help us to once again “shout for joy” that our faith and lives may point to the hope that is in you. We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus. AMEN.*