



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 9:14-17

KEY POINT(S): Jesus ushers in a Kingdom characterized by righteousness, peace and joy.

FOR LEADERS

- **Available Resources!** – Just as a reminder, we have a number of resources available to leaders at Emergence, including these discussion guides, but also podcasts, blog posts, topical sessions, Coaches, development curriculum for apprenticeship and other potential leaders, and much more! For all things Communities, check out www.emergencenj.org/weeklyresources! If you have questions about anything else, reach out to your Coach or shoot us an e-mail at Communities@emergencenj.org!
- **Baptism!** – Our baptism service is nearly here and it's the last week to sign up if you know someone who'd like to be baptized! Sign up online at baptism.emergencenj.org!

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Icebreaker** – “What’s one thing that you are most looking forward to this Summer?”
- [2] Communities Video** - Watch this week’s Communities video!
- [3]** What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

In our passage this week we see Jesus address a question about fasting from John the Baptist’s followers. Although practices like fasting and almsgiving were appropriate expressions of faith in that time, Jesus points out that *His* coming (the Messiah) should be a cause not for mourning, but for celebration.

Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 9:14-17

- [1]** What does being “joyful” mean to you?
- [2]** Would you say that we live in a “joyful” society? Why or why not?
- [3]** What about Jesus’ Church? Do you think the Church has a level of joy that should accompany the worship of Jesus? How about Emergence?
- [4]** What do you think would be some of the more negative fruits of a joyless Christianity? Have you ever seen this before, or even experienced this in your own walk of faith?

Ask for volunteers to read Romans 12:15 and Colossians 2:20-23.

- [5]** What do you think Paul’s point is here in Romans? In your opinion, do you feel that these two things (rejoicing and weeping) are mutually exclusive? Why or why not?
- [6]** What actions or attitudes is Paul urging us to avoid in Col. 2, and why do you think he takes such a low view of these things?
- [7]** Is your own devotion (or “piety,” as Ryan put it) marked by the joy of the bridegroom? Where do you feel that your own walk with Jesus could stand to be more joyful?



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Leaders: *The point that Jesus makes in our passage this week is the same that Paul contends for in Colossians and Romans, which is that our faith, our Christianity, our walk with Jesus, our salvation, or however you wish to call your own understanding of your relationship with Jesus, should be marked by JOY. Christians should be known for their joy! And it makes sense...we have hope! We've been freed from the bondage of sin and the penalty for our own unrighteousness...we've been given life in Jesus' name, and freed to live our lives as a response and a reflection of Christ! That should bring us an immense joy, regardless of what present circumstances we find ourselves in. Does that mean that we never mourn? Of course not. We still live in a broken world, with a broken culture, and in the presence of sin (both others' and our own), and therefore we will find ourselves confronted with sin, sickness, hatred and death. But those things are not eternal – Jesus himself cried at the death of his friend Lazarus – but at the end of the day, as Jesus declared on the cross, "It is finished."*

Paul goes on to explain this for us in two ways: first, by explaining that it is right for us to mourn appropriately, as right as it is to rejoice appropriately and secondly, he attacks pointless, lifeless, heartless and joyless religion that goes through a bunch of mundane traditions or motions that are all but completely void of the heart of God and the reality of what Jesus is doing in the world. The question for us, then, is how is that reflected in my life? Is it? Does the way in which I live my life reflect the heart of a man or woman who has been raised to life in Jesus? Or am I just living in religious piety?

THINKING RIGHTLY ABOUT JOY

In the sermon this week, Ryan pointed out the book of Philippians, where the apostle Paul urges his readers to “rejoice in the Lord” three times in Phil 2:18; 3:1; 4:4. Ryan went on to explain that it’s actually the Christians who are most cynical about the joy of others that are most susceptible to false teaching.

- [8]** In Philippians 3:1, Paul says that to “...write these things is no trouble to me and safe for you.” What do you think that Paul means by this? Why is rejoicing in the Lord a “safe” thing for Christians to do?
- [9]** Why do you think people can so easily conflate holiness with misery? How would you personally counter this attitude with someone you know?

Leaders: *Let me pose a rather obvious question – What do you think glorifies God more – when we obey Him out of gratitude, joy, and delight, or when we grit our teeth and walk forward with our heads down in a sense of obligation and duty?*

NEW WINESKINS

To further demonstrate his point to us, Jesus offers us a metaphor of clothing and wineskins in Matthew 9:16-17.

- [10]** How would you explain Jesus’ metaphors here in your own words? What do you think the point is of these illustrations?
- [11]** What are some of the ways in which the Kingdom of God being ushered in by Jesus is different from self-made pious religion, or even the Old Covenant that governed God’s people of Israel?
- [12]** What do you think would be examples of “old wineskins” that people try to squeeze Jesus into today? Where do you think you might be trying to do the same in your own life?

Leaders: *The point Jesus is making is threefold: 1.) He, himself, is the Messiah 2.) He’s ushering in a new Covenant for God’s people 3.) This covenant should be an incredible realization of joy, celebration, and rejoicing for God’s people.*

PRAYER

- [1]** Pray that God would kindle a true joy for Jesus in our hearts
- [2]** Pray for those you know who are finding it hard to find joy in Christ right now.