

Luke 10:17-20
Go Where the Party Is

Main idea: We usually make life all about our fleeting pleasures. We spend most of our lives chasing after temporary things, thinking they'll make us happy. But the ironic thing is that the thing that can make us most happy now is the same as the thing that will make us most happy in eternity. Rejoice in Jesus, because He's good, and He will never fade away.

Money. Sex. Power. Or even just being normal and stable, having a good family and supportive friends. These are things that we often long for and work for. These are things that our world says are important, and some of them are important. They're things that often cause us to rejoice once we obtain them, and make us feel incomplete if we don't have them.

And that's not all bad. I mean, the longing that we feel for intimacy is placed inside us by God Himself, because we weren't created to be alone. We were created for communion, with our spouse, with others, and with God Himself.

And even the desire for power isn't all bad, because God gave us dominion over the earth. He made us to be the caretakers of this planet, stewards over it, and He's given us the authority, the power, to do so. Now, when we want more power than God wants us to have, and when we abuse the power that God has given us, that's when the desire for power becomes a lust for power and becomes evil. But power itself, money, sex, normalcy, family, friends, these can all be good gifts from God when we recognize them as being from God and for God.

But we sure can get consumed with God's good gifts sometimes, right?

Friends, family, a godly spouse can all be good, gifts that God blesses us with, but when we start focusing on them as our supreme treasure rather than on God, we turn them into idols in our lives. And we've all been guilty of that. And that's a problem.

So how do we enjoy God's good gifts, and yet not enjoy them too much? Well, maybe something like this.

[clip from 11 Happy, plus 2: 08:27-09:30]

Daddy: If you inherited 20 million dollars, what would you do with the money?

Amber: I would spend some on Starfall and leave the rest all for God.

Daddy: Oh ok, you think you'd give all that money to God, pretty much?

Amber: Yeah, I would keep it in my, keep some in my pocket, maybe I could fill that whole guitar bank with all those dollars. And money.

Daddy: Do you know how much money 20 million dollars is?

Amber: No.

Daddy: It's a lot of money.

Amber: It's not that much.

Daddy: It's not that much money?

Amber: I don't, I mean, I don't know. I don't think. I don't know that much about money still. I still have to learn a little about money. I spend most of my days learning math, though. Yeah. I'm kind of bad with math, but I'm still working on it and all that kind of stuff.

That was my daughter Amber a few years ago when she was 6 years old. Every few years, we ask our kids a set of questions to see how they change over time. Well anyway, when she was 6, Amber recognized that with 20 million dollars, there were things she could enjoy, like Starfall, a learning website that costs \$35 a year, and yet, she wouldn't just spend all the money on herself. She would leave the rest all for God.

And she was so humble, recognizing that she didn't know everything about money, or math, but she wasn't giving up! She would keep learning, keep working on it, and all that kind of stuff.

Well, I think we can all have that attitude about good gifts. We can enjoy them, give them to God, and continue to grow. I think that's excellent advice, even biblical advice. I think it's the same advice Jesus gave His disciples.

Here's what it says in Luke 10, 17 through 20:

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 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. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:17-20)

Lord Jesus, direct us to always rejoice in You. Because You're good. In Your Name we pray, Amen.

If you remember, we've been looking at how Jesus sent out seventy-two of His disciples to every town and place where He Himself was about to go, that they might be His witnesses in His harvest field, preparing the hearts of those they met so that they would be ready to receive Jesus when He came to them. If you missed those messages, you can find them on our website.

Anyway, we read today what came of all that. The seventy-two disciples returned to Jesus with a report. It says in verse 17,

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!"

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They were excited! They were full of joy! They were amazed at the power they had to cast out demons because of the name of Jesus. They were grateful for God's good gifts. Specifically, they were rejoicing that they could cast out demons.

Now, I don't at all doubt that demons can be subject to us in the name of Jesus. Angels, and demons, and Satan are all real, and there's a real spiritual battle going on around us all of the time, because Satan wants us to experience the same fate as him. Misery loves company. But when we trust in Jesus, Satan and his demons have no power over us. Because God is infinitely more powerful than Satan.

So I don't at all doubt that we have power over demons in the name of Jesus. But it's when we obsess over this idea that we're tempted to be thankful more for power than for Jesus. More thankful for God's good gifts than God, the gift giver.

2 Corinthians 5 puts it this way:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

You see, God gives us a power. An authority to do ministry. To show His grace. But it's all from God, and for God, so that through our ministry, and by His power, He is reconciling the world to Himself.

In other words, give God the glory. Give God the glory for every good gift He gives you. We have the tendency to receive a blessing from God, and then focus so much on the blessing that we forget about where the blessing came from. I've seen it over and over again in my own life. God blesses me in some way - a little unexpected income, extra time to finish everything on my schedule, a ministry opportunity - but so often I make the blessing all about me. Instead of making the most of every opportunity, I miss it because I'm thinking about my own desires. Instead of giving extra to God through the church, I hoard it for myself. Instead of using the extra time for God, I waste it watching cats on youtube. But God blesses us so that we might be a blessing. God gives to us so that we might be givers. And if we don't use what He's already given us for His glory, then we can't expect Him to give us even more to use for His glory.

Jesus said it like this:

'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. (Luke 19:26)

Now, am I saying we should be givers just so that we can get more from God! No! And I'm not saying that the blessings are always material. All I'm saying is that we can't outgive God, and that through Jesus Christ we are incredibly rich both now and forever.

And no matter what your circumstances are, that's true. It doesn't matter if you feel poor or rich, weak or strong, we have immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine by grace through faith in Jesus. But don't make it about what you want, because then you'll never realize the blessings. Give God all the glory.

So Jesus responded to His disciples. Verse 18.

And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 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."

In other words, Jesus was telling His disciples, "You're right! I gave you authority! Dangerous creatures, demons, even Satan, you have power over all of these when I'm on your side, and ultimately they can't even hurt you, because they have no power over your soul. In fact," Jesus says, "I saw Satan fall from heaven! He thought he could become the ruler of heaven, but his power is nothing compared to Mine. In fact, Satan only has what limited power I give him! But to you, I give greater power, so that by your testimony the world might believe and be saved!"

Isn't that amazing? We have the power of God in us. We have the Holy Spirit in us. If you've trusted in Jesus Christ, God is with you all of the time, to strengthen you, to help you, and even though we will certainly face dangers in this life, through Christ, we have the victory over every evil thing that comes our way!

[Aladdin clip]

Genie: Phenomenal cosmic power, itty bitty living space.

I wonder if that's sometimes how we think of ourselves. I mean, it's kind of true, since God's phenomenal cosmic power is in us, in our itty bitty bodies, but do we think that it's our power, or at least wish it was our power?

Verse 20.

"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you."

After agreeing with His disciples about their power, the power they have because of Jesus giving them His power, Jesus says to them, "But nevermind all that."

What?!? That's crazy, right? I mean, that doesn't make any sense to us! We love to enjoy power, and fame, sex, money, family, friends, even just having a normal and stable life, but Jesus looks at all these good gifts and says, "Nevermind all that."

Why?

Because God doesn't give us gifts through Christ so that we can boast about the gifts. God doesn't give us power in Christ so that we can boast about the new power we have in Christ. And it's not even so much that we can boast about our position in Christ, as if we're better than anyone else. But let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. Christ alone is good! Point to Him!

You see, it's a constant temptation to make life all about us, all about what we want, and then seek after those things, rather than rejoicing in God. Even when God blesses us in some way, we take it, and we might thank God briefly for it, but then we act as if we earned it and can use it however we want. We boast about our accomplishments. About what we've done. Even about what we're going to do. But we're nothing before God, and any good thing we have is from Him and for Him.

Paul said it like this:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Do we feel that way? I've got to confess, I don't always feel that way. I want to boast about me! I want to boast about my accomplishments! I want to boast about how awesome my church is, and how great my kids are and how beautiful my wife is! Some of these things I want to boast about because I'm so thankful for God giving them to me, but some of them I want to boast about because I think I've earned them in some way.

And I like to think I earned them. I like to think that I've made something of myself. But as long as I think that way, I'm missing out on the greater blessing of being made by God. The longer we boast about being self-made men, the longer we put off being God-made men. The more we boast about what we can do, or have done, the less we remember what Jesus has done for us.

So Jesus told His disciples:

"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." (Luke 10:20)

We can get so focused on good gifts that we get distracted by them. We can miss the best gift. We miss the party. We can get so focused on the good gifts that we neglect the gift giver.

So rejoice! Rejoice not in what you can do for God, but in what God has done for you! Rejoice in the best gift: salvation through Jesus Himself. And yeah, serve Him, but never forget that as God uses you to accomplish His will, it's His power working through you.

When the disciples had gotten back from their mission, they were rejoicing in their accomplishments rather than Christ's accomplishment. In their power rather than Christ's power.

We can get so power hungry, wanting to be great, wanting to be known, wanting to make a name for ourselves, but when Christ gave us the great commission, it wasn't to exert our authority, but to reveal His authority, because all authority in heaven and on earth was given to Jesus.

Because, you see, Christ's power was most fully revealed not when He was healing people or casting out demons, or things that we look at as being great, but His power was most fully revealed when He was most weak, when He died on a cross. That's how our names are written in heaven.

You know, today is Palm Sunday. This was the day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and everyone sang His praises! Everyone was waving palm branches, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" What fame! What power! It seemed like Jesus was on top of the world, taking His place as Lord of all!

But Jesus seemed to say, "Not yet." Because the full revealing of His power and authority didn't come through the praise of men, or from His miracles, just like it couldn't come through the gift of Satan when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, but Christ's full power was shown when He made Himself nothing for the very men that praised Him, and then crucified Him, which is you and me. And it was because He endured the cross that Jesus received the greatest joy set before Him: His glory, and our redemption.

I wonder if our problem is often that we try to get joy without enduring the cross. We try to get power, and fame, and sex, or even just normalcy and stability without first earning them through suffering, through tears. In other words, we try to steal joy.

But Jesus told His disciples, "Nevermind all that! There's an even greater joy!" In other words, trying to steal joy for yourself doesn't give you the greatest joy. Trying to be happy apart from Jesus will result in emptiness. The greatest joy comes not in what we can earn for ourselves, but in what Christ has earned for us.

Now it's not wrong to rejoice in the simple gifts from God. In fact, it's good, as long as we recognize that they're from God, and for God. And remember that no matter how much blessing we experience in this life, the greatest is yet to come.

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Because if you trust in Jesus Christ, your name is written in heaven. It's written in a book, the Lamb's Book of Life. And if your name is in that book, oh! Immeasurable riches! Jesus is your Savior! Heaven is your home! And heaven isn't some boring place of clouds and fat angels, but it's the greatest party of all eternity! It's the place of unending joy! It's described as a feast, and I don't know about you, but I like to eat! So I'm looking forward to that! It's a wedding feast, in which Jesus presents His bride, the Church as spotless because of His sacrifice. And we'll rejoice. Not in the temporary things of this life like bank accounts or fame, but in Christ.

So if we know we're going to rejoice like that then, why not start now? Rejoice, that you're going to rejoice! And rejoice in the things that we're going to rejoice in! Rejoice in Jesus, because He is your Savior, and His mercies are new every day, and you're going to have eternal life with Him forever.

You see, heaven is a party, but the party starts here. Eternal life is defined not merely as a duration of life, but as a quality of life. Jesus said it this way:

This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

Eternal life is defined as simply knowing the only true God, who is Jesus. Life, true life, isn't found in all the things we often consume ourselves with in this world, but in knowing Jesus. Do you know Jesus? Do you see Him as more valuable than your name, your money, and even your life? If not, you don't yet know what it means to party. So right now, I'm inviting you to the party. Rest in Jesus, and you will know what it means to truly rejoice, forever, in Him.

Lord Jesus, thank You for You. Help us to rejoice at all times in You. Because nothing can compare with You. Forgive us of how we make life about anything but You, and help us to join You in the party. In Your name we pray, Amen.

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