

MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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Joy And Peace

Dear Friend,

The other day, while I was spending my morning time with the Lord, He gave me something that I would like to share with you. It has to do with the challenges we face in life while walking on the path we believe Jesus has directed us to walk on. It is my impression that the “church” today, at least here in the United States, has sold Christians a bill of goods insinuating that anyone who follows Jesus will have smooth sailing all the way. It’s as though we have been led to believe that God’s responsibility is to make sure our lives remain turmoil free. That has not been my experience at all, nor do I believe the Bible supports such an idea.

Here is the message that was impressed on my heart the other day about this subject. **“When you follow Jesus, He will lead you directly into situations that require you to whole heartedly trust Him.”** I believe that goes directly against what most Christians here think. If you took a survey and asked them if they believed that by following Jesus He would lead them into a life of ease or a life with challenges, I believe that more often than not they would answer; “a life of ease”.

It is as though the **“American Dream”** has somehow crossed over into American churches and has become difficult to differentiate between the two. The Declaration of Independence, which declared America’s cessation from England, contains these three ideas as being mankind’s unalienable rights: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It seems that man’s happiness has become God’s responsibility to insure.

Happiness is an emotion that is dependent on our outward circumstances. Please don’t misunderstand, I’m not suggesting that God likes or wants to see us miserable. But, I believe He is more interested in us drawing from **the spiritual force of joy** out of our reborn human spirit than depending on our outward circumstances to always be perfect so we can remain happy.

For example, where do you find in your bible any promise from God regarding home ownership, your kids going to the best schools, you having the best jobs that make the most money, multiple cars in the garage, any kind of recreation activity imaginable, and the list goes on? The answer is...nowhere!

My point is this; we have been programmed to believe that we need all these things to be happy. Furthermore, we believe we “deserve” them. Our Declaration of Independence says this is mankind’s unalienable right, to pursue happiness, so “God must want me to have all these things in order to be happy.” God never promised us happiness in this life, He gave us access to a much more powerful force that is not dependent on outward circumstances; **Joy**.
(Nehemiah 8:10)

“...for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

(Galatians 5:22)

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”

Try telling someone with **the idea** that God’s objective is to always keep them happy that God may lead them into challenging situations. I’m talking about situations that will most likely require them to wholeheartedly trust Him in order to make it to the other side. **“That can’t be God!”** Why not? Because it doesn’t fit into your image of what Christian life should look like?

Just to be clear, I am in no way suggesting that God is the cause of the problem. God is the answer, the devil is the cause, and we have the victory over all the works of the enemy. Could it be that in order to reach people, who might not otherwise be reached with the Gospel, God might have to send His children into difficult circumstances? This would be wrong of Him to do if He had not already given us the victory over the enemy. Since we have the victory our Father expects us to do something with it, besides just using it on ourselves. (Selah)

Jesus warned us that we would face difficulties. (John 16: 33)

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world, you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

Did Jesus say that He spoke all these things so that we could have every little fleshly desire met? No! He said He spoke these things so that we might have

peace. One of the problems we have today is that we equate having all our fleshly desires met with having peace.

We have somehow tied peace to our circumstances, what we have or don't have, what we do or don't do, and Jesus didn't say that at all. Jesus said, "**that in Me you might have peace.**" Peace doesn't come from the outside in, it comes from the inside out. As long as a person thinks their life as a believer should look like everyone else's life or else they are in turmoil, that person is in for disappointment because that's not what Jesus promised.

The enemy's objective is to get you out of peace and into turmoil, no matter what it takes. For some people, having to work a blue-collar job even though they have a college degree could send them directly into an emotional tailspin. Consequently, if your peace is contingent upon everything going right in your world, then all the devil has to do is shake things up a little bit and your peace vanishes like an ice cube in the July sunshine. The peace Jesus was speaking about here is not derived from natural circumstances. This peace has only one source, God alone.

Look at what Jesus said two chapters earlier in John. (John 14:27)

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Jesus has given us His peace as another fruit of the reborn human spirit. He said that the way He gave us His peace was different than how the world gives peace. The peace the world gives depends on everything going smoothly with no problems. If you have lived any time at all in this world you know that problems come, it is inevitable. If every time a problem arises your peace flies away like a little bird, then you will constantly be in turmoil and that is absolutely not how Jesus wants you to live. He wants us to take our eyes off our circumstances and put them on Him and the victory He has won for us, and to draw peace out of that well inside of us, that was His gift to us.

When we learn to live from the inside out, instead of from the outside in, we will be able to live in both joy and peace no matter what the circumstances of life throw at us. If we have to have every problem in our life solved before we can experience God's joy and peace then we will never have them. The key for us is to learn to draw out of the well inside of us joy and peace regardless of what problems in life we face.

At some point we must come to grips with the fact that as a believer our life isn't going to look like the rest of the world says it is supposed to look, and that has to be okay. We have to stop trying to make the picture in our heads of the "American Dream", which has been programmed in us by the world since we were kids, be our objective. The idea that by living out that image in our heads we are going to experience peace and true fulfillment is a lie.

It is also wrong to think that any obstacles or challenges we face are proof that we have somehow missed God's plan for our lives. I have come to realize that in many cases the obstacles are just as much proof to me as anything that I am on the right path and the enemy is simply trying to stop me.

When you are faced with difficult situations in your life and you are sure that you have been following Jesus to the best of your ability, then take comfort in the words of the Master. (John 16:33)

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

The "Overcomer" lives inside of you and He has made you an overcomer as well. Don't draw back when you find yourself in difficult circumstances, especially when you are convinced you have been following Jesus all the way. Draw from the well within and live in God's peace and joy regardless of what is going on around you. This was God's plan for us. Allow His plan to work for you.

One thought I would like to leave you with is this; when you find yourself in challenging circumstances as a result of following what you believe to be the plan of God you should ask yourself, "**God, who am I here to influence with the good news of Jesus?**" He has you where you are for a reason and you can rest assured that the souls of men are His top priority. Our mission is to rescue them from destruction. That's why we are here.

~ Jesus Loves You!

Mark Jenkins