

Welcome and Announcements – Robin

Good morning, Everyone.

I am Robin Sloboda and I am one of the pastors on staff here at Emmanuel.

Brendon is still on vacation, and I have the privilege to welcome us to our service for the eleventh Sunday after Pentecost, or the eleventh Sunday of ordinary time.

Mid-August always ushers in a reminder that fall is near, and transitions are starting to take place. My pansies are starting to look like they have seen better days and are near the end of their season. I do not like transitions, but they are part of the natural rhythm of life. The blessing, we still have a few warmer days ahead to enjoy the summer sun.

As we come closer to the end of August, we thought it would be wise to check in on how we as a church our feeling about the possibility of regathering for a new ministry year. In the next week you can anticipate receiving an email survey from the elders. The survey helps us to know what you are thinking as a whole congregation concerning regathering in the fall. Brendon will mention more about the survey next week. We ask that you continue to ponder and pray about our community regathering.

Over the last few weeks, we have mentioned that the second weekend in September will Emmanuel's 90th anniversary. The plan is to put together a video with some highlights of Emmanuel's history, as well as reflections from each you as to what Emmanuel means to you.

We are asking that you send us short video or audio clip with a one-sentence response to the question, "What do you appreciate about Emmanuel Baptist Church?"

Your response could be one word, a phrase, or a complete sentence, but just one, as we are hoping for at least ninety responses. A special email address has been created for that purpose. It's 90years@ebap.ca. It would be helpful for us if you could do this in the next few weeks so we can get working on it early. Rob has mentioned that putting together several video clips will take time, please send them as soon as possible so we have lots of time to work on this presentation.

As always, you can find more information on our website, www.ebap.ca, about ways to connect. Simply click on the banner that says "New Ways of Connecting @ EBC." You can also find a lot of that information in the weekly emails that Jan sends out on Mondays. Remember also to check out the weekly bulletin for prayer concerns and other information about our church family.

I pray as we come together in worship and with hearts full of thanksgiving that God will be gloried and honored by our praises. May our hearts be open to what His Spirit will say to us today through our time together. May we be people who love God and others well, in Jesus name. Amen.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

Holy, Holy

Holy, holy
Holy is the Lord God Almighty
Holy, holy
Holy is the Lord God Almighty
Who was and is and is to come
who was and is and is to come

Lift up His name with the sound of singing
lift up His name in all the earth
Lift up Your voice and give Him glory
for He is worthy to be praised
for He is worthy to be praised

Nathan Fellingham

Children’s Moment – Beverly

Hi everyone. And a big howdy to all the boys and girls listening today. Today I'm reading another short story from the Jesus Storybook Bible written by Sally Lloyd Jones. It is the story of Zacchaeus taken from Luke 19. Let's listen.

There was once a man who didn't have any friends. You are probably wondering why. Was it because he was so short? (That's not a reason not to like someone.) Was it because he had a name that was hard to say? (Well, neither is that.) Even though he was short and he did have a funny name, that wasn't it. No, people didn't like Zacchaeus because he stole their money.

Zacchaeus collected taxes, but Zacchaeus took more than he was supposed to and kept the extra money for himself and made himself rich. Everyone knew what he was up to and it made them cross and grumpy. They didn't like Zacchaeus one bit. So they made sure he knew it by doing things like avoiding him. And walking on the opposite side of the street. And pretending not to see him. And whispering things like, 'There's that nobody who thinks he's somebody!' loud enough so he could hear.

Anyway, one day, a huge crowd gathered by the road. Jesus was coming to their town and everyone wanted to see him.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, too. But everyone was too tall. He tried jumping up and down, but that didn't work. He couldn't see a thing. Zacchaeus had a good idea. "I'll climb that sycamore tree!" he said. So he did.

From the tree, Zacchaeus had the perfect view all the way down the road. Another minute and suddenly Jesus was at the tree. He stopped and looked up. Zacchaeus saw Jesus and Jesus saw Zacchaeus.

"Zacchaeus," Jesus said. "I'd like to come over to your house."

"Zacchaeus almost fell out of the tree! Come over to his house? No one ever wanted to come anywhere near his house, let alone inside it.

The people saw this and, needless to say, it made them grumpier than usual. They mumbled and murmured and muttered, "Why is Jesus being kind to that big sinner? Doesn't Jesus know about him?"

Zacchaeus scrambled down and took Jesus to his house. He was in a big hurry because he didn't want Jesus to change his mind. Perhaps Jesus hadn't heard about him. Perhaps Jesus didn't know about how he had been stealing. And how no one liked him. And how he didn't have any friends.

But Jesus knew - he knew all about Zacchaeus and the stealing and everything - and he still loved him.

Zacchaeus was ashamed. "Lord," he said, turning pale, 'what I've done is wrong. But now I want to do the right thing. I will give the money back to everyone - four times what I stole!" And that's just what he did.

Jesus smiled. "My friend! he said. "Today God has rescued you!"

Jesus loved Zacchaeus when nobody else did. He was Zacchaeus' friend, even when no one else was. Because Jesus was showing people what God's love was like - his wonderful, never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

Have a great week everybody.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

All Creatures

All creatures of our God and King
 lift up your voice and with us sing
 O praise him, alleluia
Thou burning sun with golden beam
 thou silver moon with softer gleam
O praise Him, o praise Him
 alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Thou rushing wind that art so strong
 ye clouds that sail in heav'n along

O praise him, alleluia
Thou rising moon in praise rejoice
ye lights of evening find a voice
O praise Him, o praise Him
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Let all things their Creator bless
and worship Him in humbleness
O praise him, alleluia
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son
and praise the Spirit three in one
O praise Him, o praise Him
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia

Lasst Uns Erfreuen
St. Francis
David Crowder and Brent Milligan

Community Prayer – Karen Verdouw

Good morning. My name is Karen Verdouw and I have the privilege of leading us in community prayer. Please join me in the prayer of confession.

We confess to you, Lord,
what we are:

we are not the people
we like others to think we are;

we are afraid to admit even to ourselves
what lies in the depths of our souls.

But we do not want to hide
our true selves from you.

(Silence)

We believe that you know us as we are,
and yet you love us.

Help us not to shrink
from self-knowledge;

teach us to respect ourselves

and affirm our uniqueness and worth;

give us the courage to put our trust
in your guiding and power.

(Silence)

We also confess to you, Lord,
the unrest of the world,

to which we contribute
and in which we share.

Forgive our reliance
on weapons of terror,

our cold indifference
to the needs of others,

our discrimination
against people of different races

our preoccupation
with material standards.

(Silence)

Forgive our being unsure
of the good news about you and from you,

and so unready to tell it,
share it and live it.

Raise us out of the paralysis of guilt
into the freedom and energy
of forgiven people.

And for those who through long habit
find forgiveness hard to accept
we ask you to break their bondage
and set them free
through Jesus Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

Baptist Union of Great Britain

Father, we come before you with praise in our hearts for you are the Holy One, our Abba, Father, Mighty God, Lord, Saviour, Healer, Forgiver of sins, you're the Beginning and the End, Creator, Sustainer, Giver of Life, our Sacrificial Lamb, and our Eternal Hope.

Father, we thank you for this day you give us where we can all pause from our daily activities and settle our minds and hearts on you. Thank you for being our anchor in this world. You remind us of who we belong to and this gives us the assurance to face each days' challenges with confidence.

As we continue to navigate this difficult time filled with so much uncertainty, we ask, each day, that you would remind us that you are in control and we do not need to allow fear to overtake our thoughts. We pray for our leaders, both locally and globally, to humbly seek your wisdom as they make decisions for their citizens. We also pray for strength and your sustaining power for those who are currently working at the forefront of the outbreak centers.

Even though this pandemic seems to overshadow all other aspects of life, we know that there are many amongst us who continue to carry burdens. We lift up to you those who are suffering physically and mentally; we pray for those who are grieving and who are lonely; we pray for people who are struggling financially and for those striving to find employment. Father, there are so many people who may be hurting and feeling ignored or forgotten: we pray for eyes to see those who need help and ask that you show us how to reach out and help them.

We also want to thank you for the blessings you give us. We thank you for caring for our daily needs of a home and food on the table, and we thank you for your Word to feed our spirits each and every day.

As we prepare ourselves now to hear your Word this morning, we ask that your Spirit be with Laura as she shares the message you have for us today.
In your name we pray,

Amen

Scripture Reading – Amy

Hello, my name is Amy Zhang and I am going to read John 15:1-17 NLT.

Jesus the True Vine

“I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. ³ You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

⁵ “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. ⁷ But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! ⁸ When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

⁹“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! ¹² This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. ¹³ There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn’t confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. ¹⁶ You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus
all our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer
O what peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer

Have we trials and temptations
is there trouble anywhere
We should never be discouraged
take it to the Lord in prayer
Can we find a friend so faithful
who will all our sorrows share
Jesus knows our every weakness
take it to the Lord in prayer

Are we weak and heavy laden
cumbered with a load of care
Precious Savior still our refuge
take it to the Lord in prayer
Do thy friends despise forsake thee
take it to the Lord in prayer
In His arms He'll take and shield thee
thou wilt find a solace there

Charles Crozat Converse
Joseph Medlicott Scriven

Abiding Reflections – Darlene and Dorothy

(Robin) Please join me in prayer: Jesus, thank you for teaching us by your Spirit to remain in you. Thank you for choosing us and calling us to come and follow you. May we be people who abide with you and produce lasting fruit to bring glory to the Father. Continue to help us be open to your presence in our life, and to draw near to you. We ask, continue to help us know what it means to abide in Jesus and to be overflowing with joy. Amen.

We are continuing our summer series called “Abide,” in which we are exploring the invitation from Jesus to abide or remain in Him as He abides or remains in us. Today, we have the privilege of hearing from Laura Monchuk. She will be reflecting on what it means to abide in Jesus and to abide in joy. Before the message, let’s listen to a couple of responses to the question: “What does abiding in Jesus look like in your life?” Today we hear from Darlene Smith and Dorothy Van’t Hof:

(Darlene) Abiding in Christ for me means talking to God through prayer with my praise and requests. "Casting all your cares on Him because He cares for you." (First Peter 5:7)

An interesting way of praying was taught to me years ago during a difficult time. I picture my concern raised to God in my left hand. Maybe a concern for my children or family or the future. Then in my other hand I visualize just some of the things I know about God; for example: His creating this amazing world, designing the smallest details in a flower, the human eye etc. Also, God's perfect love. All of these amazing things that I know about God I imagine holding in my right hand. Then I raise both hands as a prayer. I imagine placing the cares in my left hand into my right hand representing all of God's power and love. I visualize Christ taking all of my cares that I have cast on Him. Nothing is too difficult for God!

This is for me what it means to abide in Christ!

(Dorothy) As I consider my life “Abiding in Jesus” and having a true connection and dependence on Him, I have come to appreciate that it’s in the many small ways that His amazing presence is evident and clearly felt.

Sitting on our deck and watching the baby robins leave their nest, or the chorus of birds singing each morning while I have my cup of tea. I relish these moments that allow me to truly appreciate how ever present Jesus is in all aspects of my life.

Those shoulder tap moments when I’m put in the right place at the right time when I encounter a complete stranger and we exchange a smile or a few kind words. One of my reading take a ways was, “Morning is God’s way of saying one more time, go make a difference, touch a heart, encourage a mind, inspire a soul and enjoy the day.”

Abiding with Jesus in my life can be summed up in the fourth verse of the hymn “Abide with Me,” which was a staple growing up ... I need thy presence every passing hour. What but thy grace can foil the tempter’s power? Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be? Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me.

This resonates deeply of how I value and need Jesus in all aspects of my life, guiding

me and me actually stopping and listening to His still small voice while I connect and depend on Him.

Teaching – Laura Monchuk

Abiding in Jesus, Abiding in Joy

We are studying **John 15:1-17** as a church this summer, and Brendon has asked me to speak this morning about JOY as a fruit of abiding in Jesus.

Before I start, please join me in prayer: Thank you, God, for your faithfulness as I prepared for this lesson. May it please You, honour You, and glorify Your name. I ask that you open our hearts for what You have for us this morning and fill us all with the kind of joy that only comes from abiding in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In our society, we are encouraged to do whatever makes us happy. There's nothing wrong with being happy. Happiness is fun, but it fades. And, some of the avenues we humans take in pursuit of happiness actually set us on paths that eventually lead to great suffering. Happiness is often directly tied to circumstances, experiences and emotions that dim or disappear, which often makes us look for distraction from the difficult realities of life through yet another short-lived happiness fix.

Human happiness is shallow and fleeting. Yet, *joy* is another thing altogether. Joy is deeper-rooted. And we're told in **John 15:11** that Jesus tells His disciples that one of His goals for them (and for us) is to have His kind of joy: a complete and overflowing joy.

Galatians 5:22-23 includes JOY as a fruit of the Spirit, along with love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are nine characteristics that are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life. As we abide in Jesus, the trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit resides within us.

So, I think it would be safe to say we could interchange any of these fruits of the spirit with the metaphor of fruit in this passage from John 15. Like in verse 4: No Christian can produce abundant joy by himself or herself, neither can you be joy-filled unless you remain in Jesus . . . If I remain in Christ Jesus and He remains in me, I will be joyful. Apart from Jesus, I can do nothing.

Furthermore, in verses 9-12, this metaphor is clarified a bit more. God loves Jesus, so Jesus loves us. Remain in His love. If we keep Jesus' commands, we will remain in His love. Jesus is joyful, as He has kept His Father's commands and remains in His love. Now, He is telling us this for a purpose, as The Message paraphrases, "so that Jesus' joy may be our joy and our joy may be wholly mature." Or as New Living Translations says, "He is telling us these things so that we will be filled with his joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

This is a kind of joy that cannot come from us. Its source is the Lord. We must remain connected to Jesus to access this kind of overflowing, mature, complete joy.

In the time I have this morning, I'd like to focus in on three areas in which we, as Christians may actively abide in Jesus and access His juicy fruits of joy. These three areas are prayer, praise, and perseverance.

PRAY

One way we can actively abide in Jesus and His joy is through prayer. Prayer is a tangible way God has designed for us to stay connected to His presence and His joy. As **John 15:7-8** says, **"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."**

Prayer keeps us connected to our Heavenly Father. It keeps us plugged in to the will of God. It is a way the Lord weaves us in as active participants in His Kingdom plan for His glory. Prayer helps us exercise our faith and trust in God. It is an active clinging to His presence and promises. God designed prayer to be a way for us to abide or remain in Jesus and for the Holy Spirit to keep filling us and producing good fruit through us, like joy.

I really got a lot out of Robin's teaching last week on praying in Jesus' name. She called our attention to this verse from **John 16:23-24**. I'd like to read this beautiful promise from Jesus again for us this morning using Eugene Peterson's paraphrase in The Message:

"This is what I want you to do: Ask the Father for whatever is in keeping with the things I've revealed to you. Ask in my name, according to my will, and he'll most certainly give it to you. Your joy will be a river overflowing its banks!"

If we want to experience more of Christ's bountiful joy, He is telling us we can confidently ask our gracious God for it or for anything else that we need. Jesus is saying when we ask in His name and according to His will, God will be glorified, we will be blessed and we will have overflowing joy.

Joy is ours. Joy is here. Joy is brimming over and flowing out of our lives. . . except when it isn't.

There are things that we can allow to impede the flow of God's joy in our lives. Perhaps it's debris from unforgiveness, a stone of fear or worry, a boulder of sorrow and grief, or even the compounding of many tiny pebbles of anger or bitterness or a number of other things. Piece by piece, we can dam up the river of joy so we no longer feel it bubbling up inside of us or spilling over the banks of our souls to splash onto those with whom we come in contact.

We each have debris from painful, disappointing and down-right devastating circumstances in our lives. **Psalms 55:22** and **1 Peter 5:7** encourage us to pile our troubling boulders onto God's shoulders. He will carry our loads because He loves us! Surrendering over our rubble from any life circumstances to the Lord can free us to experience the overflowing joy He desires for us.

I wanted to share a personal answer to prayer that God delivered to me on a sidewalk back in 2012.

I was having incredible anxiety at the time. I was pregnant with my third child around one year after our second child had died inexplicably at full-term in utero. My 3-year-old son and I were traveling with my husband on a business trip out of province, and I was having a really hard time relaxing in the beautiful, yet unfamiliar, surroundings because I saw imagined danger around every corner for my unborn child, my toddler and myself.

We were walking to an unfamiliar playground my husband had found online. It was supposed to be a happy time with my toddler, but I was truly just going through the motions while inside I was suffering a major case of the what-ifs. *What if my son gets hurt on this playground? What if I twist my ankle and fall down? What if I can't find my way back to the hotel?* And of course, the most prevalent what-if of the time: *What if the same thing happens again and my baby dies inside me?*

As we walked, I felt that all-too-familiar heaviness on my chest, and I prayed for God to help me.

Somewhere along our walk, outside a coffee shop, someone had written in chalk, "*Don't let the fear of WHAT IF take away the JOY of WHAT IS.*" I stopped and stared with tears in my eyes. I could feel the heaviness I'd been carrying begin to lift as I was reminded so amazingly that God saw me, He was right there with me, and He was answering my prayer.

It reminded me to look for *all* that was true in the moment. I was pregnant with a healthy baby, I had an amazing little boy and husband who loved me, I had wonderful family and friends who cared for me (like my wonderful Emmanuel church family), and most importantly, I had a faithful Creator who cared for me enough to orchestrate a beautifully poetic answer to my prayer in real time.

It is eight years almost to the day since I read this message for the first time, and it remains an encouragement to me to this day. "*Don't let the fear of WHAT IF take away the JOY of WHAT IS.*"

The fear of *what if* can be a common obstacle to the joy God has for us. *What if I lose my loved one? What if I get really sick? What if I can't find a job? What if I fail? What if I run out of money? What if...? What if...?* There are many sad realities that we cannot deny. But, these are always only part of *what is*.

Abiding in fear is dwelling only in the negative realities while ignoring the positive ones. I believe abiding in Christ includes acknowledging *what is* – the sorrows and the joys – and lifting them all to our loving God in prayer and thanksgiving.

Philippians 4:6-7 ~ "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus."

We don't know what the immediate future holds, and truthfully, we never ever have. But we know *who* holds the future and who will hold our hand through it. He is the One to whom we pray.

Prayer helps us to stay connected, to remain or abide in Jesus. When we are abiding in Jesus through prayer, He hears our prayer and can renew our hearts with a fresh sense of hope and joy.

PRAISE

Another way we can actively abide in Jesus and His joy is through praise – in acknowledging who God is and thanking Him for all He has done.

In the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, when snow remained on the ground, our neighbourhood posted a challenge on its community Facebook page to place pictures in our windows based on a weekly theme. This was to serve as a scavenger hunt activity for families, encouraging them to get outside for a walk. My daughter and I were all about a fun craft that could spread cheer to others (and I was also secretly excited to finally make a dent in that 500-pack of construction paper I'd purchased a few years ago!)

One week we cut out dogs and cats for the animal theme, another week we made silly faces. The last two themes were flowers and encouraging words. As my girlie and I cut flowers out of paper, I asked God to give me some encouraging words for my neighbours in a time of uncertainty and disappointment. Five words came to mind that felt very appropriate then and now: *Joy blooms inside thankful hearts.*

As I name the gifts in each day, even in the toughest of circumstances, I truly can feel more and more shoots of joy grow within me.

I perceive abiding in Jesus to be a form of recognition of and gratitude for the abundant provision of the Lord. Abiding in Jesus is praising God from whom all blessings flow. **James 1:17** says “**Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**” And **Psalm 85:12**: “**The Lord will indeed provide what is good...**” (NIV) “**The Lord pours down His blessings...**” (NLT) Abiding in Jesus is refusing to break away from the Source of joy to chase down something else I may think I *deserve* in pursuit of fleeting happiness.

This current pandemic is not the life any of us imagined. But as we live here, in this time of great concern and suffering, blessings still abound. When we are plugged into the vine of Christ, we are able to squint through the cloud of our present situations to glimpse the bigger picture from God's perspective.

When we remain in Jesus, Jesus remains in us, and we remain in God's love and provision. So, we can praise God and tap into His joy, even when it does not seem to make sense circumstantially.

The writer of **Lamentations 3** captures this so well as he describes multiple afflictions and hardships in great metaphoric detail. (*Mangled by lions, arrows, and bears. Oh, my!*) Then starting in v. 20:

**“I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss.
21 Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this:**

22 The faithful love of the LORD never ends!

His mercies never cease.

23 Great is his faithfulness;

his mercies begin afresh each morning.

**24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my inheritance;
therefore, I will hope in him!"**

What loving mercies can you name today? There are good gifts everywhere if we chose to unwrap them as such. Even if you are struggling today to see any good gifts around you, the greatest gift of all -- God's absolute love for you -- is a persistent truth. It is the great "what-is."

"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever." (Psalm 136:1)

In his book *Champagne for the Soul: Rediscovering God's Gift of Joy*, author Mike Mason writes, *"Far from originating joy, humans are meant to be like an echo, reverberating with God's joy and sending it back to him."*

I love that imagery of being an echo of God's joy. We echo His joy when we praise and worship the Lord and His greatness with thankful hearts, when we sing out in joyful song or when we pour out His love in service. This kind of praise accesses a deep, soul-lifting joy that reaches far beyond our current circumstances. This is the kind of joy that we just can't contain. It's a kind of joy that overflows and pours out on the parched world around us and makes a joyful noise unto the Lord.

PERSEVERANCE

Another way we can actively abide in Jesus and His joy is through perseverance. As Christians, we live in the often-uncomfortable space between asking God to answer our prayers and trusting his goodness despite the outcomes. Sometimes God delivers us from our trials, sometimes God delivers through our trials and sometimes God delivers after our trials. The maturing of our joy (and our patience) develops as we remain in the Lord in the waiting.

James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

It's a continual act of perseverance to cling tightly to the vine through both the sun and rain, in times of drought or midst the howling winds of stress and struggle. And, we are asked to consider it all pure joy as we become more mature and complete, lacking in no good thing.

Romans 5:3-5 also talks about this: "We can REJOICE, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For

we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.”

To share another quote from Mike Mason, *“I may not always feel happy, but I’m always hopeful. That is, at the deepest level I have joy, and in the unstable outside world I have hope. And hope is like my beating heart: it’s what gives me the energy to keep putting one foot in front of the other . . .”*

One of the most beautiful blessings God has taught me through His word and, honestly, through my biggest sorrows, is that we can still find joy in unhappy places. When we are connected to the Source of joy that is limitless and eternal, then there doesn’t have to be an end to our joy.

As pastor and author Frederick Buechner points out, *“Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes. Even nailed to a tree.”*

Hebrews 12:2 encourages us to persevere by **“...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

How distinctive is Jesus’ kind of joy that it would remain with Him in a time of such great suffering. His joy, which is so incredibly different than the happiness of this world, THIS is the joy that overflows into us when we abide in Him. It is the type of joy that God wants for us. This is the only way our joy can be complete in this life.

I acknowledge that there’s a very good chance that you or someone you love very much may be going through a great trial right now. Or, maybe you can identify that there’s some debris or what-ifs that have been keeping your joy at bay.

I ask God right now, in the name of Jesus, to give you the strength, encouragement and hope you need to surrender it to Him. Thank you, Jesus, for modeling enduring joy and for making this type of joy possible in this life while we remain in you. Lord, you know who is listening to this message right now. Allow them to feel the joy of your presence around them this morning like a gentle, refreshing river on a hot August day. I ask that you will allow them to feel Your joy bubbling up from your Holy Spirit dwelling inside them. I am envisioning all of our collective joy, spilling over onto one another, onto our families, onto our friends, our colleagues, our neighbours. May our joy pour out over our masks and into thirsty hearts at the grocery store, at the gas station, in our schools! No matter our circumstances we bring before you this morning, Lord, thank you for encouraging us to consider it pure joy as we abide in Christ and as we pray in His name, praise His name, and persevere through Christ who strengthens us. Amen!

Song – Emmanuel Musicians

Come and Listen

Come and listen
 come to the water's edge
all you who know and fear the Lord
Come and listen
 come to the water's edge
all you who are thirsty come

Let me tell you what
 He has done for me
Let me tell you what
 He has done for me
He has done for you
 He has done for us

Come and listen
 come and listen to what He's done
Come and listen
 come and listen to what He's done

Praise our God for He is good
 praise our God for He is good
Praise our God for He is good
 praise our God for He is good
He has done for me
 He has done for you
 He has done for us

Come and listen
 come and listen to what He's done
Come and listen
 come and listen to what He's done

David Crowder

Benediction – Robin

May we go now, dependent on God, rooted in Jesus and led by the Spirit, to fully love God and all people for God's Kingdom, pleasure and glory. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Musicians

Adam Bourassa, Amy Bourassa, Scott Jeschke, Chole Meadows, Scott Lepp, Beverly Toth, Julia Friesen, Rob Priestley, Dave Young, Kari Elliott