

The Quest for Joy- Regent Chapel (October 21, 2009)

About ten months ago now, in January of this year, Sharon and I were in Vernon, BC, a city of about 40,000 people located at the northern end of the Okanogan Valley.

We were there to help our son David and his wife Tara with their newborn son Caleb, their second child, who had just arrived into this world.

One morning I took their daughter, our first grandchild, Jennifer to the park. No easy task as I had to outfit her in her snowsuit, gloves, boots, cap. When we got to the park we first made a snowman and threw snowballs. Soon she wanted to do what was then her favorite thing to do at the park – she wanted to swing. So I helped her up onto one of the swings and began to push her. “Higher Campa,” as you would anticipate. “More higher Campa.”

After about five minutes of swinging back and forth, Jennifer – then two and a half years old, let go of the right hand chain and put her hand over her heart. “Campa . . .” That is what she called be then. It was a significant improvement over what she had been calling be the past few months, “Crappa.” “Campa,” she said, with her hand over her heart, “Campa, I am so happy.” I could see it in her eyes and hear it in her voice. “I am so happy.” “That’s wonderful,” I said, not sure just how she was using the word “happy.” Back and forth she went on the swing. She looked to her right, to the hills east of the park, and then to the left, to the slightly taller hills to the west. “Campa, look – the mountains are laughing.” Oh for eyes to see and ears to hear as a child! “They are?” I asked; “why?” “Because,” she said, “the mountains are happy too.” Back and forth she went on the swing. And then she asked, “Campa, are you happy?” Eye to eye – “Campa, are you happy?”

What was I suppose to say? I was very happy that she was happy. And very touched that she saw and heard happy mountains. But what was I suppose to say? “Jennifer, I would like to be, but I hurt that your daddy has to work so hard because he and your mom got screwed by your daddy’s co-workers and are now in serious debt. Jennifer, I would like to be happy, but there is a war going on in Iraq draining the Western economy into a dangerous place. Jennifer, I would like to be happy, but my Preaching and Worship course did not get off to a good start and I am pretty discouraged. All of this, of course, I am saying to myself – all in a nano-second. “Campa, are you happy?”

Since that day last January – I think about it nearly every day – I have resumed my quest for joy. I say resumed, because finding joy – so elusive for me – has been a significant theme in my life. It is for others of great spiritual depth and insight than me – a fact in which I find comfort. Since that day last January I have felt the pull to seek joy with greater intentionality.

Why? Because there was a time when I would have been known for joy. On that day in the park I heard in my head – from the Lord or from my own heart, I do not know – “you have lost your first joy.”

Why is this such a problem?

Jesus prays for this.

In John’s Gospel joy is THE mark of discipleship.

“Campa, are you happy?”

I think Jennifer means “are you experiencing what I am – joy”

Joy – deeper than happiness, richer than pleasure.

The emotion that says “I’m home.”

“At-home-ness.”

15:11 – “These things...”

Jesus uses the phrase throughout UR Discourse

Cite

Imply all of His teaching in UR

All of His teaching in John?

All of His teaching?

End S/M with “that My joy...”?

I think so.

What I know thus far.

1. I know that we are not wired for constant joy. Cannot handle it. When David – Jennifer’s Dad – was given to us. Carrot top head – zest for life. Joy. Wiped us out! Heaven – maybe. Earth – not yet.
2. I know that Pascal, though exaggerating a bit, was on to something. “All do for joy.” So Piper too on to something with Christian Hedonism. Jesus saying, “I want joy for you – here is where it is found.” So, no.3
3. **Emerges** from abiding in Jesus.
4. Comes out of love – command. Sharon, Marissa – Joy.
5. Is a Person – as is Peace, Light, Love. Joy comes when not looking for IT but for Him.
6. I know the obstacles to joy – perfectionism (never good enough) and people-pleasing (never know where stand)
7. Cannot by-pass or accelerate lament.
8. Not contingent on circumstances. Happiness, not joy. UR – hard times. “Sorrow”
9. Found in living into His friendship. Philos greater than agape.
10. I know Karl Barth is right – “a defiant nevertheless” – Habk. 3 CHS

11. Participate in His Joy – in His at-home-ness – in His at-home-ness in the Father – in His at-home-ness in the Father’s love. “I have said these things that My at-home-ness in the Father’s love may be in you, and that your at-home-ness in the Father’s love may be made complete.

“Campa, I am so happy.”

Lord, please grant that she has many more such moments on which she can call in the down times.

“Campa, the mountains are laughing.”

Lord, as she grows up, as she sets aside childish ways, never let her out-grow the capacity to see and hear Your creation rejoicing even as it groans. And please help me grow into the child-like-ness needed to fully enter Your kingdom.

“Campa, are you happy?”

(Wait a few seconds – exit).