

Once there was a young man from a good home who rebelled against the values and ideals his mother and father had tried to instill within him. He ran with the wrong crowd. He got into scrapes with the law. He seemed to delight in trampling on the feelings of those who loved him most.

One evening his father was coming in from a late business meeting and he walked by his son's bedroom. There was the young man stretched out on the bed fast asleep. Seated on the bed beside him as his mother. Her husband watched quietly as his wife gently brushed back the hair on her son's forehead and gently kissed him. With tears in her eyes she turned to her husband and whispered: "You know, he won't let me love him when he is awake".

The sad loneliness of that mother must be something like the sad loneliness of God. He loves each of us but we resist it. We will bless our lives, but we are reluctant to receive those blessings. How frustrating it must be for any parent who has so much that he or she wants to give to have a child who will not receive.

Jesus speaks of God's desire to give good things to his children: "Which of you would give you son a serpent when he asks for a fish. Or would you give him a scorpion when he asks for an egg. If you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more, then, will your Father which is

in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him"

Many people stay away from Christ because they have the idea that he will subtract from their lives. The opposite is true of course for Jesus adds to our lives. There are some good things God wants us to have. All we have to do is ask and be willing to receive.

What are some of the good things God wants to give you this morning? What are some of the blessings he wants to pour out to you

1. First of all a HEART FILLED WITH JOY. That is God's will for you. But let us be careful, happiness and joy are not objects you find outside yourself. They come from within.

An ancient Hindu legend states that when the gods were making the world, they said: "Where can we hide the most valuable treasures, so that they will not be lost? How can we hide them so that the lust and greed of men will not steal or destroy them? What can we do to be assured that these riches will be carried on from generation to generation for the benefit of all mankind?"

So in their wisdom they selected a hiding place that was so obvious it wouldn't be seen. There they placed the true riches of life, endowed with the power of perpetual self-replenishment. Where did they place these ~~gifts~~ treasures? They placed the secret to happiness and fulfillment within the heart of man. And joy and happiness come from within.



Joy comes<sup>3</sup> from the awareness that we are God's children.

It comes from having God's spirit within us. There is no other source of true happiness and joy. Someone has described the mood of persons in our time as being one of outer optimism and inner despair. That is largely true, I suspect. Outer optimism and inner despair. Despite the glib confidence we show, many of us somehow have the feeling that we have missed something in life. We may not be sure what it is. But there is an empty spot there. St Augustine described it as a God-shaped void. "Our hearts are restless 'til they find their rest in thee". That is a good thing the Father would give us - a heart filled with joy.

2. A second good thing God wants to give us is A SOUL FREE FROM THE BURDEN OF SIN. Sin robs us of joy. No one is happier than a one with a clear conscience.

Brendan Behan, the Irish playwright, virtually drank himself to death. After his death his biographer revealed the strange compulsion which drove him to alcohol.

Behan lived with a deep and unrelenting sense of guilt. In 1942 he went to England as a member of the IRA, with sabotage as his purpose. One day he dropped a bomb into a pillar box. When it exploded a young mother and her infant were passing and both were killed. Behan was overcome with guilt for causing the needless suffering to helpless innocent people. And increasingly he tried to drown that guilt in alcohol.

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Unresolved guilt takes a higher toll than we realize. There are many who feel that God's law can be broken and not experience guilt. It is only discovery of sin that frightens us. "as long as no one knows, what harm is there?" Somehow, though, we never forget the wrong we have done. It lingers on in the soul like an indelible stain on a white carpet. And there is only one power that can lift that stain. And that is forgiveness of God experienced thru the infusion of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

King Charles V was loaned large sums of money by a merchant in Antwerp. The note came due but the King was bankrupt. The merchant gave a great banquet for the King. When all the guests arrived and the food was brought in, the merchant had a large platter placed on the table with a fire blazing from it. Then taking the note out of his pocket, he held it in the flames until it was burned. The King threw his arms around the merchant and wept.

There are some who would go off silently and weep tears of remorse and relief if that awful stain could be removed from our souls. It can be. God is willing. God is waiting.

3. A heart filled with joy; a soul freed from the burden of sin; and a MIND RELEASED FROM THE BONDAGE OF WORRY AND REGRET. That is the third good thing God wants to give us. Jesus asks: Why are you anxious. . . consider the lilies of the field...the birds of the air..." If they can trust God,



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can't we. If we could but believe "that all things work to the good of those who love God".

Some are cynical about such promises.

Leslie weatherhead once us a limerick to illustrate the shallowness with which many regard God's providence. The kimerick went like this:

There was a young lady from Ryde  
Who was carried away by the tide  
A man-eating shark  
Was heard to remark  
I knew that the Lord ould provide

We know that often the world is cruel and hard. We know that there is a lot to fear. Yet there is one who is far greater in his love for us than the sum toal of all the things we dread. Let us relax and release our worries to his care. Let us turn our fears and anxieties over to him. His spirit will bear witness in our lives, as Paul put it. We would know the ONE in whom we believe. We would know the quiet place that he seeks to give thsoe who are troubled and afraid.

A SS school teacher asked ~~members of her class~~ to recite the 23rd Psalm. a timid little girl raised her and siad she could. She stood up and said: "The Lord is my shepehrd. That's all I want". Wasn't she speaking for many of us.

Consider thelilies, the birds of the air. Trust the creato Your heart can be filled with joy; your soul can be freed from the burden of sin; your mind can be relased from worry and fear

In Marc Connelly's THE GREEN PASTURES when "de Lawd" pre-

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pares to leave heaven and come to earth to see how his children are doing, he gives Gabriel some final instructions: "Gabriel, don't forget about that star that hasn't been working right. Take care of that" Gabriel agrees to take care of it. "And Gabriel, remember the little sparrow with the broken wing? Take care of that too, won't you?" God is portrayed as being equally concerned about the cosmos and the sparrows.

Oh sure, such a child-like faith seems so good to be true. But it is. God is like a mother kissing the forehead of her sleeping son who won't accept her love when he is awake. God is like a father who is willing and waiting to give good things to his children, if they only ask.

Isn't it time you asked. Isn't it time you receive the gift of his spirit. Do yourself a favor; do your empty heart, your stained soul, your anxious mind a favor. Let him give you the good things he wants to give you...today.

1. Heart filled with joy
2. Free from sin
3. release from worry + regret