

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church Penrith

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www.penrithpresbyterian.com



ENCOURAGEMENT LETTER 13/3/2024

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How are you today? I am filled with joy after our thanksgiving service to consider all that God has done and is doing. I give thanks for Janis, Chloe and Sam doing their Profession of Faith.

Our encouragement continues in John 17 with "Lasting Joy". Please take the time to read through the church matters too.

ENCOURAGEMENT: Lasting Joy

What gives you joy? There are many things in life that make us happy, but much of it does not last when the moment passes. Happiness often depends on what happens. There is gladness at the party, then the guests go home and the mess is left to tidy. There is happiness at the wedding, that can dissipate in the struggles of marriage. There is delight in listening to a song we like or tasting a meal we love that disappears quickly after it is over. But what gives us lasting joy?

As we have been looking at John 17, Jesus continues his prayer:

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world."

John 17:13-14

Jesus speaks to the Father looking forward to that moment to when he returns to him, but he is not leaving his disciples with nothing. He has spent time with them in the Upper Room, sharing the Passover meal with them, sharing what is to come. He says these things while he is with them, so they might have the full measure of his joy within them. How is it they may have his joy? Jesus' words tell them of what will happen and what he will do and all that it means for them. He speaks to them about:

- His coming betrayal by Judas
- How he is the Way to the Father
- How he will answer their prayers
- How the Holy Spirit will live in them, the very presence and power of God
- How he loves them so much he will lay down his life for them
- How he overcomes the world

I am sure there are more things we can identify. What he says brings home the reality of what he achieves. When he dies and rises again, they remember his words and it all clicks into place. They see the cross, they see the resurrection, they see Jesus the glorious Son and they are filled with joy. God has loved them and rescued them by Jesus.

Their joy is grounded upon Jesus' unchangeable character and his works that stand for all eternity. It is not a happiness in the fleeting happenings of life, but a joy grounded in the immutable reality of Christ.

The world might hate them for the things that Jesus has told them. Like him, they will attract ire and ridicule from those who hated Jesus. But now in trusting in Jesus and finding joy in him they have nothing to worry about. The joy they have extends beyond this world for they now belong to Jesus and the new world to come. They are no longer citizens of this world but citizens of God's kingdom. This imparts a joy that transcends anything this world may offer.

So take time to stop and consider all that you have in Christ. Consider his salvation in dying upon the cross and in rising from the dead. Consider his continuing presence with you in the Spirit. Consider how much he loves you. Stop and find your joy in Jesus – joy that transcends life's ups and downs because it rests on the rock that is Christ himself. You might find a hymn and see out your joy to God.

As always, love and prayers,
Steve