

HAPPINESS /JOY: AUGUST, 2019

**I AM READING A PSALM RATHER THAN THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IT FITS INTO MY TOPIC TODAY, WHICH IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND JOY.**

**PSALM 100;** Psalm 100 King James Version (KJV)

**100** Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

<sup>2</sup> Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

<sup>3</sup> Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

<sup>4</sup> Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

<sup>5</sup> For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

THE SUGGESTED NEW TESTAMENT READING WAS FROM ECCLESIASTES. ONE WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR WITH--- ABOUT VANITY OF VANITIES---ALL IS VANITY”

I HONESTLY COULD NOT FIND A SEGWAY FROM 'ALL IS VANITY' TO WHAT I WANT TO TALK ABOUT TODAY.

BUT I DID FIND A SEGWAY IN THAT I'VE HAD THIS TOPIC – JOY AND HAPPINESS-- ON MY MIND SINCE EARLY SPRING.

I HAD THE 'VANITY' TO THINK I HAD COME UP WITH THIS SUBJECT ON MY OWN. BUT THEN I READ AN EDITORIAL IN THE NEW YORK TIMES BY DAVID BROOKS ON MAY 7, TITLED; THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JOY AND HAPPINESS. HE TOOK MY IDEA!

ALSO OUR MINDS HERE IN THIS COMMUNITY CHURCH MUST BE CIRCLING AROUND THE SAME IDEAS. IN HIS MESSAGE LAST SUNDAY, AL SIKES REFERRED TO DAVID BROOKS' BOOK, WHERE THIS ESSAY APPEARS, **THE SECOND MOUNTAIN: THE QUEST FOR A MORAL LIFE.**

DAVID BROOKS WRITES:

*JOY INVOLVES THE TRANSCENDENCE OF SELF. WHEN YOU'RE ON THE SECOND MOUNTAIN, YOU REALIZE WE AIM TOO LOW. WE COMPETE TO GET NEAR A LITTLE SUNLAMP, BUT IF WE LIVED DIFFERENTLY, WE COULD FEEL THE GLOW OF REAL SUNSHINE. ON THE SECOND MOUNTAIN YOU SEE THAT HAPPINESS IS GOOD, BUT JOY IS BETTER.*

I AGREE WITH THE IMAGE OF SUNLAMP VRS. REAL SUNSHINE, BUT I BELIEVE JOY IS NOT JUST BETTER – I BELIEVE JOY IS A DIVINE GIFT— SOMETHING LIKE GRACE—IT IS GIVEN, IT CAN'T BE *ATTAINED*. IT IS A 'TOUCH OF THE DIVINE'. YOU DON'T 'EARN' JOY – YOU CAN'T DO SOMETHING TO GET IT—IT JUST DESCENDS ON YOU UNANNOUNCED.

THINK ABOUT LEVELS OF POSITIVE FEELINGS; THERE IS CONTENTMENT, NOT A BAD FEELING, THEN PLEASURE WHICH CAN MAKE YOU HAPPY, AND AT THE EXTREME, THERE IS ALSO ECSTASY.

THERE'S A REASON THERE IS A DRUG CALLED ECSTASY. ONE CAN 'WORK UP TO ECSTASY' CAN DO SOMETHING TO ACHIEVE A STATE OF ECSTASY--- BUT YOU CAN'T **DO** ANYTHING TO GET JOY.

YOU CAN BE HAPPY – CONTENT—WHEN THINGS ARE GOING WELL, YOU ARE WITH YOUR LOVED ONES, ENJOYING A NICE WALK, LISTENING TO GREAT MUSIC. BUT JOY IS DIFFERENT.

I WILL DESCRIBE A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF JOY AS AN EXAMPLE.

YEARS AGO--- OVER 30 NOW, I WAS DRIVING TO THE BEAVERKILL IN MY OLD 1969 VOLVO, WHICH IS THE ONLY CAR I EVER LOVED. EVEN THOUGH IT HAD LOST 3<sup>RD</sup> GEAR AND YOU COULD SEE THE ROAD THROUGH THE FLOOR ON THE PASSENGER'S SIDE. THE KNOB KEPT COMING OFF THE GEAR SHIFT. (DOES ANYONE REMEMBER THE VOLVO GEAR SHIFT IN JOHN IRVING'S NOVEL "THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GARP?)"

I WAS DRIVING UP THE EAST SIDE OF THE WURTSBORO HILLS. IT WAS A SUMMER DAY WITH THUNDER CLOUDS IN THE DISTANCE. THE WINDOWS WERE OPEN. I HAD JUST STOPPED AND BOUGHT SOME FRESH CORN TO HAVE FOR DINNER. I EVEN REMEMBER WHAT I WAS WEARING – A KIND OF PEASANT BLOUSE AND SIMPLE COTTON

SKIRT. OUR DOG PANAMA WAS IN THE BACK SEAT PANTING – SHE HATED BEING IN THE CAR BUT HATED BEING LEFT EVEN MORE.

THERE WAS NOTHING PARTICULARLY SPECIAL THAT DAY. IT WAS ANOTHER SUMMER AFTERNOON. BUT SUDDENLY – OUT OF SOMEWHERE I FELT THIS FLOOD OF JOY—MORE THAN HAPPINESS—IT WAS INSTANTLY TRANSFORMING. IT CAME – AND BY THE TIME I WAS DRIVING BACK DOWN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WURTSBORO HILLS, IT HAD LIFTED. BUT IT LEFT ME WITH A GREAT SENSE OF --- IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN, BUT OF HAVING BEEN TRANSFORMED FOR THOSE FEW PRECIOUS MOMENTS . JOY IS A KIND OF RUSH—NOT SOMETHING YOU CAN SUSTAIN.

IF I WERE TO FIND A VISUAL IMAGE OF JOY – IT WOULD BE THE FACES AND LEAPING BODIES OF THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM WHEN THEY SCORED THE WINNING POINT FOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP. JOY *FEELS* LIKE THE WAY THEY LOOKED.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS REFERENCES TO JOY. **ODE TO JOY**; THE POEM BY FRIEDRICH SCHILLER, AND OF COURSE THE *JOY* IN BEETHOVEN'S 9<sup>TH</sup> SYMPHONY . WHICH WE SANG THIS MORNING.

A FRIEND ONCE SAID, 'IMAGINE BEING THE SOLOIST WHO WAITS FOR THAT BUILDUP BY THE ORCHESTRA. THEN WITH EVERYTHING IN SUSPENSION AND OUT OF THAT SILENCE, SUDDENLY HE/SHE SINGS OUT THAT ONE WORD "FREUDE"-GERMAN FOR JOY-- THEN THE CHORUS JOINS IN, JOYFUL, JOYFUL WE ADORE THEE."

AND JUST IN CASE I COULD EVEN PRETEND TO THINK I HAD SOMEHOW COME UP WITH AN ORIGINAL THOUGHT ABOUT JOY, I READ A BOOK REVIEW A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO IN THE WALL

STREET JOURNAL, ON A BOOK OF COLLECTED POEMS, CALLED *JOY: 100 POEMS*. BY CHRISTIAN WIMAN. THE REVIEWER, DAVID SKEEL WROTE:

JOY IS A MYSTERIOUS EMOTION, EASY TO RECOGNIZE AND ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE. TO EXPERIENCE JOY IS AS IF TO HAVE A PURER, MORE BEAUTIFUL WORLD SUDDENLY BREAK INTO ONE'S DAILY EXISTENCE.

HE QUOTES C.S. LEWIS, WHO SAID ABOUT JOY:

I DOUBT WHETHER ANYONE WHO HAS TASTED IT WOULD EVER.....EXCHANGE IT FOR ALL THE PLEASURES IN THE WORLD. BUT THEN JOY IS NEVER IN OUR POWER AND PLEASURE OFTEN IS. “

NOT ONLY DO PEOPLE WHO ARE HAPPY OR TEND TO BE HAPPY; EXPERIENCE JOY. MELANCHOLY AND EVEN DEPRESSED PEOPLE CAN FEEL A RUSH OF JOY.

ANNE MORROW LINDBERGH SAID, “FOR HAPPINESS ONE NEEDS SECURITY, BUT JOY CAN SPRING LIKE A FLOWER EVEN FROM THE CLIFFS OF DESPAIR.”

WHEN JOHN AND I LIVED IN THE VILLAGE – BACK IN THE 60'S WE WOULD SOMETIMES GO TO A BAR ON HOUSTON STREET. THERE WAS A MAN WHO SAT IN A CORNER, IN A BUSINESS SUIT, AND HE WOULD PERFORM CARD TRICKS FOR DRINKS. I THINK HE SAT THERE EVERY NIGHT, SLOWLY GETTING CLOSE TO OBIVILION WITH ALCHOHOL. HE ONCE SHOWED ME HIS 'CARD' – NAME AND OFFER TO DO MAGIC CARD TRICKS - AND ON THE BACK WAS A PENCIL FIGURE OF A SMALL DOG--- WITH THE WORD “JOY”.

NOW, I REALIZE THAT WAS MOST LIKELY A COME ON TO GET US TO BUY HIM MORE DRINKS.--- BUT FOR SOME REASON THAT LITTLE TINY WORD *JOY. HELD IN HIS HAND* IN THAT DARK AND NOT VERY HAPPY PLACE – MADE AN IMPRESSIONSON ME.

ON A THEOLOGICAL SIDE, JOY CAN BE COMPARED TO GRACE--- IT IS SOMETHING NOT DESERVED, IT IS A GIFT.

AGAIN HOW OUR MINDS WORK TOGETHER HERE IN THIS CHURCH -- --- BOB JONES TALKED ABOUT GRACE IN HIS MESSAGE IN JUNE AND AL SIKES TALKED ABOUT GRACE LAST SUMMER

NOW GRACE IS A VERY COMPLEX SUBJECT THAT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED THEOLOGICALLY FOR CENTURIES. ONE WRITER WHO WAS VERY CATHOLIC—AND ALSO SOUTHERN GOTHIC, IS CARSON MCCULLERS. SHE MAINTAINED THAT HER BOOKS AND SHORT STORIES ARE ESSENTIALLY ABOUT GRACE. HER ARGUMENT IS THAT EVEN THE MOST HENIOUS PEOPLE WHO DO HORRID THINGS CAN BE GIVEN THE GIFT OF GRACE IN A FLASH BEFORE THEY DIE.

SHE SAID: most people think of these stories as hard, hopeless and brutal. BUT ALL my stories are about the action of DIVINE grace on a character who is not very willing to support it,

WE CAN COMPARE GRACE TO JOY BUT THEY ARE DIFFERENT. GRACE IMPLIES A MORE PERMANENT CONDITION THAN JOY. THERE IS A STATE OF GRACE.

BUT JOY IS FLEETING –ALTHOUGH THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING 'TRANSPORTED' REMAINS, EVEN AFTER THE FEELING OF JOY HAS LEFT.

I GUESS ONE COULD EXPLAIN THE SENSE OF JOY BY EXAMINING THE NUROLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THIS PHENONOMA BUT SINCE YOU CAN'T DETERMINE WHEN JOY WILL 'DESCEND ON YOU'—HOW COULD YOU POSSIBLEY MEASURE IT? IT'S THIS VERY ILLUSIVE NATURE OF SOMETHING THAT WE DEFINITELY EXPERIENCE THAT MAKES IT A PART OF – WHAT I REFER TO AS THE DIVINE.

I SUGGEST THAT JOY MUST GIVE US SOME LINK, OR A TIE TO WHAT LIES BEYOND US AND IS NOT IN OUR CONTROL. IT IS A VITAL PART OF THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

I'M SURE IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT I FIND JOY CLOSELY TIED TO THE MIRACLES OF NATURE. MOUNTAINS, SUNSETS, THE MILKY WAY, THE MIRACLE OF A TINY DRAGON FLY—ALL THESE NATURAL THINGS CAN BRING UNEXPECTED WONDER AND JOY.

LOOKING FOR QUOTES ABOUT JOY I CAME ACROSS THIS

ONE, FROM GILBERT BAKER; "WE NEEDED SOMETHING TO EXPRESS OUR JOY, OUR BEAUTY, OUR POWER. AND RAINBOW DID THAT.

THEN I THOUGHT – WHO **IS** GILBERT BAKER – AND AS IT TURNS OUT HE WAS A GREAT ADVOCATE OF THE LGBT MOVEMENT AND THE RAINBOW HE WAS REFERRING IS THE SYMPOLE OF THAT MOVEMENT—THE RAINBOW FLAG.

BUT EVEN IF HIS REFERENCE WAS TO AN ACTUALY MAN-MADE RAINBOW, THE IMAGE IS STILL VALID—HOW DO YOU LOOK AT A RAINBOW WITHOUTH SOME SENSE OF WONDER, WHICH IS CLOSE TO JOY. THE RAINBOW'S EPHEMERAL NATURE IS PART OF THAT FEELING.

SO I WOULD LIKE TO CLOSE THIS MESSAGE WITH US ALL SINGING 'JOY TO THE WORLD' WHICH REFERS TO THE BIRTH OF CHRIST, THE MOMENT WHEN ANGELS BURST FORTH WITH GREAT TIDINGS OF GOOD NEWS FOR ALL THE WORLD. CHRISTMAS IS A JOYFUL CELEBRATION – A JOYOUS OCCASION.

THE TEXT IS QUITE LOVELY.IT WAS WRITTEN BY ISSAC WATTS IN 1719 BASED ON PSALM 98, WHICH WE READ IN OUR



RESPONSIVE READING. AND THE TUNE IS BASED ON ONE BY  
GEORGE FREDRICH HANDEL.

I PARTICULARLY LIKE THE WORDS "LET HEAVEN AND  
NATURE SING" AND THE SECOND VERSE 'WHILE FIELDS AND  
FLOODS, ROCKS HILLS AND PLAINS == REPEAT THE SOUNDING  
JOY. AND THE LAST VERSE 'RESOUNDS' WITH THE PHRASE, AND  
WONDERS OF HIS LOVE.

ALTHOUGH ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST THIS HYMN LENDS  
ITSELF TO CELEBRATING THE JOYS AND WONDERS OF NATURE  
AND OUR LIVES ON EARTH.

PAGE 246, VERSES 1,2 AND 4

