



THE REBEL'S GUIDE TO JOY

Part 1 of The Rebel's Guide to Joy

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Acts 16, Philippians 1:1-1a | October 07, 2007

You are listening to Philippians, a Rebel's Guide to Joy, a teaching series by Pastor Mark Driscoll. The following is a presentation of Mars Hill Church in Seattle. For more audio and video content, visit marshillchurch.org.

Mark Driscoll: Welcome, welcome, welcome. Tonight, we're gonna start the great Book of Philippians. We're titling it The Rebel's Guide to Joy. One of the great themes of that Book is, in fact, joy. And so, what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna pray. My name's Mark. I'm the preaching pastor at the church. I'll go ahead and pray, and then we'll just launch right in, set everything up for 'ya, and have a little fun in Philippians. And glad you guys could join us this evening as we get things started. So, I'll pray and we'll get to work.

Father, we're grateful. We're exceedingly grateful that you're a good God. That you love us and you take good care of us. That you have good plans for us. And that you've chosen to speak to us. And so, as we open your Word, we are asking that you would send your Holy Spirit to instruct us, inform us, convict us, and enable us to live new lives that are patterned after the life of Jesus, in whose name we ask these things. Amen.

I'll tell you guys a little bit about Philippians. Great Book. I've spent months studying it, really excited to teach it to you. One of the great themes of the book is joy, which I think is really important because we live in a nation that is, in large part, founded as a social experiment in the pursuit of happiness. I'll prove it to 'ya with my handy dandy clicker. Right here, on the Declaration of Independence, it says we have rights. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Life, guaranteed. Liberty, guaranteed. Happiness, good luck. You're welcome to pursue it while you're looking for unicorns and honest politicians, and whatever else you think might be fun.

It's amazing, though, that life and liberty are guaranteed and joy, happiness, that's something you've gotta pursue on your own. Best of luck finding it. And so, we're a nation that has, for a few hundred years, undertaken this experiment of the pursuit of happiness, trying to find what will make us happy. And people tend to look in two places – culture and religion.

So, we'll look at culture first. And when we look at culture you'll find that culture has, for us, new processes, new possessions, new places, new people, all of which we are told, "If you go in this direction or these directions, at the end there is joy. You'll be happy." So, we'll start first with processes. And it seems like every talk show host, guru, late night infomercial, magazine cover has steps. Seven steps to joy, four steps to joy, three steps to joy.

(Laughter)

Men's health – 759 ways to live the perfect life, as 1 example. I don't know about you, 759 seems like a lot to remember, right? The Old Testament only has 600 commandments. Men's health has got more rules than the Bible.

(Laughter)

Additionally, perfect, to me, seems like an overstatement, right? Perfect is an overstatement and I read the whole thing. Most of it's about being an idiot, breaking the commandments, get a big screen TV, and taking advantage of women. So, it's really not the perfect life. And, additionally, it doesn't say anything about God, Jesus, religion, Heaven, hell, Bible, nothing. Maybe some of you have tried that. You've said, "Okay, I'm gonna do these 7 steps, these 11 steps, these 759 steps. Maybe you've tried one of these processes and it didn't work.

Well, then, what we tend to move onto is possessions and what you'll find in advertising is almost every ad has got somebody who's smiling and the subtle inference is, "Buy our junk and you'll be happy." For example, here, maybe all you need is new undergarments. Maybe that's really the source of your grief.

(Laughter)

Look how happy they are. A new dress might make you happy. If that doesn't work, you can, gentlemen, go buy new jeans, Wrangler jeans. You won't be cool, or manly, or successful like Brett Favre, but you can wear the same pants.

(Laughter)

About as close as you're gonna get, sadly; or, maybe you move on and you get new jewelry, right ladies? New watch, new ring, new earrings. Some lady said, "Amen." Now, she looks happy. What you don't see is her boyfriend. He's over on the side with a nervous twitch 'cause he can't afford all

that.

(Laughter)

It makes him very sad, but she's pretty happy about that.

(Laughter)

Maybe what you need is new technology that will send you the hottest celebrity news on your phone. So, when you're looking at your depressing life, you're like, "Hey, so and so went to rehab. (Chuckling) I'm doing pretty good." You'll feel better.

(Laughter)

Or, if that doesn't work, you can get a new product like crunchy brand, which is better than, apparently, old school computer programmer brand, but it comes with a weird side effect of making you bowlegged.

(Laughter)

I'm not sure why. The pursuit of joy in culture takes you to new process. That doesn't work. You pursue new possessions. If that doesn't work, maybe the answer is you need a new place. Maybe you're just in the wrong place. Maybe you should, instead, go to, for example, the bar. Get drunk. Meet some other miserable people. That'll make you happy.

(Laughter)

Or if the bar doesn't work, maybe you need to go to a place that's a little warmer, like Hawaii. That'll make you happy. And if that doesn't work, where are you gonna go? You're going to Vegas, baby.

And if that doesn't work, then maybe what you need is new people, right? Happy people, funny people, hilarious people. Who are the funniest people in the culture? The comedians and I love comedy. And the comedians must have figured out the pursuit of happiness because they're laughing and they make a good living making other people laugh. But, what I find that is curious is when you examine the lives of some of the funniest people, they tend to, sometimes, be the least happy. I'll give you some examples since you asked.

Mitch Hedberg. Any of you guys ever listen to him? He's hilarious and dead from a drug overdose. Likewise, Belushi. Hilarious, dead of a drug overdose. Likewise, Chris Farley. Hilarious, especially the little van down by the river, small coat. You know, I've got whole – that's funny, but he's dead as well, drug overdose. That sometimes the funniest people who make their living enabling the rest of us to laugh are, in and of themselves, the least happy. One more recent example, Owen Wilson, interesting word, despair on the cover of People Magazine saying that this comedic actor, who was rich, successful, famous, funny, gifted, talented, was also so depressed that he slit his own wrists and tried to recently kill himself. And I don't know the guy. It says in the article that he actually did go to church growing up. Honestly, I'm praying for him. I hope he, you know, comes to Jesus or comes back to Jesus, or whatever is going on, and he and Jesus works this out and the guy gets some encouragement 'cause I don't know what's going on. But, he's, obviously, in a sad place.

All of this to say that in culture is not the answer to the pursuit of happiness. That you may try different processes. You may obtain different possessions. You may go to different places. You may even laugh with different people. But, in the end, it probably isn't gonna make you all that happy.

And so, what people do, they transition the pursuit of happiness from culture to religion, right? So, that'll be our next category. And religion begins with sort of pop psychology, with a little bit of God overlay, and sort of new age Oprah-ism. It's very popular and it's sort of way to find your happiness in your inner self and there's a lot of new age magazines and general spiritual talk. One example I found is awesome.

(Laughter)

This is awesome. This magazine cover will reveal Paris Hilton's seven spiritual lessons.

(Laughter)

That's awesome.

(Laughter)

The cool stuff is that the craziest stuff isn't even made up; it's real. Might I submit to you, if you're at the place spiritually where you're like, "Paris, help" –

(Laughter)

– okay, you're officially in a bad place spiritually.

In addition, interior story has your action plan to joy. Again, six steps. And what I find interesting, not one of them says anything about God. Spirituality, often times, has nothing to do with God. What it does say, point one, "What makes your heart leap?" I hope this is not cannibalism or terrorism because the second thing is, "Find inspiration". Oh, Jeffrey Dahmer or Osama bin Laden, for example. And what the whole thing is is that there is no God. There's just you. And if there is a God, he exist to tell – to do what you tell him to do, so figure out what you like, tell God to do it, and

then God has to do what you tell him to do, and God's your errand boy who runs around doing what you want him to do. And that's what spiritually minded people tend to be. "It's about me. It's not about God. It's about what I want, not about what he wants. It's about what I tell him to do and not him telling me what to do."

And so, some of you may have tried sort of vague, general spirituality, and it didn't go so well. So, maybe now, you've considered trying on Christianity as a specific form of religion.

What I find disconcerting is this whole wave of new Christian thinking that says that joy is to be found in the same place that culture and spirituality tells us. Get rich. Get healthy. Be happy. That's the equation. Health and wealth. Prosperity. Now, in this, what we are saying is that, as Christians, we have nothing to offer that is any different from non-Christians or people in other religions.

My point is this. In your pursuit of joy, you've gotta be really careful that just because it's in a Christian bookstore, on the Christian radio station, or, Heaven forbid, on Christian television, doesn't necessarily mean that it's right. That you and I have got to be discerning. I want you to think this through with me. By that definition, that walking closely with God in maturity of faith means that you are wealthy, with good relationships, living in victory, without pain, and without anxiety, excludes Jesus. Okay, might I just submit to you that whatever definition of a good life you have, it should be big enough to include God.

Let's think about it, okay? If God's plan for you is that you would prosper. That you would be rich. That you would have more than enough money to pay your bills, what does that say about Jesus who was born in what? A rich family or poor family? Poor family. Worked a common job for 30 years, spent three years in ministry, flat broke, homeless, sometimes hungry, and when it came time to pay his taxes, like some of you, he couldn't afford it.

How about this issue of relationships? Did Jesus ever have any strained relationships?

(Laughter)

One televangelist says, "God wants you to have great relationships and you need to be a total victor, winner. All your relationships need to be good." Well, you know, I read the Bible. Jesus, our great God and Savior, his family disowned him. His friends abandoned him. Judas betrayed him. And the crowd screamed, "Crucify him!" I don't mean to overstate my case. It appears as though there were, perhaps, occasional relational strain.

(Laughter)

Perhaps.

How about this issue of pain? "God doesn't want you to have pain. You shouldn't have pain." Did Jesus ever suffer physical pain? Some of you have constant, chronic, physical pain. Jesus Christ was beaten. His beard plucked. Crown of thorns put in his head. Scourged. Beaten, Whipped within, literally, the near point of his own death. And then, was crucified. Nailed to a Roman crossbar between two thieves. You know what that is? Pain. Excruciating, horrendous, physical pain.

How about this other issue of victory? "God doesn't want you to be a victim, but to be a victor." Was Jesus ever victimized? Some of you have been victimized; been raped, abandoned, beaten, molested, abused, neglected, hated, despised, betrayed. You ever been a victim? It happens all the time. Jesus was. False accusations. False witnesses. False trial. False condemnation. False execution. That's a victim.

And lastly, were you in despair? "If you really know God, and you really trust God, you won't be a person who has any anxiety. You'll be fine." Did Jesus? Do you guys remember the night before Jesus died? He was in the Garden of Gethsemane so stressed out he couldn't even sleep, and his stress level was so high that he literally sweated drops of blood, which is unbelievable anxiety.

Here's my point. My point is that a relationship with God is not all lollipops, skipping while singing hymns, right? There are days that are very, very hard, and very difficult, and very painful. And then, the pursuit of joy, if all we read is the first two chapters of Genesis, which his what some do, they believe the Bible has two chapters. "God made everything very good. The end." "Go do it. Just have a positive attitude. Wake up every morning, look in the mirror and say, 'I'm a champion'."

(Laughter)

Click your heels twice, suck on your lollipop, and live your illusion. Go for it. Run, Forest, run.

(Laughter)

You know, it takes more than that. And if you keep reading your Bible, God did make everything very good in Genesis 1 and 2. And something very bad happened in Genesis 3. We sinned. And sin results in death. And conflict. And chaos. And injustice. And war. And famine. And pestilence. And plague. And hardship. And loss. And suffering. And mourning. And weeping. And crying. And death. And if all we tell people is, "God made it very good. Go do it", and we neglect the sin problem, we're setting people up for constant failure so that when they're hurting, they ask God, "Where are you?" When they're suffering, "God, where are you?" When they can't pay their bills, "God where are you?" When they're victimized, "God where are you? I thought I was supposed to be a total winner, and I feel like a total loser."

The result is, as well, for those of us who live on this earth with our eyes open, people are hurting. People are suffering. People are dying. People are struggling. People are discouraged. And they need more than out of context verses. They need more than pithy bumper sticker truisms. And they need

more than just a good attitude. Statistically, the facts bear this out. CNN reported most recently that the number one category of prescription medication in the United States of America is anti-depressants. And I'm not saying that everyone who is on an anti-depressant medication is in sin. I'm not saying that. Some people do need it. But, when it is the number one category of prescription medication, used by 118 million people, and up, what is it, 48 percent between the years 1995 and 2002, that tells you that the pursuit of happiness isn't going well. Despite all of the cultural and religious effort to make us happy, it's not working. Something just isn't working.

Twenty-five percent of all adults, at some point in their life, experience a major depressive episode. The same is true of eight percent of all adolescents. A few hundred year experiment, at cultural and religious answers, simply ends with a conclusion that joy is not to be found in either.

Perhaps most stunning, the Center for Disease Control reports that the number three cause of death among teenage girls is suicide. Last year, more than 4,000 girls lost hope and killed themselves. People medicate as well with drugs, alcohol, sex, food nicotine. We self medicate. How many people, in addition, have not only killed themselves, but tried unsuccessfully, are constantly fighting that torment of wanting to kill themselves? And I know many girls, some, perhaps, even in this room, ritual cutting and such things.

My point is simply this. That we live in a nation that exists for the cause of the pursuit of happiness and it's not going that well. Philippians is a book about joy and so it has some answer for us. Before we open that book, let me submit to you that I consider there to be three primary reasons why the pursuit of happiness is not going well. One, we hang our hopes on someone or something, saying, "When I meet that person, I fall in love. I get married, I have kids" or that thing, "I finish college. I make my money. I get my house. I get my job. I get my promotion." "When that person or thing comes into my life, then I'll be happy because that will be the source of my joy." But, what if that never happens?

I'll let you in on a little secret. We're all not gonna be President when we grow up.

(Laughter)

I'll let you in on a little secret. We're all not gonna get married, and make babies, and be millionaires, and never have physical pain, and have perfect relationships, and get to say, "I lived happily ever after." What if you don't meet that person that is the mate that would fit you well? What if you don't have those children? What if you don't get those friends? What if you don't finish that degree? What if you don't buy that house? What if you don't get that car? What if you don't get that job? What if you don't get that health? What if you don't obtain that wealth? Well, then you'll be grieved, despairing, mourning, because your hope was out there and it never came.

Second reason why I think the pursuit of happiness is not working. Let me say this on that first point as well. Let me make a distinction between desire and discontent. Desire is good. God wants you to desire things, like falling in love, and paying your bills, and being healthy, and living a fruitful life. It's good to desire that. But, when it flips over into discontent, that is saying, "I won't be happy until those things happen." That's why Paul says elsewhere that, "Godliness with contentment is of great gain." We're to have desire and contentment. If we have desire without contentment, we have discontentment. Then, we constantly set ourselves up for despair, disappointment, and discouragement.

Second reason I think why the pursuit of happiness is failing. We do get that person or those things that our joy is hung on, and they're not that fun. Okay, now don't raise your hand, but how many of you here today, and you're married, and you were thinking, "I'll be happy when I get married." And then you get married, and you realize, "I'm not so happy. I'm a sinner. They're a sinner. There's a lot more conflict than I was hoping. I was hoping they would do everything I said and they tend not to." And, surprisingly enough, they were thinking the same thing.

(Laughter)

"That really isn't going the way either of us were anticipating." How many people, then, they get the child that they've always wanted and they don't like the child 'cause the child's like a sprinkler, and there's fluids flying out every hole, and they're always screaming, and they never sleep, and they cost a lot of money?

(Laughter)

Or, they get the job they've always wanted and there's so many hours with the job that it just consumes their whole life? Or they get the house they've always wanted and the massive mortgage has them stressed out? Or they get the car they always wanted. Some wing nut gives 'em a door ding? That's life on the fallen earth. That sin has come into human history and work cursed, and the life we live is cursed, and the Bible uses the word "toil", and the truth is that having a person or a thing and the ability to enjoy that person or thing are two different things, not unlike a can of peaches and a can opener.

Perhaps, the Book of the Bible that is most clear on this point is Ecclesiastes. Therein, we find a guy Solomon. The wisest, richest, most powerful man on the earth. This guy's got thousands of women he sleeps with. This guy's got more money than he knows what to do with, and more wisdom than anyone who's ever lived, other than Jesus. He has it all and he writes a Book called Ecclesiastes. And he opens it saying this, "Meaningless, meaningless, it's all meaningless." Now, most of us go, "No way. That guy's just an idiot. He didn't know what he was doing. You give me all of his money; I'll - it'll say, "Good times, good times, it's all good times."

(Laughter)

Right? "I'll rewrite that Book." And he's saying, "No, trust me. You may have things, but without God giving you the ability to enjoy them, you'll find them to be dissatisfying." How many of you have experienced this? There was someone or something that you really wanted, and you got it, and it didn't do the job, and you weren't that happy?

The third reason is this. Blaise Pascal, 17th century Christian philosopher, says that, "We tend to be miserable. That we don't like to think about being miserable, so we create diversions. We think about something else. We do something to take our mind off our misery." Today, that would include surf the internet, watch TV, drink, smoke, mess around, find a hobby, whatever it is. Dink around on your Blackberry, whatever it is. We tend to divert ourselves. That's why the Danish philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard said, "If I could prescribe one remedy for the human condition, I would assign every human being to sit alone in silence in their room so they can meditate on their misery." Because what tends to happen is we're not happy, and rather than think about that, we just keep working, keep playing, keep sleeping. We do something so we don't have to think about it. So, let's just take a moment and say, "It's okay to be discouraged. It's okay to be at a hard place in your life." It's okay to be at a place where you're wondering where the hope, and the joy, and the future is for you.

And the pursuit of happiness may have not worked out well for you to this point. And I'm saying that culture and religion do not afford you a real helpful answer. And so, what we will do is we will turn to Scripture, not shocking. We're gonna turn to the Book of Philippians, the great theme of which is joy. And we're gonna see if God, through his Word and his servant, Paul, can give us options to culture and religion. So, we'll read one verse. Actually, we're gonna deal with one verse. That's how good it is. Tonight, we'll do one verse, okay? We'll start.

Paul. Okay, we'll stop there. First point.

(Laughter)

Paul. Who's this guy? He's the author of the Book. He hated Christians, murdered them. Jesus came down from Heaven, blinded him, knocked him over. He became a Christian. Theologically, we call that election. Alright, when Jesus comes and beats you up from Heaven, you're elect, okay? Officially elect. So, Jesus comes down from Heaven. Paul becomes a Christian. Goes from the murder of Christians to a Christian. Goes from a man who kills Christians to a pastor of Christians. Big change. He is a man who then so much loves and serves Jesus that he goes into full time ministry and he writes many of the Books of the New Testament, including this letter to his friends at the church at Philippi. We'll keep going.

And Timothy, that's his right hand man, his pastoral assistant. "Servants" – we'll come back to that word. In the Greek, it is slaves. We'll come back to it – "of Christ Jesus" – okay, Jesus is our God, his God, and Christ Jesus or in Christ Jesus, appears throughout Philippians. It's a huge theme – "To all the saints" – we'll come back to that word. Very important word – "in Christ Jesus." That's gonna be the key. "In Christ Jesus" – where is joy? Not in culture and sin. Not in religion and pride. It's in Christ Jesus – "who are at Philippi" – I'll tell you a little bit about Philippi. That was the city where there church was. Philippi was, in the most prominent nation in the world, as our city is in present day, the most prominent nation in the world. It was, according to Acts 16:11, a regional hub, much like Seattle is a hub for the Pacific Northwest. It was the center of education. Students were there. Commerce was there. Business was there. The technological advancements and cultural progress of that day emanated from that major urban center, as in our own day it does from our great city of Seattle. It was a very religious and spiritual town. Lots of witchcraft, religions, and spirituality, but very little knowledge of the Bible.

For example, it took ten Jewish men to form a synagogue, and they didn't have that many men who knew the Bible to actually form a synagogue. Furthermore, this city was very important for church planting and a strategic center of ministry, much like our own city is. And the way that Paul ended up there is recorded in Acts Chapter 16. There, God comes to him in a vision. Our God's a miraculous God. Says, "You need to go to this region and preach the Gospel. Tell 'em about Jesus, plant a church." So, he goes there and he finds that there is a group of women. A woman named Lydia is among them. She's very wealthy, probably underwrote a lot of the church ministry at Philippi. A few other women are with her. They become Christians. They become the first core group for the church plan.

Furthermore, there's a demonized girl, who's clairvoyant, can predict the future, got spiritual power and through the power of this demon, she does all kinds of sort of fortune telling and such. She becomes a Christian. The demon leaves her. She loses her demonic power. And as a result, her agent, who's booking gigs for her in Vegas, is very upset because now, he's lost his income stream. And so, he has Paul beaten up and thrown in jail. Paul's in jail. God sends an earthquake to liberate him. The Philippian jailer then has a conversion experience, becomes a Christian. Their church started kind of like Mars Hill. Very small with a few women, one guy who likes to beat people up, and a demonized girl.

(Laughter)

It's eclectic, but exciting, and that's how their church started. That's how our church started. And then, fast forward, the Book of Philippians is written back to that church at, roughly, their 11th birthday, which is exactly what we celebrate today at Mars Hill, our 11th birthday. So, there's all these sort of similarities between their work and ours. Theologically, they were a good church. Best church in the New Testament. He doesn't rebuke 'em for being heretics, wing nuts, and weirdoes. There's nothing like 1 Corinthians where a dude's shackled up with his mom. They've actually done pretty well.

Additionally, relationally, they got a little bit of conflict, Euodia and Syntyche are scrapping but, other than that, as you read the Book, most of the people are getting along well. And they're very respectful in their attitudes. When he writes whack job churches, like Galatia or the church at Corinth, he has to keep telling them that he's an Apostle, and he has Spiritual authority, and they need to respect it. Because they already respect his authority, he just simply tells them, "I'm a servant of Christ Jesus." He doesn't need to reiterate the fact that he is, in fact, an Apostle. So, that is what he says. "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers" – those are the pastors or elders. Those words are synonymous in Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5. Those are the senior male leaders in the church, and the deacons, and those are female and male other leaders in the church that work alongside of the pastors who are the senior leaders in the church. And so, this is his introduction.

Three things I wanna hammer on. Christ Jesus, saints, and slaves. We'll take 'em in that order. He says twice in the first verse, "Christ Jesus." So, we

need to tell you who Jesus is. This is one thing that's so important because in culture, religion, and spirituality, which is a religious form of American religion, there's not a lot of talk about Jesus. There's just not.

Paul starts with Jesus and says his name twice, and focuses everything on Jesus, and before he can get to joy, he's gotta tell us about Jesus. Let me tell 'ya that Paul also was an Old Testament Scholar and he was well aware of the Old Testament promises about the coming of Jesus, and many of them prophesied that Jesus would come hundreds of years in advance as a humble servant. As a humble servant. And you need to see this picture of Jesus as humble servant to really appreciate Philipians. It's a theme he'll pick up again in Chapter 2. It's a theme that's woven throughout the Book.

If you wanna study an Old Testament Book that foreshadows the coming of Jesus as humble servant, I would suggest to you the Book of Isaiah. And in Chapters 40-66, one of the great themes is Jesus' coming. He is our great God, but he's coming as our humble servant. In Isaiah 42, God the Father says that, "My servant is coming", Jesus, "to bring salvation." In Isaiah 52 and 53, it has this amazing series of prophecies of how specifically Jesus would serve us, that he would live without sin. That, first of all, he would come from a humble beginning, a poor simple family. That he would live a simple life. That he would have no beauty or majesty in him. That we would be attracted to him. He would look normal, and average, and regular. He would live simply and humbly, without sin. That, ultimately, he would be betrayed. That he would have our sin placed upon him. "He would take upon himself, it says, "the iniquity of us all." That he would be put to death with two thieves. That he would be crucified with the wicked.

It also goes on to say that he then would die and be buried in a rich man's tomb. And that, then, he would resurrect from death and he would see the light of life and be satisfied. And he would be our humble, suffering servant through his life, death, burial and resurrection, bringing our gift of salvation.

And then Jesus comes. And Jesus tells us that he is, in fact, a humble servant. And in this, I want you to see that Jesus was a rebel who was counter cultural. I know, in our day, rebel means sinner. But, everyone is sinning, so it's no longer rebellious to sin, right? You're just a conformist if you're drunk, and naked, and driving around on a loud motorcycle, smoking cigarettes, and breaking commandments, and getting pregnant out of wedlock. Everyone's done that. That's so tired.

(Laughter)

If you really wanna be a rebel, get a job. Cut your grass. Read your Bible. And shut up because no one's doing that.

(Laughter)

That's rebellion. That's the only rebellion left, okay? And we're gonna encourage you to be counter cultural rebels like Jesus. And Jesus rebelled against culture and religion by coming as a humble servant because both culture and religion tell you not to serve, but to be served. And not to be humble, but to be proud. And Jesus came, in humility, to serve. He says this in Matthew 20:28. He says it himself. "The Son of Man", which is a title from Daniel about Jesus being God, "The Son of Man came not to be" what? "Served." We live in a service based economy. Many of you have service jobs. You get paid to serve people who walk in and act like they're God.

We live in a culture where the goal is to make enough money that people will serve you and religion exists in that same way, to get into spiritual authority so that people will serve you. Jesus says, "I didn't come, though I am God, to be served, but to" what? "But, to serve." God came to serve? This is absolutely unbelievable. And Jesus says, "And to give my life as a ransom or the payment for sin for many." Jesus went to the cross and he served us. And Jesus served others during his life. He fed people. He cared for people. He healed people. He even washed the feet of his own disciples, which was the job of a poor slave. He even washed the feet of Judas Iscariot, a man who betrayed him and murdered him. There is no one as humble as Jesus. And there is no one who has served us as well as Jesus. And Jesus is still alive today. He hears our prayers. He answers our prayers. "He lives to intercede for us", Hebrews says, and Jesus is still, to this very day, though he is our great God and Savior in glory, he remains, likewise, a humble servant.

Now, in saying that, that is a great clue to understanding joy. It's not to be found in pride, but in humility. It's not to be found in being served, but in serving. And nothing in culture or religion will tell you to be a humble servant. Only Jesus will tell you that. And if you believe that, and you're a Christian, there's a word that describes who you are. "To all the saints", that's who you are. You're a saint! If you are a Christian or become one today, you are a saint. Now, I'm assuming that most of you will be cool with this because it's a pretty cool title. How many of you, like me, however, were raised Catholic and when you hear saint, you twitch a little bit. You're like – you get a little shake about you.

(Laughter)

How many of you were raised Catholic and you hear saint, and you freak out. I was an altar boy. You can see me in my little uniform, going to Catholic church, going to Catholic school, helping the priest with mass, praying to the saints, memorizing the prayers of the saints, and then Catholicism. And some Catholics are Christians who love Jesus. I wasn't one.

Here's how you become a saint in Catholicism. One, you gotta die, first thing, okay?

(Laughter)

So, once you've done that, second thing, then they send out a guy with a clipboard to do an investigation. And he puts together a little file as to whether or not you qualify as a saint. And if he feels that you do, then he forwards your case onto the bishop. And if the bishop feels like you have a good case, then he forwards you onto Rome, which is headquarters, where the cause of the saints investigates your case. And if they give you the thumbs up, then

you get forwarded on for approval, and they declare you to be venerable. And if you continue onto the next round, you get the gold pass and get to go to Hollywood, then the next thing that happens is you are sent to the beautification committee and they then declare you to be blessed. Now, at that point, it gets really tough because now, even though you're dead, you have to perform three post-mortem miracles.

(Laughter)

And if you perform three miracles, though you're dead, then you go onto the pope and if the pope signs off on you, then you're canonized and you get to be declared a saint. And in Christianity, the Bible says, "There's one step." What is that? Jesus. Check. In. Done. Love that. Easy.

(Laughter)

So, if you're a Christian, and you're here, you're a saint. What that means is Jesus lived for you, died for you, rose for you. Intercedes for you today. He's taken away your old life. He gives you a new life. He has made you holy in his sight. It's a gift you've received by grace. You're now set apart for Kingdom service, a new life. You're a saint. That's our identity. There's great joy and dignity in that. And so, I don't mind if we use the word saint, St. Francis. St. Augustine, as long as we use it for all Christians, which means, you know, if where you live, a pipe breaks and you call the plumber, and he shows up, and he's got a fish on the back of his van, open the door, "St. Hank, nice to see you, patron saint of the pipes. Come on in and do your worship."

(Laughter)

"Crawl under there and serve the Lord Jesus, St. Hank. We love you." You guys need to know this. You can now put this on your college application under honors, awards and achievements. Saint. Put it down.

(Laughter)

Saint. Represent. Saint. You're a saint.

(Laughter)

It's a good thing. Does that feel nice? Try it on for size. Put it on your business card. Saint. Put it on your resume. Saint. In your job interview, "So, why should I give you this job?" "I'm a saint."

(Laughter)

"I got a big hat at home. You want me to bring it? I'm a saint."

(Laughter)

Most of you will believe that. The other title that is given, I'm gonna have to sell you on, alright? Servant. The Greek word is slave. Now, in using that word, the Bible is not endorsing slavery as was practiced in America because that was a sin. 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul says, "Slave trading is a sin." That's what happened in America. God doesn't want his people to be in slavery. 1 Corinthians 7, Paul says, "If you're a Christian, and you're a slave, and you can get free, then get free. We don't want Christians to have slaves or be slaves", but many people in the Bible were slaves and they couldn't get out of their slavery 'cause they're born into slavery, indebted, which means they get into slavery to pay off their debt. Captured in war, born into slavery, those kind of things, you can't get out of. So, the Bible says, "As long as you're a slave, be a good Christian. Do the best you can in the state you are." It doesn't endorse slavery.

And in saying this, what we're saying is, to be a Christian means to be a slave to Jesus Christ. Okay, that means that Jesus is your master. He's in charge. You do what he says. He's the one that you listen to, follow, and obey. Additionally, it means you're gonna be doing whatever your master's doing. You'll be serving wherever your master's serving, and you're not gonna freak out if your life is worse than, or equally difficult as, your master, right? I mean, how many people go to their master and say, "Why do you got the big house and why do I gotta work so much?"

(Laughter)

"Well, you're the slave. That's how it goes." Jesus suffered, so you'll suffer. Jesus had difficult days. You're gonna have difficult days. Jesus' friends betrayed him. It's probably gonna happen. Jesus died. You're gonna die. If Jesus is your master and you're his slave, then your life is gonna look a lot like his. That's just how it is. So, don't freak out. "Oh, my gosh, I'm having a bad day." Well, you belong to a guy they killed. Expect it. Just anticipate it.

Now, in this, in telling you that you can be a slave to Jesus, most of you, I'm assuming, are not ready to sign up. "Yay, yay, yay. At the college fair at my high school, I saw the booth that said slave, and I went there first. I was hoping this would happen." And most of you didn't shoot for this. So, let me say this. The first thing I gotta convince you of is that we're all slaves. All slaves to either sin, religion or Jesus. It's not a myth. It's a who or a what. That's the issue.

So, we'll do a slavery to sin first. It says it this way. In Titus 3:3, Paul says, "For we, ourselves", talking about Christians who used to be non-Christians, "were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves" – there's our word – "to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and being hated and hating others." Slaves to sin.

I argued with a guy recently. He said, "I'm not a slave to sin." I said, "Then be perfect." He says, "I can't be perfect." I said, "Ha ha, it's because you're a slave."

(Laughter)

"Thanks for proving my point." He looked at me for a while, eventually got it.

(Laughter)

If you can't stop drinking, you're a slave to alcohol. If you can't stop overeating, you're a slave to food. If you can't stop getting angry, you're a slave to bitterness or rage. If you can't stop sleeping around, you're a slave to perversion. And we're all a slave to something or someone. If you can't stop doing what someone says. If you can't dump your abusive boyfriend. If you can't get free of the demands of people who are hurting you, you're a slave.

And here's how slavery to sin works. It starts kinda fun, and then it gets real bad, right? Going out for drinks becomes drunkenness. Flirting with somebody becomes an abusive relationship. It goes bad. And then, you die and go to hell. So, it just goes real bad, alright?

(Laughter)

Okay, you with me? And here's how slavery to sin works. It's selfish. It's for me, it's not for God and other people. Additionally, it makes me God. I get to do whatever I want. Forget God and what he wants." It demands service. "You need to do what I say" and it struggles to serve because it's not about humility and sacrifice.

And, lastly, it's about internal rewards. I like it. It made me happy. It felt good. I feel better. That's all that it takes. Slavery to sin. Many of you are slaves to sin and you know it. You're slaves to sin.

Second category, slavery to religion. And I have to criticize religion, too, because if I only talk about sin, all the really religious people will be like, (Applause), "Yay, get those wicked sinners. Get 'em." I'm not trying to convert sinners to religious people 'cause religious people murdered Jesus and that's the wrong team, okay? Like, if you kill God, you're on the wrong team.

(Laughter)

Just note to self. Write that down. If you kill God, you're on the wrong team. Religious people hated, murdered, opposed Jesus. And here's where it's spoken of, 2 Peter 2:19, "For whatever overcomes a person to that, he or she is enslaved." There's our word. And, contextually there, it's talking about religious people. Religious people are slaves to religion. Religion is a whole bunch of stupid, goofy rules that God didn't make up, aren't in the Bible, a little checklist saying, "If I do these things, and I don't do these things, then I'm a good person. I'm holy, righteous and good. God will love me because he has to, because he loves winners. He hates loser. And I'm a winner. Yay. I got a gold star on my chart." Religion is horrible. Religious people are just the most difficult, obstinate, self-righteous, proud people. They don't wanna have humility like Jesus. And they're not happy.

And here's how religion starts. It's not very fun. So, it starts bad. That's why religious people have to work through threat, fear, condemnation, and intimidation because it's no fun, so they gotta scare you into being religious. And they tell you, "Unless you do good things, God won't love you", as opposed to telling you, "God loves you, so now you can live a new life and do good things." It's all about you, it's not about God. Religious people are no fun. You ever met religious people that look like fun? I –

(Laughter)

– I know a lot of religious people. They're no fun at all, so it starts not very fun. It gets really not fun. And then, you die and go to hell and it's like, "Bummer."

(Laughter)

"It was a bad. I mean, it was really bad. And now, it's really, really bad." Welcome to religion. That's religion. And here's the problem with religion. It's selfish. It's for me. It's not for God or others. It makes God obligated to me. "God, I didn't do this bad thing, and I did do this good thing. Now, you gotta answer my prayers. Now, you gotta heal me. Now, you gotta make me rich. Now you gotta bless me. Now, you gotta make me rich. Now, you gotta bless me. Now, you gotta do what I want." It's like a shell game where you're trying to con God into being good, as if he wasn't to begin with.

It demands to serve. "I have to serve 'cause I'm strong. You're weak. I'm good. You're bad. You need me. I don't need you. I have to serve." So, religious people will serve, even when you don't want 'em to, right? When we've been sick and my wife's had a baby, we've had religious people bug us. "We're gonna bring you a meal." "No, we're fine. We got tons of food. We're fine." "No, we have to bring a meal." "No, we don't need a meal, seriously." "We have to bring a dang meal." I'm like, "Man, what kinda freakish, you know, casserole religion have you joined?"

(Laughter)

"We don't need the cass – we're fine." "No, but I'm religious, and this is what I must do." Religious people struggle to stop serving. Religious people struggle to accept service because of pride. Religion, as well, has external rewards. People love you, praise you, call you a deacon or an elder, give you a promotion, tell you you're very spiritual, pat you on the back, "Oh, you're such a nice person." It's all about external rewards. Slavery to sin, slavery to religion, or slavery to Jesus, which, curiously enough, is the only way to truly be free. Slavery to Jesus is what he's talking about here. Servants or

slaves of Christ Jesus.

And I'll tell you this. Being a slave to Jesus, doing what he says and wants, it's pretty fun, most of the time. Sometimes, though, if I'm honest, it's not all that fun. I've been a Christian for 17 years. There are days when someone sins against you and it says, "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you." And you think, "No, no, no, no, I don't wanna."

(Laughter)

And Jesus says, "No, no, no, I'm the master. I've loved you. You love them. I've forgiven you. You forgive them. I've been nice to you. You be nice to them. I'm the master." "Okay, fair enough. You're the master." Do what the master says. It's fun and, sometimes, it's a little hard. And it gets more fun. I've actually been a Christian 17 years and, honestly, it gets more fun. And then, you die and go to Heaven and then it's super fun. So, it's totally better than sin and religion.

The other thing that's cool about it, it's selfless, not selfish. Because Jesus has served me, now I can serve Jesus and others and obey the first two commandments, to love others and love God. It's possible because of Jesus having first served me. And rather than me being God and getting what I want, or me manipulating God to give me what I want, I exist so that God might be glorified through me. Do what God wants. Live as God wants. Serve others as God wants so that others see how good Jesus is. He's our God. It's not about me being God. It's not about me manipulating God. It's about me having this wonderful opportunity to glorify God, who has served me so well.

Additionally, it's not about internal rewards, pleasures and feelings. It's not about external rewards, compliments and promotions. It's about eternal rewards. One day, standing before Jesus, hearing, "Well done, good and faithful servant" and entering into your eternal rest. I'll give you a secret. Life is short. I'll give you another secret. Eternity's a long time. And life may not go the way you want it here. I'll give you a clue. This isn't Heaven. Heaven is still coming. And there, faithful service will be rewarded by a faithful God who has served us well. And there will be judgment for sin, and religion, and there will be blessing and reward for humble service for those who live as slaves to Jesus Christ.

Now, in this, I am assuming that many of you are immediately rejecting and saying, "There is no way that I am going to be a slave to Jesus. Let me get the three primary objections out of the way. See if I can't convince you, for some of you will say, "I'm free. Why do I wanna be a slave?"

I would ask you to be completely honest with yourself. Are you really free? You're not. Then, I would ask you to be honest again and say, you need to then determine to who or what your enslaved. Who or what is your master? Ladies, if you do everything your boyfriend says, he's your master. Gentlemen, if you do whatever your girlfriend wants so that she'll sleep with you, she's your master. If it is alcohol, if it is drugs, if it is food, if it is pride, if it is straight A's and achievement, someone, something is your master.

Here's my question. Is it – are they – better than Jesus? Do they love you more? Have they come looking for you? Have they died for 'ya? Have they risen for 'ya? Have they gone to prepare a place for 'ya? Are they coming again for you? Did they leave to intercede for you? Do they serve you? Do they care about you? Here's what I've found out about Jesus. He's a better master than I am. He's a better master than I am.

Now, as a new Christian, to be honest, I really struggled to believe that, but Christianity is about faith, which is trusting that Jesus is better than me. And if he's the master and I'm not, and no one and no thing beyond Jesus is my master, I will be in the best possible position. Jesus is better to me than I am. He's more loving, more gracious, more patient, more kind, more merciful, more generous, than I am.

I'll be honest and tell you that the key to freedom – you heard a lot about freedom in that clip – freedom comes through slavery to Christ. It is the rebel's secret to joy and the issue is that so many people are unhappy because no one ever thought to look into slavery as the key to freedom. And to look at humility as the key to joy. And to look at servanthood as a great lifestyle for those whose identity is as saint.

Some of you, as well, will say, "I don't wanna be a slave because if I put that on my business card, I know somebody's gonna take advantage of me and I'm gonna be made into a doormat. And I don't want people to walk over me and mistreat me for my whole life." And I would say you're an image bearer of God. I agree with you. We don't want that for you either.

One book by Richard Foster, it's a decent book on the spiritual disciplines, but his chapter on servant and service is pathetic because he says that, "We should be the scum of the earth as Christians. That we should let people walk over us so that we can be like Jesus." And I say that's ridiculous nonsense. We're supposed to serve people in a way that helps them to become more holy, and Christ-like, and disciples of Jesus. That means if someone is sinning all the time and we keep serving them, we are enabling their sin. We're also to call people to repentance and help them to grow in holiness.

I'll give you an example. My wife, we had this conversation. She gave me permission. My wife is a humble servant. Her name is grace. My high school sweetheart. Met her at 17. March 12th will be the 20th anniversary of our first date. She's a sweet gal and she loves to serve. We got five little kids and what I noticed was she'd cook the meal, set the table, pick up the dinner, do the dishes, wait on these kids hand and foot. And I said, "Honey, the kids don't do anything."

(Laughter)

She said, "That's okay. I don't mind serving." I said, "Yes, but in letting them walk over you, you're not making them into good disciples. They're learning to be served, not to serve. They're gonna have character that is exactly the opposite of Jesus, so they need to learn to set the table, and pick up their dishes, and help their mom. And they need to learn to do their chores. And you can't always serve them because by letting them walk over you,

you're not really serving them. You're enabling them." She said, "Ahhh, you're right." So, we made these adjustments. It was all fine. I've got good kids. Things are going okay.

Let me say this, though. By being a servant of Jesus, you are actually freed up not to be a slave to other people and things. You could say no to pushy people, rude people, demanding people, arrogant people, abusive people. You could say, "No, you're not my master. Jesus is. He says I'm not to do that. He says today is my day off. I don't wanna disobey the master. I need to go take a nap."

(Laughter)

True. That's actually true. Your master does say to take a day off. See, Jesus is a great master.

Third reason some of you won't, you just wanna be great. You just wanna be great. You don't wanna be mediocre. You wanna find the champion in you. You wanna live your best life now. You wanna be all you can be. You wanna have total victory. That's what you want. In Jesus' day, his disciples, in Luke 22, were having that same conversation. I'm sure it was awkward. Jesus walks up, "Hey, guys, what are you talking about?" Remember the story? I'm sure they're all looking at the ground. It's very awkward. "We were having an argument about who was the greatest." I'm sure looking at Jesus, they're like, "Why? It's probably him."

(Laughter)

"It's probably Jesus. We missed that. That's bad. That's just bad." Can you imagine how awkward that would be? "Well, we're having an argument, Jesus, about who's the greatest." What I love about Jesus, he doesn't say, "How dare you!" What he says is, "I'll tell you how to be the greatest." And what does he say? "You wanna be the first, you gotta be the last. If you wanna be the greatest, you gotta be the least. You need to be the servant and slave of all." Jesus gives the most shocking answer. The answer that no one anticipated that was coming. The answer that is rebellious to both the culture and the religion, which both tell you, Be first, not last. Be proud, not humble. Be served, don't serve." Jesus says, "No, that's all wrong. That's why everybody's miserable."

That is the key to our joy. Our identity is as saint because of what Jesus has done for us through his death, burial and resurrection, to take away our sin and make us whole. And our lifestyle is as slave. We belong to Jesus. We trust him. He's the best master. We obey him and his life is the only one that is really worth living.

Now, the difference with this slavery is that it is entirely voluntary. You will need to decide who your master is. You will need to decide what your identity is. You will need to decide what you or who you are enslaved to. We so much want that to be Jesus.

As a guy who didn't know Jesus for more than the first half of his life, and has known Jesus for almost half of his life, I assure you of this. I have no regrets. Jesus is the beset master. He loves. He serves. He cares. He hears. He gives. He lives. He dies. He rises. He intercedes. He prepares a place and he's coming again. And we want you to be able to, today, become a Christian. To give your sin to Jesus. To ask him to forgive you. To walk away from the pursuit of happiness in sin or religion, and instead, come to Jesus, and be a servant to slave of Jesus.

After Jesus has humbly served you, he will enable you then to work with him in the earth, serving others, humbly. And I assure you of this. It's the only way to have joy.

Now, throughout the history of the church, there have been people who've experienced this. People who were slaves to sin or religion and then, they met Jesus and everything changed. And they had joy. And out of that, they wrote songs. We call them hymns. And we sing them in worship, and God's people have sung them for hundred of years.

So, here's what we're going to do as a gift. We're going to share with you before we close our time together and call you to response, a biographical sketch of a man whose name is Robert Robinson. He wrote a great hymn called Come Thou Fount. I don't know if you've ever heard it. We'll do it Mars Hill style, so it'll be cool, even though it's hundred of years old. I want you to learn his story. As we sing songs, sometimes, we don't know what God has done in the person's life. And as we see what God has done in their life, then we're able to share in their joy and to worship with them. So, we'll introduce you to this man. We'll transition our service. And I hope you enjoy it.

Robert Robinson was born in England in 1735. Eight years later, his father died. Robert's mother couldn't control him, so she sent him away to a trade school in London. When he arrived, he spent most of his time with a local gang, raising hell and getting drunk. One night when Robert was about 17, he and his friends decided to go to an old gypsy fortuneteller's shop. They got her drunk so she would tell them their fortunes for free. The fortuneteller pointed her finger at Robert and told him that he would live a long life and would see both his children and grandchildren born. Robert thought, "If this is true, I can't keep living like this." George Whitfield, a great revival preacher was speaking one night and Robert and his friends went to heckle him and torment the crowd. The preacher was quoting John the Baptist as he confronted the overly religious. "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Whitfield burst into tears, yelling, "Oh, my hearers, the wrath to come. The wrath to come."

Whitfield's message haunted Robert for three years before he finally gave his life to Jesus. Robert immediately felt a call to pastoral ministry. Over his lifetime, he pastored a number of churches, wrote volumes on theology, and also penned several hymns. In 1 Samuel 7:12, we read how Samuel set up a stone altar commemorating God's help and salvation after a victory of God's people over the Philistines. He called the stone, "Ebenezer", which means stone of help. And these verses resonated with Robert, inspiring the song, Come Thou Fount, which is literally his altar of remembrance for the saving work of Jesus in his life. It's a plea for the Spirit to fill us, enabling us to remain faithful, in spite of our wondering hearts.

(Music playing/singing)

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