

WEEK 12: November 26, 2017	Ecclesiastes 8:15	A SPECIAL GIFT
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QUESTION: WHAT DOES SOLOMON MEAN BY “THE ENJOYMENT OF LIFE”?

**Ecclesiastes 8:15**, So I commend the enjoyment of life, because nothing is better for a man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany him in his work all the days of the life God has given him under the sun.

### **JOY, A GIFT FROM GOD**

- **NOT THE FRUIT OF OUR LABOR**

**Ecclesiastes 2:1**, I thought in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good.” But that also proved to be meaningless.

**Ecclesiastes 2:24–26**,<sup>24</sup> A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,<sup>25</sup> for **without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?**<sup>26</sup> To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

- **AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR WALK WITH GOD**

**Nehemiah 8:9–12**,<sup>9</sup> Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.<sup>10</sup> Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for **the joy of the LORD is your strength.**”<sup>11</sup> The Levites calmed all the people, saying, “Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve.”<sup>12</sup> Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to **celebrate with great joy**, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.

### **JOY, A GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING**

- **A SOLEMN PROMISE**

1 Peter 1:3–9,<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,<sup>4</sup> and into an **inheritance** that can never perish, spoil or fade—**kept in heaven for you**,<sup>5</sup> who **through faith are shielded by God’s power** until the coming of the salvation that is ready

to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> **In this you greatly rejoice**, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. <sup>7</sup> These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are **filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy**, <sup>9</sup> for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

- **A CONSTANT COMPANION**

## **JOY, A GIFT GUARANTEED BY THE GIVER**

- **FOREVER JOINED TO GIVER**
- **FORMED OUT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD**

**John 15:1–5**, <sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup> He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. <sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

**Galatians 5:22–25**, <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

### **For further study . . .**

1. Review 1 Peter 1:3-9. Can you provide some tangible expression to what it means to be “*filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy*”?
2. Read John 15. Carefully note the connection between the vinedresser, the vine, the branch, and its fruit. Did you notice a progression in productivity?
3. Reflect on the three expressions of JOY in today’s sermon. How does this definition help us to live life with more confidence and peace?