

Dear Fellow Friends of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Today, to many in this congregation, we will say, “Happy Mother’s Day.” Why is it happy for our mothers? Maybe there was a bouquet of flowers that was delivered. Or maybe some very nice greeting cards. Or perhaps some handmade cards from the kids. Moms are happy when they receive the attention they deserve on Mother’s Day.

Today, we are going to make a distinction between happy and joyful. Happy is caused by an event, something that happens in your life. It can be something simple like a greeting card, or something more complex, like a positive report from a doctor.

Joy is a little different. Joy is something that lasts. We can rejoice even when things aren’t going so well because we know we have a Savior who loves us. We can find joy even when others are complaining bitterly. You see, joy is tied to our relationship with our Lord. Today, then we will consider that

RESURRECTION CHRISTIANS ARE FILLED WITH JOY

I. We are filled with joy because we have a loving Friend who is our Savior.

We can rejoice because our Friend Jesus passed the biggest test of all. He kept God’s law. We call this his active obedience. He didn’t fail any of the tests of behavior. His thoughts, his words, his actions were always perfect. He did all of this because we had flunked every test of behavior that God ever put before us. But the best part is that the perfect score of our Friend is now our perfect score before God. What a joy to know that his A+ is now our A+ through faith in Jesus.

His obedience took him all the way to the cross. We call this his passive obedience. He reminds us, **“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for his friends.”** He suffered what we should have suffered. He suffered for all our imperfections, all our sinful failures. For Jesus’ sake, our heavenly Father gives us total and complete forgiveness. Every sin is washed away in the blood of Jesus. The resurrection confirms that fact. No wonder Jesus says, **“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”**

We want this joy to continue. Jesus urges us, **“Remain in my love.”** But do we? Do we joyfully obey God’s Word and do his will?

I am certain, without a doubt, that everyone of us needs the confession of sins coming up later in this service. Just think about what comes out of our mouths from time to time: angry words that hurt people’s feelings; curses that misuse the name of our Lord; foul language that discredits our standing as Jesus’ friends. Such verbal behavior saddens our Savior and disrespects God. Such behavior can damage our relationship with people.

So why do we do it? Why do we lash out at people with bad language? Does it make you feel better to cuss someone out? Does it feel good to get some anger off our chests? Oh, I’m sure there are times when we feel better because we put someone in their place or cut them down to size with our harsh words. But then the guilt for what we have said and done starts to creep into us. We know that our Lord does not approve. So that short term happiness is no match for the long term joy of doing what is right before God and human beings.

As obedient believers, we find joy in our friend Jesus. We find joy as we repent of our sins of bad language. We rejoice in the forgiveness he gives us. We find joy in cleaning up our act, and cleaning up our bad mouth. We find joy in showing our faith to others by

proper words and kind actions. After all Paul told us, **“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love.”** And we find joy when we make sacrifices for other people.

I remember an ad on TV. A husband and wife were preparing for an evening out. He was shaving at the sink. She was putting in her earrings over the toilet. Then she fumbled an earring and it went down into the toilet. Her husband saw it, immediately reached over, put his hand down the toilet, found her earring, washed it off and gave it back to her. That is a sacrificial act that fills a wife with joy.

II. Jesus has made it possible for each believer to be filled with joy because of his sacrifice for us. Consequently, we are ready and willing to make sacrifices for him. We are filled with joy because we get the privilege of serving our Savior.

Remember, what he says, **“You are my friends if you do what I command.”** The fact that we are friends with Jesus is because of what he has done for us. He says, **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.”**

We are equipped to do that. Jesus promises, **“Everything I have learned from my Father, I have made known to you.”** We know God’s plan for us, his plan of salvation. As believers we get to participate in this plan. This is why we reach out as a congregation, seeking people who need to know their Savior. It is why we support mission work across the globe. It is why we let our faith show as we produce the fruits of faith for the good of other people. What a joy it is to be included in God’s plan of salvation, his plan to bring people to know him and to trust him.

What a blessing then to work together as we serve Jesus, our Friend. There is a place for each of us in God’s plan. Now we recognize that we don’t all have the same role or the same gifts. Some members will lead and some will support the leaders. Some will teach, some will be active in witnessing their faith. Some will be enabled to give generously so that our mission can continue, and some will work diligently to care for all that God has given us here. Some will pray fervently for the members of the congregation and for others on our prayer list. What a joy that we have a role to play in furthering Christ’s work in our world.

In all of this, our friend Jesus is by our side. We want to copy him as we interact with one another. Jesus has promised, **“Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you.”** He keeps that promise as he guides us through his Word, as he keeps us on the path to heaven. As we await that glorious day of our entrance into eternal life, we have the joy in knowing that our Savior is going to show us how to live our lives for him right now. What a joy to have a friend like that.

When we need to talk to him, he is always there. Prayer is our way to communicate with our God. Once again, the Savior’s promise: **“Whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you.”** Rejoice: our Friend Jesus is listening to your prayers. Rejoice: our Friend Jesus is answering your prayers according to what is best for you and what is right according to his will. May we use that avenue of prayer on a daily basis, and especially now as we are calling our next pastor.

What a joy to have a Savior who loves us so much. His command to us is simple: **“Love one another.”** As resurrection Christians may we do that joyfully to the glory of God. Amen.