

CCA—December 16, 2018
Philippians 4:4-9

Can Outward Circumstances Produce Joy?

Four observations about joy, and a story:

1 – Outward circumstances or events cannot produce abiding joy. Joy is a quality of the inner life. It grows within as we learn to live in God's Presence. Love, joy and peace are experienced together. "Rejoice in the Lord always."

2 - Key to learning how to live in God's Presence is learning how to locate our thoughts correctly. Two habits to cultivate: prayer and thanksgiving.

3 – Four thought patterns which dissipate joy. We are looking at the wrong things:

- + looking back with vain regret at failures/what could have been
- + looking forward, worrying about the future
- + looking inward, absorbed with ourselves—victimhood
- + looking around, taking our identity in what other people think

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

4 – Growth in abiding joy inevitably leads through suffering and loss. God's ultimate purpose in every trial he allows is always good. Key: how will I choose to respond?

Hebrews 12:2: Looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Is God really in charge? Is he really good? So many "whys" ...