

Joy

Part 1 – Acts 2:1-21

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. ¹⁸ Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. ²⁰ The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. ²¹ And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

(Acts 2:14-21)

First times are wonderful. The first time you held another's hand. The first time you kissed. The first time the sight of that amazing person caused your stomach to summersault. The first time you became lost in the drama of sport. The first time you did really well at something. The first time a beautiful place grabbed your heart. The first song that brought tears to your eyes. The first book you couldn't put down and you had to read all the way through. The first person who really was your friend. The first time you stood on your board and caught a wave. The first little face that was bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh. And then the avalanche of firsts, the first grunt, the first smile, the first grab, the first step, the first word and finally the first full night of sleep. First times are wonderful and have a very special place in the museum of our memory.

Fifty days since the death of Jesus, on the Jewish Feast of First Fruits (*Reshit Katsir*, Numbers 28:26), the day of Pentecost, the disciples were praying in their rented upper room and it was the first time. It was the first time that a group of people had all experienced the presence of God's Holy Spirit in quite this way. It began with a gentle pressure on that place within them beyond their senses where they experienced the world. It was like the feeling that comes from being completely safe, completely belonging and completely loved. And it grew and grew until it was undeniable, unstoppable, uncontainable and unrestrainable – and its final manifestation was a delirious sense of joy.

Someone once said that God never seems to laugh in the bible, but that's not true, because our joy is the echo of God's laughter, our joy is the sounding board of God's pleasure, our Joy comes from God (Nehemiah 8:10), and on that day, on that first day, on that Pentecost day, God's belly laugh exploded through their souls and just to make sure that they were absolutely clear, whose feelings they were riding, God gave them a miraculous sound-track of wind and an awe inspiring light-show of fire, that said to them all; this is Me!

First times are wonderful but also memorable, because there was more to this first time than simply a good time had by all. It was deliberately memorable in the way that those great parties we plot and plan for our loved ones are deliberately memorable. Our plan to plant the knowledge of our love deep into their memory banks. Pentecost was God planting the importance of the presence of the Holy Spirit deep into the memory banks of the church. God's message was, there is no church without the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit you are just a bunch of friends meeting in an upper room which nobody knows and nobody cares. But with the Holy Spirit, Joy becomes uncontainable, the upper room becomes too confining and somehow you spill out onto the streets drunk with Joy and roaring with rapture, disrupting the morning traffic. People turn around to see what all the fuss is about. What's with those people? They seem to be enjoying themselves, and they seem to be having a good time. You can't do that without booze so they must be drunk.

¹⁴ *That's when Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight.*

¹⁵ *These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning.*

¹⁶ *This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:*

¹⁷ *"In the Last Days," God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams.*

¹⁸ *When the time comes, I'll pour out my Spirit On those who serve me, men and women both, and they'll prophesy. (Acts 2:14-18, MSG)*

These people aren't drunk, they were just having a good time with God. These are our mothers and fathers in the faith, exuberantly testifying to all and sundry their absolute joy in the presence of God. But I wonder, if these mothers and fathers were to visit us, their children, today, here in this church, what would they see, what would they think? How would they see us spending the gift of their legacy, that precious gift of the Holy Spirit poured out over the church on the day of Pentecost. I'm not sure, they were stuffed full of the fruit of God's spirit; *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5:22-23), so they would probably be kind and gracious to us, making excuses for the very different world we live in. But I can't get around one inescapable fact, it's the same Spirit! (1 Corinthians 12:4). The same Spirit that filled them from the day of Pentecost, is here for us, isn't it?

Would those mothers and fathers of faith, if they visited us today, would they wonder if we had quenched the Holy Spirit? Paul taught them to be careful about that, he said "*do not put out the Spirit's fire*" do not quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Mum, Dad have I done that? Have I taken your legacy and quenched it? I fear sometimes I have. I fear sometimes I live as if you had never given the Spirit to your people. I wake up sometimes only mindful of the strength of my arm, the dubious power of my brain and the list of tasks I have given myself to do, oblivious to the fact that God has poured out his love and his spirit upon me (Romans 5:5). But I think its worse, that some days I wake up lazy, that some days I just couldn't be bothered reaching down and deep, looking for that spark within, not

quenching the Spirit by intent but neglect. Some days it's just easier to turn on the Tele.

You see the church is supposed to be full of drunks, people having a riotous joyous time together, not drunk on alcohol but being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). That was certainly not the church of my youth. If my Pentecost Parents were to visit that church they would have worried themselves sick. What's happened here? Why are they all so sad? Is someone dying? What's that expression on their faces? Are they eating lemons? I think they would have been very confused.

What is the church supposed to be? Well Paul argues that; *...the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*, (Romans 14:17). You see this text appears in the middle of a battle for the heart and the soul of the church. There is a group within the church at Rome who are stuck on the old Jewish ways of pleasing God, which is doing the right things, eating the right things. Personally I'm not sure I could be Jewish, is life worth living without bacon? Anyway, they are heavily criticising people who eat the wrong things, they are telling them that church is all about these eating rules. So Paul tells them that this is not what church is supposed to be about, it's not about your religion and your rules. Whenever religion and rules dominate, church slides from the mosh pit into the mausoleum. Paul says that what church is about is *righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*, (Romans 14:17). And really that's right, it's intuitively right. That wonderful first time I felt the wonder of the Holy Spirit in church, I wasn't sure what was going on, but I knew it was right, I knew that this was the way the church was supposed to be.

A moment with the Holy Spirit

Lucinda Castaing

I come from a very non-Christian family but when I was 15 I started dating a Christian guy (who's now my patient husband) I thought I'd set him straight on this whole Christianity thing, we debated and argued about it for two years, I would raise a point and it would be defeated, with hard facts, reason and logic. Until one night I simply said that I "think" I believe in Jesus. So I decided I would test God, closing my eyes and saying (with needle and thread in hand) "God, if you're really God then I'm going to close my eyes and move my hands near each other and when I open my eyes this needle will be threaded." The first time the needle was threaded I decided my hands were too close together and the eye of the needle too large and I couldn't do it myself, so the 2nd time I moved my hands really far apart and got the smallest needle I could find, after that threaded too I decided I was clearly just too good at this (that I sew far too much and therefore can thread any needle...) so I frayed the thread... and of course God had no trouble treading that needle :) He was so patient with me, meeting me where I was, showing me I could trust him.

Helen Coleman: The Holy Spirit is always in my life. I couldn't do life without him but my relationship with him started when I first came to the Lord about 40 years ago. I saw the power of God move on my life and change my heart. He started to speak to me, lead me and guide me. At that stage I was going to an Anglican Church.

About 20 years after that, The Holy Spirit told me one day that my husband was in love with another woman and when I asked him he told me that it was true (thought I'd hired a private detective). He decided at that point he was going to leave, bless his heart... I didn't want this but he was adamant.

After that, a friend invited me to a Pentecostal church. She could see I needed the power of God in my life and the other church could not provide it. My friend could see I was devastated! I had been married for 28 years, was a Christian, and I was very angry with my husband. Whilst I was worshipping in the new church I got baptised in the Holy Spirit but didn't realise it until I went home. Before I walked into the church I was full of anger because of what happened with my husband and I guess I wanted to kill him and I wanted to die in the process. I started to sob as the Holy Spirit started the healing process. I didn't know what was going on at the time I just felt a softening of my heart. He removed the anger, the suicidal thoughts, and the bad thoughts about my husband. Before I knew it I was filled with supernatural joy. When I got home I fell to my knees and praised God. It was then I realized I could praise God in other tongues.

The Holy Spirit told me that he was my counsellor and asked me to sit with him and tell him everything that was on my heart and mind i.e. In other words be real with him. Was I angry? Was I hurt? How did I feel....?

So that's what I did. I learnt to cry, and learned to sob my heart out on the counsellor's (Holy Spirit's) knee.

Spending time with the counsellor went on for weeks I guess, and after each session he would fill me with joy. I would tell him what was on my heart, cry, then after the session was over he would fill me with more joy. I had so much joy that nobody realised what I was going through even my own mother said years later "Helen you weren't upset when your husband left you were you?" It was God's supernatural joy that got me through the whole thing otherwise I just could not have coped. I was working full time and I was in the middle of doing a Bachelor of Health Administration and knew I had to sell the house and move. My beautiful house that I loved so much but I idolised, just as I idolised my husband. I had no idea where I was going.

It was at this point that God actually called me to go into Aged Care ministry. I told the Lord if I continued spending so much time talking to him I would never get through my degree. The Holy Spirit just told me he would get me through which he did.

I know this all sounds weird but God's ways are not our ways and the fruit of it was amazing. I know that I would not have got through this without him. I was totally blessed.

The wonderful thing is I was able to forgive my husband I'm able to love him as a brother now, and thanked him for being part of my life for 28 years, and giving me 2 beautiful children. And God worked the whole thing together for good because I'm doing everything I ever dreamed of doing now that God called me to aged care ministry and this is where I want to be. It's only God who can do this.

The Holy Spirit has healed me from a lot of soulish problems and will continue to do this.

These days every morning I sit with the counsellor and talk to him, I will not leave the house until I do this.

If I don't spend time with him I would have stuff inside that I need to let go of. In this world we rush around too much. When Jesus was here on earth his life was simple - not complicated but plenty of time to do the fathers work. I don't believe God wants us to live complicated busy lives like that - we are walking around with a lot of garbage.....we need to release it and let it go!!

A final thought

When Jesus spoke to the church at Ephesus he had this to say to them

⁴ Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

⁵ Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. (Revelation 2:4-5)

The first love of a believer is the kiss of the Holy Spirit on our soul, don't lose that. Don't start taking the Holy Spirit for granted, don't stop making the effort. And if you have, if you have stopped treasuring the Holy Spirit, if you have stopped day dreaming about the Holy Spirit, if your faith has become all times and dates and no fire, its' time for a change, it's time to repent, it's time to ask God to fill you again, because you don't want God to remove his presence from the church, because a church without God's presence is a terrible empty thing.

Let's pray – Dear Lord, love us again

Other thoughts I wish I had time to talk about

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (Psalms 51:10-12)

⁸ 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, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:8-9)

²⁴ To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- ²⁵ to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

The Joy of the Lord

The Book of Psalms have more references to joy than any other book in the Bible and the psalmist wrote a lot about joy and much like what Nehemiah wrote, "the joy of the LORD is your strength" (Neh 8:10) for "all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy" (Psalm 5:11). The psalmist wrote that God "put more joy in

my heart" (Psalm 4:7) and in God's *"presence there is fullness of joy"* (Psalm 16:11). Shouldn't your worship services overflow with joy and make you *"shout for joy over your salvation"* (Psalm 20:5) because God's presence will *"make him glad with the joy of your presence"* (Psalm 21:6).

The joy of worship

Psalm 27:6 says we should *"offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy"* and to all the *"righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart"* (Psalm 32:11). Indeed, *"Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright"* (Psalm 33:1) and *"Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore"* (Psalm 35:27). The psalmist didn't just have joy, he had *"exceeding joy"* (Psalm 43:4) and not just joy but *"joy and gladness"* (Psalm 45:15) so why not *"Shout to God with loud songs of joy"* (Psalm 47:1) for we have much to be joyful about so again I say *"Shout for joy to God, all the earth"* (Psalm 66:1)!

The joy of His disciples

Peter wrote about this as with having the knowledge of Jesus, writing *"Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory"* (1 Pet 1:8). Even in our trials James writes that we should *"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds"* (James 1:2). This helped Jesus endure the cross *"who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."* (Hebrews 12:2)

A fruit of the Spirit

Paul mentions some of the fruits of the Spirit like *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness"* and many others so joy is one of the fruits or the results of having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You cannot fake joy...you either have it or you don't. Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica that *"for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit"* (1 Thess 1:6) indicating that joy is associated with God the Holy Spirit and that the *"righteousness and peace and joy [is] in the Holy Spirit"* (Rom 14:17) and finds its source in God as even *"the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 13:52).

The joy from others

Paul received joy from Philemon from which we see him writing *"I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you"* (Phil 1:7) and in his remembrance of Timothy by writing *"As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy"* (2 Tim 1:4). Paul got much joy from just thinking about the churches and in Thessalonica he wrote *"For you are our glory and joy"* (1 Thess 2:20) and with *"thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God"* (1 Thess 3:9). The church at Philippi might have been Paul's favorite church and some call the Book of Philippians *"the joy book"* or letter as he wrote *"complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind"* (Phil 2:2) and considered this church his *"joy and crown"* (Phil 4:1). Even to the church at Corinth he wrote *"I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all"* (2 Cor 2:3). The Apostle John described this feeling as

having “no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth” (3 John 3:4). Paul prayed for the church at Rome, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” (Rom 15:13).

Charles Finney – and the lady of joy

“In preaching at a certain place I was discoursing upon religion as an experience; upon the love of God, the peace and joy of the salvation of Christ. As I came out of the pulpit, I was met at the foot of the pulpit stairs by a prominent lawyer, a stranger to me, who wished to be introduced to me. He said to me: “Mr. Finney, after tea, I wish you would make a religious call with me, I wish to introduce you to a friend of mine.” I replied, “I suppose it is for a religious purpose.” He answered yes. I told him I should be happy to accompany him. He called on me after tea, and took me to the house of his friend, and introduced me to an aged lady, who immediately expressed great joy to see me, and began to tell me what the Lord had done for her soul.

She poured out a sweet religious experience in a conversation of half an hour. Her joy was overflowing. She said the very atmosphere she breathed seemed to be love.

This lawyer sat where I could look him in the face without appearing to do so. I had learned that he was not a religious man. I saw the muscles of his face quiver; that it was with difficulty that he could suppress his emotions while the old lady was pouring off from her full heart this flood of religious experience.

After hearing what she had to say, we rose up and took our leave. As we stepped out into the street, he stepped before me and said, “See there! what do you think of that? I know that that is the Christian religion; I know that that is what I need, and I never was so determined not to rest short of it as I am now.”

Thus I have found it common, when preaching religion as a matter of experience and consciousness, to find it carrying conviction to the minds even of the most skeptical. I have often heard of their saying--“There, I understand that now; I see that is and must be true religion; this is what we all need, or certainly we cannot go to heaven.”

Santana is helped by God

Rock and Roll legend Carlos Santana has been through some truly dark moments in his life.

“You have to go through the darkest night of the soul to get to the brightest light of the day,” Santana said.

Despite his fame and accomplishments, he says he’s only made it through by trusting in God – and he’s not staying quiet about it.

Santana told the Gospel Herald that when his wife left him, he entered a deep depression.

He visited a local church, but said that he had voices in his head telling him that his life was filled with misery.

He tried to kill himself seven times, but says that he was kept alive through God’s grace.

Santana says Jesus' voice not only gave him hope, but helped him overcome his depression.

And the joy he received from Christ was something he never got out of music.

Santana says he even discovered the life-changing power of forgiveness.

During his childhood, Santana's father abandoned his family.

And when he was 10, one of his father's friends molested him repeatedly. He says he was filled with fear and guilt, but kept quiet about the abuse.

Santana says he carried the weight of unforgiveness, anger, and resentment in his heart towards the man for years.

But he was finally set free from that anger and pain when he forgave him.

"I was able to remove the anger by forgiving that man," he told Rolling Stone in 2008. "Forgiveness, man, forgiveness is incredibly liberating. And I'm here to tell you, with all my heart and spirit, that it can be done. You can be freed."

Santana is considered one of the greatest Rock and Roll guitarists of all time. He's reached a pinnacle in the world of music.