



Ozark Mission Project

To transform lives through worship, fellowship, and hands on mission

The Joy That Is Set Before Us

Read Hebrews 12: 1-4

This great passage from Hebrews is beloved for its encouraging image of a great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and are cheering us on in our heaven-ward journey, but did you notice the power of verse 2? The writer tells us that Jesus endured the cross “for the sake of the **joy** that was set before him.” Did you hear that word? The joy! What joy? The joy of being falsely arrested; of being betrayed by someone you love; of being abandoned by your dearest companions; of being mocked, whipped, and spat upon; of suffering an excruciatingly painful public execution normally reserved for the most heinous criminal? Joy seems like an odd word to use!

It might seem that Jesus was thinking of heaven to come, but I think that Jesus was thinking of a joy that we experience right here on earth. He was thinking about the joy that comes from total, self-giving love. Have you ever experienced that joy? I remember that one of my greatest moments of joy came at OMP when my family group re-shingled a roof for an elderly couple who had just received word of their daughter’s death moments before we showed up for the first day. We couldn’t do much to ease their pain, but we were determined to finish that job and take away their worries over a leaky roof. As I stood on the roof at the end of two long days in 100 plus weather, I felt my greatest moment of joy. My family group had given their all for this couple, and there is no greater joy.

What is it about selfless love, about giving to others, that brings us such joy? Could it be that we experience joy when we give because we were made in the image of God? Yes, we were made in the image of God. And God is a God of love. Jesus, his son, showed us that love when he endured the cross for us. We are made in the image of God, and when we love unselfishly, we become the people God created us to be. No wonder we feel joy!

1. Have you ever felt the joy that comes from helping others?
2. Does knowing that you are made in the image of God make it easier to love unselfishly?
3. What is one way that you can share the love of God with another person today?