

What Causes Jesus to Rejoice

Other than posts on refugees and political fear, most of my posts the last few months have come from my Bible reading in the book of Luke. I have been working slowly through various books of the Bible since picking up a New Testament with Psalms at a sale at a Christian bookstore that was going out of business in 2011. I'm using that New Testament almost like a journaling Bible to chronicle my path through the New Testament. I should have long since made my way through it, but I only have one or two days a week where I can sit in it like I want, not so much studying it (I study the Bible all the time) but truly meditating on it—*ruminating* on it. I like to do this on my porch swing in the mornings, overlooking the pond on our farm.

Again and again, in those moments of reading and meditating, God's words hit me like sunshine breaking through the clouds after a rain. And this Saturday's time on the porch swing was no different. I was reading from Luke 10, and the sunlight from that passage warmed my soul.

"The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us through your name.' He said to them, 'I saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Look, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

"At that time Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for it was Your good pleasure" (v. 17-21, MEV).

There's a lot of joy in this passage. The disciples return to Jesus with joy after watching the power they had over demons and evil through the name of Jesus. Jesus tells them they have something even better than that to take joy in – that their names are written in heaven. Then Jesus rejoices.

Jesus REJOICED. This word gave me pause when I first read it, and I enjoyed envisioning what this might have looked like in person. The Contemporary English Version words verse 21 this way – “At that very moment, Jesus overflowed with joy from the Holy Spirit.”

The New American Standard says He “rejoiced greatly.” The Greek word can also be translated as exulted or exultation. This is more than happiness. It's more than a peaceful smile. The Greek for *rejoiced greatly* literally means *much leaping* or *much springing*. Jesus had demonstrable joy. I love to envision that. It makes me smile.

Why was Jesus demonstrably joyful in this moment? His disciples had just returned with a similar kind of joy, amazed at what they had seen God do. They were seeing what many before them longed to see but only watched for it from afar. Jesus is full of joy at the disciples' joy.

He knows what their joy represents – God revealing Himself to them. But note that Jesus takes special joy because God revealed Himself this way to those who weren't revered by society as worthy of such revelation. Jesus takes special joy in God's grace to these guys. And His joy is so great that it overflows His heart to be seen by those around Him.

This makes me cry a little, that Jesus wasn't just glad that God had revealed Himself, but that God had revealed Himself to these particular guys. A tax collector, a couple of fishermen, a number among the seventy-two who likely had been healed from various diseases. Jesus is overflowing with deep joy at God's GRACE to these guys.

Sometimes, I think of God giving His grace begrudgingly. "Well, if you guys hadn't screwed everything up in the Garden, I wouldn't have to do this stuff." I know some gracious people who do a lot of kind, giving, gracious things for me or others. But there often comes a point when they are doing it because it's the right thing to do, and they aren't particularly happy about it.

Not so with Jesus. In the end, God's grace costs Jesus the most of anyone. And, yet, here He is demonstrably joyful, perhaps to the point of jumping with joy, as He watches God's grace to His disciples.

They were coming to know things that the angels longed to know, seeing things that the prophets of old had longed to see. Jesus had come. The prophecies of His coming were fulfilled. And soon Jesus would defeat death despite Satan's best attempts to thwart Him.

Jesus had already seen Satan thrown from heaven, and He knew Satan would be ultimately defeated soon through the cross. This is the reality in which you and I still live. Satan tries to defeat us, but he is ultimately a crippled foe incapable of launching a fatal attack.

THIS is why we rejoice this Christmas season. And I hope the vision of Jesus leaping with joy at God's grace to His disciples and subsequently to us moves you to hope a little more this holiday season. If you got to the point of demonstrable joy – a smile you can't make stop or maybe even a little leap in the air – that wouldn't be hokey. That would be the appropriate response for what God has done for us which we celebrate this season.

"But know this: God's kingdom has come to you" (Luke 10:11).

I have a huge grin on my face right now. This makes me truly happy.

Adapted from **Wendy Alsup's** blog, . Wendy has authored three books, including The Gospel-Centered Woman. She is also a wife, mom and college math teacher who loves ministering to women.