

Lesson 34

Cause for Rejoicing

Group Icebreaker:

Name some things that cause you great joy?

Introduction:

After Jesus finished His instructions concerning offenses, He attended the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem where He forgave a woman caught in adultery. While at the feast He declared himself to be the light of the world, healed a man who was born blind and then finished by declaring Himself, the good shepherd. A short time later He sent seventy other disciples to preach the gospel in the cities and towns where He was going. The instructions He gave them can be found in Lessons 21-24.

Reading the Scripture:

Luke 10:17-24, Matthew 11:25-30

Cause for Rejoicing

Luke 10:17-20

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

And the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."

Come to Me, and I Will Give You Rest

Matthew 11:25-30, Luke 10:21-24

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

At that very time **He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit,**¹ and said, "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. **Take My yoke upon you,**² and **learn from Me,**³ for I am gentle and humble in heart; and **YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.**⁴ For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." And turning to the disciples, He said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them."

¹ **He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit.** Jesus was probably shouting and leaping in the air with joy.

² **Take My yoke upon you.** Trust Me and let Me direct you.

³ **Learn from Me.** Let Me show you what is good for you and pleasing to God.

⁴ **YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.** Jeremiah 6:16, "This is what the LORD says: 'Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.'"

The Commands:

- ❖ Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.
- ❖ Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you.
- ❖ But rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.
- ❖ Come to Me.
- ❖ Take My yoke upon you
- ❖ Learn from Me.

The Lesson:

When the seventy went out, they weren't sure what was going to happen or what results they would achieve. They simply obeyed Jesus' commands! Upon returning from their evangelistic tour they were overjoyed and reported to Jesus that even the demons had been subject to them in His name. In reply, Jesus reminded them that He had given them authority over all the power of the enemy.

This authority is granted to all of Jesus' disciples because in preaching the gospel they are speaking **truth** in love thereby, directly opposing spiritual powers. In fact, Jesus when confronted by Pontius Pilate, said that testifying of the truth was the purpose for which he had come to earth. *"You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, **to testify to the truth**. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."* (John 18:37) And the apostle John put it this way, *"The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."* (1 John 3:8)

At the feast of Tabernacles prior to sending the seventy Jesus described the works of the devil and contrasted it with His own works. *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.* (John 10:10) The power of the enemy is **lies** through **deception**, which brings about **sin** resulting in **death** and the power of Christ is **truth** spoken in **love**, which brings about **obedience** resulting in **life**.

Jesus used two symbolic creatures to describe His enemies and how they affect mankind: the serpent and the scorpion. The serpent represents **lies** and **deception**. *Now the serpent was **more crafty** than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.* (Genesis 3:1) *And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.* (Revelation 12:9) The **scorpion** represents **sin** and **death**. *O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? The **sting of death is sin**, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)

Although it seemed appropriate for the seventy disciples to rejoice with the authority they had been given, Jesus told them not to. Instead they were to rejoice in the fact that their names were written in heaven. In saying this Jesus was telling them that their names were inscribed in the Book of Life. This would have given His disciples something to rejoice about! Jewish teaching holds that only the truly righteous are inscribed in the Book of Life. We might think of them as "saints" or those who had nothing to be ashamed of. The Jews also believe that most people are written in the book of repentance and their fate has not yet been sealed, while the truly unrepentant wicked people are inscribed in the book of the dead. To hear Jesus say that their names had already been inscribed in heaven would have been good news indeed.

Then, in the midst of His own rejoicing, Jesus commanded, *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.* His appeal reaches to every part of man: spirit, soul and body and is a direct reference to what He said at the Feast of Tabernacles. *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*

The burdens people carry may be different. Some struggle with the physical burdens of life. Others struggle with the spiritual burdens of sin and death. And still others struggle with the soulish burden of keeping the Law. Jesus even addressed this last burden when he spoke with the scribes and Pharisees. *Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.* (Luke 11:46) The Apostle Peter also addressed the issue at the first church council in Jerusalem around 50 AD. He said, *“Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?”* (Acts 15:10) It really doesn’t matter what the burden is, the people carrying it are all looking for the same things. To those who come to Jesus, He offers rest, a shared load and a lighter load. Lets take a closer look at what He said.

Most people who are weary from carrying a heavy burden look for an opportunity to rest. They want to set their load down, sit or lie down for a while and be refreshed. Jesus said, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.”* The prophet Isaiah spoke of this rest when he said, *“He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, He who said to them, ‘Here is rest, give rest to the weary,’ and, ‘here is repose,’ but they would not listen.”* (Isaiah 28:11-12) The book of Acts adds its own commentary. *Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.* (Acts 3:19)

Jesus doesn’t just offer people rest, He offers to help carry their burdens the rest of the way. *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.* In saying, *“take my yoke upon you”*, Jesus gives His hearers a commonplace illustration of a pair of animals working together to accomplish a task. And He is speaking as if He were one of the animals. When a young animal is first put under **yoke**, he is paired with an older animal, which is use to the work. The older animal is in fact **teaching** the younger animal to work efficiently and in tandem with others. By stating that He was gentle and humble in heart, Jesus is reflecting on His very nature and telling others how He will treat those who are paired with Him. This concept is alluded to in John 6:45. *“It is written in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.’⁵ Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.”*

Jesus not only offers people rest and sharing their load, but He promises that they will also have a lighter load. *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.* In hearing Jesus’ statement we should be reminded that animals are yoked together in order to pull something. In Jesus’ illustration it is a wagon. Why, because wagons are designed to carry loads!

Try to visualize this. You are carrying a huge load of wood on your back. How far can you go without needing rest and refreshment? Then imagine that someone comes along and offers to help

⁵ Isaiah 54:13

you carry your wood the rest of the way. Are you feeling better? Now he says to you, “lets just put it in my little **wagon and we’ll pull it together**. How does that make you feel? Oh and by the way, the guy who is **helping you pull the wagon is God**. Does this give you cause for rejoicing?

This is the very concept that Isaiah the prophet was conveying to the people. *Do you not know? Have you not heard? **The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the LORD will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.*** (Isaiah 40:28-31)

Group Discussion:

1. What burdens are you carrying by yourself?
2. Can you by faith let the Lord help you with the burden?
3. If you can, what does that help look like to you
4. What does the following statement mean to you? *Bear one another’s burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ.*

The Point of the Lesson:

Our Father in heaven has given us many things that we can rejoice about.

Application:

When the burden becomes too great, look to the Lord and the children of God to help you.