

***Jesus is our Better Joy - Hebrews 12:1-3***  
**Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

**Notes from the Sermon**

Its right there in Hebrews 12, a phrase that would have shook the early believers when they read it. For us, crucifixion is more of a distant idea, something that happened to Jesus a long time ago, but not part of our current experience and reality. We live in a civilized democratic society which has generally rejected the idea of state sanctioned terror as a way of forcing its dominance and the people's submission. We might have a different experience if we lived in China or North Korea, but the idea of street lined with executed people just isn't in our experience. So we see a phrase such as "Who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame," and we lump it in with all of the other verses that remind us that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. We miss the irony in the words the author uses. They wouldn't have.

If you asked an early Hebrew to write their life goals, their dreams were probably pretty simple. But near the top of the list would have been to make sure they did not get crucified. Virtually all of them had seen it happen, or walked by a corpse on a cross after the horror took place. Crucifixion is absolutely the worst form of capital punishment devised by humanity. It was invented by the Persians, but perfected (maybe that's the wrong word) by the Romans, and they used it often. Rome's highest value was to maintain power and peace with an iron fist. History calls the period in which Jesus lived the "Pax Romana", meaning the peace of Rome. But the peace here is not about the loving type of peace where everyone finds common ground and a way to look for the best in others. Rather, it was a peace forced on people and kingdoms from power and terrorism. And the greatest form of state sanctioned terrorism was the cross. Designed to inflict maximum pain and absolute humiliation, crucified victims were nailed or tied to crosses, usually completely naked, and completely helpless. They were then lifted for maximum visibility. Crowd would then mock and shame the victim as they hung there. Their pain was excruciating (funny I should use this word that actually means "from the cross), and they were unable to do anything, including scratching an itch or fighting off a bird who came to lick wounds or go after eyes. Crucifixion was horrible, but the Romans used it as a way to make sure people did not revolt, commit treason, or become a general trouble maker. After some revolts, Romans liked streets with crosses and left the victims on them long after death. Any person who walked by a cross would make it an immediate life goal to avoid that fate. Nobody volunteered for a cross. Well, with one exception.

This is why the phrase would have caught the First Century reader a bit different. "For the joy set before Him." How can anyone go willingly to a cross to find joy. The cross is the end of life, and there is nothing joyful about it. The words of Hebrews are actually shocking, but they tell us something about Jesus' mission and Kingdom that is central to the message of Easter. At any point Jesus could have retreated into the wilderness, away from the Jewish leaders and Roman control. Instead, the Gospels show us His resolve to go to Jerusalem to die on this cross. We are also told that at any moment Jesus could have flexed His divine muscles, called 10,000 angels who stood ready to come destroy those involved in the evil conspiracy to kill the Son of God. But he stood silent and went willingly. Why did He do this? Because there was joy for Jesus that could only come by way of the cross. And He knew that.

Jesus knew that the cross was not the end of the story, rather it was the pathway to the empty tomb and the First Easter. Jewish leaders and Roman soldiers thought they had ended Jesus' voice and authority. Little did they and the demonic forces know

that the cross was a throne, and that by His death Jesus would defeat all enemies. Sin, death, hell, and the grave would be destroyed forever, and all human political kingdoms were put on a clock. The joy of victory through the agony of what seemed to be defeat. And this victory secured a forgiven people, purchased by His death and set free in the resurrection. Make no bones about it, Jesus is the happiest being of all, he is God in Heaven who does whatever pleases Him, and He is the man who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. As a result He is now seated, as King, at the right hand of His Father. And He is the fountain of all true joy and happiness. Our problem is that we are too easily pleased, pursuing the path of least resistance and momentary pleasure, when we are promised full and complete joy. But we too must know that the path of joy is the same as Jesus', through the cross, found in laying down our lives, taking up our cross, and following Him.

### **Bible Reading for the Week**

#### **Daily Bible Readings**

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Genesis 44	Genesis 45	Genesis 46	Genesis 47	Genesis 48	Genesis 49	Genesis 50

Reading from this past week's sermon: Hebrews 12:1-11

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Hebrews 12:12-17

### **Family Worship**

Song - *Our God Saves*

<https://youtu.be/q6um7z4qvY8?si=A3RGZpBCTUEJOmyx>

#### **Gospel Project**

Unit: God is Gracious

Story: Jesus Saves us from Our Enemies

Big Picture Question: What is repentance?

Answer: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

Scripture: John 19-20

#### **New City Catechism**

Question 17: What is idolatry?

Answer: Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator.

Verse: Romans 1:21,25

#### **Hebrews 12:1-3**

- Why was the cross such a shameful thing? How do you think this verse would have been read and understood by the First Century readers?
- How in the world could Jesus see the cross as a path to the greatest joy?
- In what ways was the cross the path to the fullness of joy for Jesus?
- How do we experience the joy of the Lord in our lives? What does Hebrews teach us about finding this joy?

#### **Prayer**

\*Praise Jesus for the joy he gives us because of the cross and resurrection.

\*Pray for the members of our staff and Elders team headed to Indianapolis for the Gospel Coalition Conference this week.