

## "The Daily Delight"

(A Sermon for the First Sunday after Pentecost—Trinity Sunday)

**Text:** Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

**Lectionary Text:** Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3:1-17

**Subject:** The delight of living daily as a member of God's family.

**Desired Response:** Set minds on the things of the Spirit.

**How To:** Learn sensitivity to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

**How Long:** Can begin today.

**Sermon in a Sentence:** "The delight of living daily as a member of God's family belongs to those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit."

**Worship Theme:** "As Father, God gathers around Himself a loving family of His dearest children."

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Do any of you remember the name Erma Bombeck? She was a syndicated newspaper-writer who also penned some rather-funny books. One was, *If Life Is a Bowl of Cherries, What Am I Doing in the Pits?*

Is this how you feel sometimes? ... a born loser ... and to make matters worse, possibly you call yourself a Christian. And, isn't a follower of Jesus supposed to experience joy and a daily delight?

"But I must confess," you say, "I expected things to be at least a little better than the usual ho-hums I experience. Is something wrong with me, or was maybe Jesus guilty of overstating what He has to offer?"

If you identify at all with such musings, I sincerely hope that my words today will prove helpful. That confidence is based partly on the daily pleasure—the daily delight—that I know many believers personally experience in their relationship with Christ. But more importantly, I'll fasten my remarks to what, in my mind, are some extremely important verses in the Bible. Are you interested?

In Romans chapter 8, the Apostle Paul states that a primary difference between the Christian and the non-Christian is that the Holy Spirit is alive within each true believer. Here's the passage to which I'm referring. It's found in Romans 8:1-17:

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

*<sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

*<sup>9</sup> You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*

*<sup>12</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. <sup>13</sup> For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.*

*<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

In the second half of verse 9 the Apostle Paul writes:

*And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.*

This is a key truth that, in far too many cases, sincere believers tend to overlook. In fact, I wonder if the ignoring of this truth is why so many believers seem to lack daily joy and daily delight in their lives.

It certainly is true that the Holy Spirit plays a critically important role in the lives of those God has called to Himself. It's the Spirit who adds the flavoring of delight to walking with Christ, by daily keeping us in firsthand contact with the very God of the universe.

In fact, at conversion, the Holy Spirit immediately begins to make His divine presence known by influencing the totality of who we are. Specifically and initially, there comes a great sense of peace, in terms of our souls. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.

Think back for just a moment to the first time you apprehended the fact that God loves you, that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die to pay the penalty for your sins, and that He has vouchsafed a place in heaven where you will live eternally with Him. At that moment of stark realization, didn't you feel an overwhelming sense of joy? And, didn't that joy—that delight—continue day after day, at least for a while?

By the Holy Spirit's touch, the mind of a believer also discovers "rest." That's in regard to having found the key missing piece to life's puzzle, without which nothing really makes sense. But, with Christ, the whole world now takes on wonderful meaning—a meaning that is at once and the same time made up of sweet peace, great joy, enormous delight, and amazing rest.

Emotionally—at conversion, as part of their daily delight, most people testify to feeling greatly loved, and many speak of feeling extremely close to God. Security and assurance are common early indicators of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of a new believer.

"Yeah, but let's face it," some may respond with a tinge of sadness. "All that goes away almost as fast as it comes!"

Granted, for many that's true! But hear me now—the intention of God was that this awareness of His divine Presence would remain. And, that same daily sense of wonder ... and pleasure ... and satisfaction ... and delight is what I know many believers do regularly experience and to which I can share some important secrets—that is if you're interested.

Well, maybe an easy way to start to get a handle on what I'm sharing is first by talking about our conscience—which is one of the more long-range factors.

Before becoming a Christian, our conscience was programmed by the society in which we were raised. So, when we did what most people frowned upon, we felt guilty and bad. But now, in response to our acceptance of the gift God has reserved for us and brought to our attention, the Spirit of Christ—that is the Holy Spirit—has come to dwell within us. So much is this the case, that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

*<sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*

As a new believer, almost immediately, our conscience begins receiving input from a new source. No longer is it getting signals from just one location—a second influence has been added, and that is God Himself through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

So before, when we were selfish, we excused matters and said, "I'm no worse than the next person." And, we were probably right. Thus, our conscience hardly made itself known. But now, if we act selfishly in that same way, as a new Christian, it's like a divine alarm goes off in our heads (bzzzzzzzzt...) saying, "Stop that instantly; I disapprove!"

In fact, being a new Christian can be quite annoying because, at first, it seems like every time we turn around the alarm is triggered. That's because there's a tremendous difference between God's way and the way of the world at its best. (Am I talking about something with which you can identify?)

Now, the wise believer is most grateful for this help and sees it for what it is—a gracious evidence of God's Presence in his or her life. Sadly, some other Christians, for whatever reason, become quite adept at shutting off these warnings—or stifling, or silencing, or quenching this communing of the Holy Spirit—to the degree that, after a while, God can no longer teach them through this means.

Maybe some of us have become that way now. The keen edge of our conscience is spiritually seared. And, it no longer bothers us to be angry with a brother or sister; or to speak unkindly of God's servants; or to think impure thoughts. I know it's possible to get that way.

Now, if we find ourselves in that state, whether each of us is truly a Christian I can't say—that's between each one and God. But, I'll guarantee that those in this state are not happy Christians! And, though it may sound peculiarly simple, it's still true that to just respond daily to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in our conscience will result in the delight of sensing a genuine touch of the supernatural in our world.

In similar fashion, the Holy Spirit seeks to retrain our desires, so that eventually we truly enjoy what God likes and truly despise what He loathes. The life of prayer becomes extremely meaningful, and as we mature in obedience, we know God listens when we speak.

After conversion, our emotions begin to change, too. Now our hearts are broken by events that others often seem to think interesting and newsworthy. And, though much of what we used to laugh at isn't as funny anymore, it still seems that happiness, joy, and great delight virtually surround us because we sense God is being very close to us.

"But, wait a minute," you ask. "Can't the devil put thoughts in our minds too?"

Sure—he tempts all people, Christians and non-Christians. But, very seldom is it that hard to tell the difference.

Maybe it would help just to think about what this new Counselor is called—the Holy Spirit. So, when it's a matter of holiness ... respond! Because that message is from God.

He's also very appropriately named the "Spirit of Truth." If you're like me, you'll find Him hammering away at this, until not only are outright falsehoods taboo, but also any slanting or shading or exaggerating of the facts.

Many "spiritual children" know they need to respond to God regarding their naughty tongues, and certainly there's no question as to the source of these promptings.

In Romans 15:30, Scripture speaks about "the love of the Spirit." So, the strong impulse to do a good thing on another's behalf should be seen as having initiated with God.

Regularly the Bible refers to the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of Jesus" or the "Spirit of Christ." So again, we need not question any inner encouragement to act in a Christ-like fashion.

I could mention numerous other terms—like the "Spirit of Power," the "Sword of the Spirit" (a reference to the Scriptures), and the "Spirit of Peace and Grace."

One I like a lot is found in this same 8th chapter of Romans, where Paul writes in verse 14:

*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*

And, what could be more intimate than the next two verses?

<sup>15</sup> *The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."* <sup>16</sup> *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

Which sets up the sentence I want to share next that captures, in a few words, my thoughts for this visit. *"The delight of living daily as a member of God's family (if you please, as His dearly loved son or daughter) belongs to those who (now I haven't yet explained this last part) set their minds on the things of the Spirit."* Let me share that sentence with you again and then come back to that last phrase. *"The delight of living daily as a member of God's family belongs to those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit."*

Here's Romans 8:5-6:

<sup>5</sup> *Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.* <sup>6</sup> *The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.*

Now, to the Christians who feel the walk with Christ comes up a little short, I ask: "Where have you set your mind?"

We wouldn't by chance be like the children's story about the young wild goose, would we?

Flying high on his initial migration, he was entranced by what was going on in a barnyard far below. Pulling out of formation, he swooped lower to verify that these new birds seemed to have something special going for them. Why, they didn't even have to work for their food—it was actually provided for them.

"I'll just stay a day or two," he thought, "and then I'll catch up once again with my friends." But the "day or two" stretched into a week, and the week into months—when one afternoon, WAY up in the sky, he heard, far off, the honking of his old companions on their return trip. Something inside triggered and now his heart pounded faster and he beat his clipped wings and with great effort rose to the eaves of the barn, where his chest heaved in and out. But he could go no higher.

"Next time," he thought (out of breath), "I'll fly up there where I belong next time." But it was not to be—and the story ends when one day the great birds flew overhead and he—with his belly full of the things of the barnyard—never even heard their cry.

To enjoy what we were intended to know by rebirth in Christ is to “set our minds” on the lofty heights of the Holy Spirit. Obviously, as Paul uses those words, he means them to involve more than just responding in obedience to the Holy Spirit’s initiative.

So, how do we get in touch and stay in touch with the Holy Spirit?

We’re to actually pursue learning the thoughts of God through such activities as:

- Reading and, more importantly, meditating on His written Word.
- Building on or growing from our simple exposure to Scripture to putting our knowledge to work by becoming God’s responsible spokespersons.

But, at a minimum, to “set your mind on the things of the Spirit” is to treat the ways of this new divine Counselor with utmost respect.

- When He nudges your conscience, respond in obedience.
- When He brings an answer to prayer, express your gratitude by sharing what He has done with others.
- When He opens up a new pathway for you, follow it closely and give testimony to others about how good He has been to you.

And, all of those “How-To” actions can begin this very day.

Joy evades the Christian whose mind is constantly drawn to the ways of the flesh—who allows how he or she thinks to be influenced primarily by this world—who has a head full of earthly values in a body where the Holy Spirit has now come to live and is attempting to make Himself known.

Minister of the Gospel, Washington Gladden, wrote the following hymn back in 1879 to celebrate what it means to set one’s mind on the things of the Holy Spirit. I’m quite certain you will recognize these words.

O Master, let me walk with Thee  
in lowly paths of service free;  
tell me Thy secret; help me bear  
the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move  
by some clear, winning word of love;

teach me the wayward feet to stay,  
and guide them in the homeward way.

Teach me Thy patience, still with Thee  
in closer, dearer company,  
in work that keeps faith sweet and strong,  
in trust that triumphs over wrong.

In hope that sends a shining ray  
far down the future's broad'ning way;  
in peace that only Thou canst give,  
with Thee, O Master, let me live.

In closing, I must tell you that my fondest hope is that, by sharing forcefully and honestly, I haven't in any way minimized the overwhelming delight that belongs to those who live the good life Paul describes—as full family members of the household of God. It's truly a great pleasure. But, it's reserved exclusively for those who fully recognize that...

*"The delight of living daily as a member of God's family belongs to those who set their minds on the things of the Spirit."*

And that, my dear ones, is everything. It's everything that God intends for us, as His dearly loved children, to experience every single day of our lives. It truly is our daily delight.

Amen.