

### Exegesis

**Vs. 11** – The Lord moves to demonstrate that there is a *direct link* between obedience and joy: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Being obedient to the Scriptures can seem, at least initially, a sorrowful endeavor. Dying to self is *never* a pleasant experience. But Jesus reassures his followers that the summit of true happiness can only be reached by following the compass of obedience.<sup>1</sup>

Notice how Jesus says, “*my* joy.” The kind of joy he is talking about is deeply personal; it is *specific* to the Son of God. And as his “peace” ought not to be confused with the world’s “peace” (cf. 14:27), so should Christ’s “joy” be distinguished from the world’s “joy” (cf. 16:20-22). This means it’s an *everlasting joy* instead of being one that is *temporary*; rather than being *transitory*, it is *enduring enjoyment*; it is *abiding joyfulness* and not some *momentary* fling. In fact, as when he talked about his “love” (cf. 15:9-10), Jesus says that his “joy” comes to “remain”—i.e., continue, dwell, live, etc.—in the believer as they obey his commandments. Consequently, this *indwelling* joy profoundly impacts the disciple’s life. Jesus tells the apostles that he spoke “these things” so that their “joy might be *full*” (cf. 17:13).<sup>2</sup> Should the apostles internalize the Farewell Discourse, they would experience joy in the fullest sense of the word.

This is the most positive sermon Jesus ever preached. Case in point, the term “joy” (χαρά, *chará*) shows up *seven* times in this section alone (cf. 15:11 (2x’s); 16:20, 21, 22, 24; 17:13). The only other place that the term “joy” can be found in this account is when the Baptizer says, “...the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly (χαρᾷ χαίρει, *cha-rá chai-reh*) because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy (χαρά, *cha-rá*) therefore is fulfilled” (3:29). John’s words back then are so similar to Jesus’ words here that we cannot help but make a correlation. In other words, the thing that brought Jesus’ cousin the most joy is the *same thing* that will bring Jesus’ disciples the most joy: *prioritizing Christ’s voice—i.e., his words, commandments, and instructions—above all others.*<sup>3</sup>

Christians ought to be some of the most *joyful* people on the planet. There is no greater high than when a believer humbles himself and exalts the Son of God, when he can *gleefully* echo John’s words in 3:30, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” However, sadly, many Christians

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<sup>1</sup> Klink (2016), p. 656, “...the Christian life is not burdensome but blessing.”

<sup>2</sup> John utilizes nearly identical phrasing in 1 Jn. 1:4, “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” Whether it was Jesus or John, the goal in teaching was the same: *a joy-filled life.*

<sup>3</sup> Köstenberger (2008), p. 457, points out that John the Baptist even “leapt for joy” while yet in Elizabeth’s womb when his mother heard Mary’s greeting (cf. Lu. 1:41, 44).

so often get that sentiment backward. They'd much rather say, "I must increase, but *He* must decrease." This makes many believers into some of the most *joyless* people on the planet. Only when we're *all in* and *wholeheartedly* devoted to Christ will we receive Christ's joy. As Morris says, "To be halfhearted is to get the worst of both worlds."<sup>4</sup> It is to indulge in sinfulness, knowing its joys never last. And it is to know righteousness but never experience its' lasting joys.

Happy is the man who does not look to himself as a guide but looks to Christ, "the author and finisher of [his] faith" (Heb. 12:2). In doing so, he is unburdened from the pressures of having to lead himself and possibly others into an unknown future. Instead, he need only follow the One who has already gone before him. This is why, even if they should suffer for it, the *followers* of Jesus are happiest when they're *following* Jesus (cf. Ac. 5:41; Rom. 5:3; Col. 1:24; Heb. 10:34; Ja. 1:2-3; 1 Pet. 4:13). The sheep is never more content than when it is made to lie down in green pastures or led beside still waters; I dare say, it will want for *nothing* so long as it follows the Good Shepherd (cf. 10:9, 11; Ps. 23:1-2).

**Vs. 12-13** – "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." As obedience was linked to joy in vs. 11, so joy is now linked to love. If the disciple is never *happier* than when obeying Christ's commands, he is *happiest* when loving his fellow disciples because "to love others like Christ" is the most important of all the commandments. To fulfill such a supreme standard would be quite an achievement. Doing something so Christ-like would undoubtedly come with an overwhelming sense of satisfaction. Though clearly, this is not to say that a love for others supersedes a love for God. Instead, the "commandments" in vs. 10 are *condensed* to just one "commandment" in vs. 12: "love one another, as I have loved you."<sup>5</sup> A love for God is *substantiated* by a love for others, or, in this context, a love for fellow believers (cf. 1 Jn. 3:16; 4:11-21).<sup>6</sup> You cannot love others if you do not love God, and vice versa (cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Ma. 12:28-34; Lu. 10:25-28).

Nevertheless, it is hard to overemphasize the importance of loving others. Truly, we would need no other law if we followed this one rule. There is simply no greater way to demonstrate

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<sup>4</sup> Morris (1995), p. 598.

<sup>5</sup> Klink (2016), p. 656.

<sup>6</sup> Though, as Carson (1991), p. 522, points out, we should not make too much of a distinction between a love for enemies and a love for friends (cf. Mat. 5:43-47; Rom. 5:8-10). As Philip Loyd puts it, the sort of love that wishes to distinguish between the two has "sunk below its proper level." The comparison is between Jesus' love for the disciples and the disciples' love for one another.

a God-like-love than for a person to "lay down [their] life for [their] friends."<sup>7</sup> In contrast, this love is not politically motivated, such as the kind demonstrated by those who were called "friends of Caesar" in the first century.<sup>8</sup> That variety of love only existed so long as it benefited a person's social standing. Should the tides of popular opinion shift, this quid pro quo brand of love would flow in whatever direction the current was moving.

No, the sort of love Jesus is talking about is the kind that exists between *friends*; it is the type of affection shared between equals who know each other as well as they know themselves. It is what is commonly referred to as a "*selfless love*," and it stands out in a world ruled by *selfish love* (cf. 13:1). So important is this charge that, if you'll recall, it is the *sole* characteristic by which a true disciple of Jesus is to be identified (cf. 13:34-35). Whenever we show Christ-like love, it is as if we are playing a tune from another world, a heavenly melody that reveals we are children of the Light. To souls imprisoned by darkness, we can't help but be noticed. A true follower of Jesus can no more be hidden from view than a city on a hill or a candle on a candlestick (cf. Mat. 5:14-16). And, make no mistake, the Christian shines the brightest when they love others like Christ loved them.

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<sup>7</sup> Carson (1991), p. 521, quoting Barrett, p. 476, "The eternal divine love reached its complete and unsurpassable expression in the death of Christ, which was at the same time the death of a man for his friends."

<sup>8</sup> Kruse (2017), p. 371.

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

### **Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 58 | John 15:11-13**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Tonight, we'll talk about the link between obedience, joy, and love. Jesus will show that if the disciple is never *happier* than when he is obeying Christ's commands, he will be *happiest* when he is loving his fellow disciples because loving others is the most important of all the commandments. This is not to say that a love for others supersedes a love for God. Instead, the "commandments" in vs. 10 are *condensed* to just one "commandment" in vs. 12: "love one another, as I have loved you." In other words, a love for God is substantiated by a love for others, or, in this context, a love for fellow believers (cf. 1 Jn. 3:16; 4:11-21). You cannot love others if you do not love God, and vice versa (cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Ma. 12:28-34; Lu. 10:25-28). You will not experience true joy if you do not love others as Christ loved you.

it is hard to overemphasize the importance of loving others. Truly, we would need no other law if we followed this one rule. There is simply no greater way to demonstrate a God-like-love than for a person to "lay down [their] life for [their] friends." So important is the charge to love others that, if you'll recall, it is the sole characteristic by which a true disciple of Jesus is to be identified (cf. 13:34-35).

Whenever we show Christ-like love, it is as if we are playing a tune from another world, a heavenly melody that reveals we are children of the Light. To souls imprisoned by darkness, we can't help but be noticed. A true follower of Jesus can no more be hidden from view than a city on a hill or a candle on a candlestick (cf. Mat. 5:14-16). And, make no mistake, the Christian shines the brightest when they love others like Christ loved them.

**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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Podcast Details:

Season 1 | 58