

Transcript:

a reading from Galatians 5:22 and 23 but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace forbearance kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self-control against such things there is no law the word of the Lord um so I have the distinct Joy of introducing you today to our preacher um Melanie Richards is going to come up in just a minute she serves as our yeah we can give it up for Melanie um so excited many of you know her uh Melanie serves as the pastoral care

associate uh on our staff and she just does a phenomenal job caring for people who are grieving or going through hard seasons in fact the last few weeks she's been leading a group called grief share where a lot of people from our church and the community uh have come to walk through a season of grief together and she's LED that space and you'll hear a little bit about her story uh today um but I'm so excited she has a great message she's been working really hard the last couple weeks I'm going to go

ahead and invite her up if you guys would welcome her uh to the stage um she's uh she's phenomenal she's done such a great job with this special it is actually uh the first sermon uh that she has ever given um and she just did a great job now here's what I will say is we've been working really hard together um I've been doing a little bit of coaching and she's just done phenomenal can I give you a little bit of coaching this morning is that okay is like people who are here one thing is that uh anytime a new preacher gets up I

think it's a very natural tendency to be like I wonder how they're going to do this morning I wonder if they're going to mess up I wonder how tied to their notes they're going to be I wonder if they're going to say something a little weird and that's all natural that's good it doesn't matter how last week I told you all that Ben who serves in our student Ministry had a husband so we all make mistakes okay he doesn't like it always we all say things so that's not the purpose of today um the conversation

and what we believe is that preaching is not just one person speaking to an audience it's the Holy Spirit speaking to a church um and so that's what we are here for today is you are here to receive something from the Holy Spirit not just Melanie or a certain

preacher um so that's one thing second piece of coaching could I give you with new preachers it's really good if you smile just a little bit like just give them a soft face I'm going to be upstairs with the youth so I will be one less

soft face in the audience but we're talking about Joy today so just show her a little Joy all right just like let her feel welcome and relax and it'll be great it's going to be a good morning she's got an awesome message so Melanie take it away thank you Paul thank you Paul thank you good morning good morning welcome online thank you for being here I am excited for what God has for us I'm also humbled to be asked to speak about joy in a culture of Despair and by no means am I an expert on this topic I have

wrestled with some Despair and I have wondered how to hang on to Joy so we're just going to invite the Holy Spirit here today on a personal note personal note my husband Lars and I have attended Waterstone I think about 26 years now a while and when we first came we were newly married no children now we're just old married with children but we love water stone one of the things we love about Waterstone is the authentic Community people here will walk with you in broken spaces they will be on the

journey with you when you're having a hard time we have found that to be true in our lives and I hope that you do as well that we can walk well with people and as some of you might know we've been on a hard journey four years ago our 15-year-old son Luke took his life and it's been a soul shattering experience and as we've walked through this Waterstone has walked well with us as we have been on this healing path and seeking the Lord in restoration and in renewal so this morning I'd like to open

us in prayer father we just pause and we take a breath in your presence Lord just a little breath holy spirit that you would Breathe upon us that you would come and that you would show us what does joy mean and how do we walk in that and Lord all the distractions and all the things Lord would you just remove those so we can sit in your presence and we can draw near to you and we can know you more intimately so we offer this time to you Lord father that you might be glorified that you might be magnified we want to worship you because

you are worthy in your name Jesus amen so as we start this morning we're talking about the topic of joy in a culture of Despair and I'm excited about this series God has such good things for us and hopefully as we explore the fruit of Joy today we can draw near to his spirit and we can experience what he has for us that's what's really important right is what he has to say for us we're going to start by looking at despair I know you all came this morning hoping to look at despair right we all experience it right one of

my questions is where are you feeling despair maybe you're a student and you feel loneliness and sometimes that leads to hopelessness as you scroll through social media and you see all the parties and all the events that you weren't invited to and you feel despair maybe you're at work and your boss has just been off and you feel uncertain you might lose your job and uncertainty is swirling all around you and you're feeling despair or maybe you're a spouse and your marriage is not going well and you're afraid you're

going to lose things to divorce or maybe to alheim s and despair looms well what about the elections maybe that's bringing us all despair right as we look at what's happening in our country or the global situation with the wars that are raging and the lives that are being lost despair can easily come in we all experience it how do we hang on to Joy in these spaces in the midst of Despair what does Joy even look like I want to ask this morning if you Google Joy what you will get is pictures of people

with their arms stretched up looking to the sky looking happy and free and we all want to be in those spaces right I've been doing a little informal survey prior to speaking and I've been asking people when you think about joy and a Biblical character in the Bible who comes to your mind it's a good question interesting enough most people don't have anyone who comes to mind right away we have to sit and we think about it and another interesting thing is a wide variety of people are mentioned as Biblical characters that

represent Joy I wonder why this is I think it might be because we need a clear understanding of what Joy means we don't always know what it means what is a clear understanding of Joy I hope today we can dive into that a bit I'd like for us to examine what Joy is how do we have joy what Joy is not maybe the difference between Despair

and sorrow and looking to the scripture what does God say what does he tell us about Joy how do we cultivate it what is his character so that's where we're going to

go this morning let's first take a look at the definition of Joy if you look it up in the dictionary it says a feeling of great pleasure or happiness that comes from success good fortune or well-being it's gladness how does our culture define Joy what would the culture say that Joy is I think our culture tends to look at personal happiness and qualifies that as Joy did you know there is a world happiness report they started this report in 2012 and according to this report America has fallen out of a country in

the top 20 places place happy to live a happy place to live we've fallen out of the top 20 in this last year and one of the reasons why is they the statistics and metrics of it has measured those under 30 and those under 30 have become increasingly more unhappy and I think most can say all of us have in some ways so personal happiness has dropped significantly despair has increased it's not good news right as we examine cultural happiness it does seem to be based on circumstances and on feelings and happiness is

typically would you say a more fleeting emotion it's often sparked by a particular moment or event that brings excitement just to be clear happiness isn't bad we all want to be happy right but it can't be our ultimate Pursuit if we were to picture happiness what comes to mind might be a baby pool full of toys and splashing and fun right it's excitement and as we talk about Joy the picture that comes to mind might be more of a well of deep Waters of Stillness Joy is a long-lasting state of being it's an inner work an attitude it

can be an emotion but it's also a choice it's both we want to have happiness and joy both of those really are a reflection of God's character right that's who he is that's what makes his kingdom attractive and we want to join and we want to be on Mission we want to be joyful as Paul read earlier our focus is the fruit of the spirit Galatians 5:22 but the fruit of the spirit is love joy peace forbearance kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self-control and against such things there is no law

to clarify Joy is not like a spiritual gift in that some people have it and some people don't right Joy is something we all can have because we have joy in the presence of Jesus and who he is through the power of the Holy Spirit the late Pastor Tim Keller we like Tim Keller here at Waterstone right the late Pastor Tim Keller talked about joy in this way Joy is a bullan that comes when we are finding Joy in God he goes on to quote 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 which says but we have this Treasure of Jars of Clay to show this

all surpassing power right is from God it's not from us we are hard-pressed on every side but not crushed we are perplexed but not in despair persecuted but not abandoned struck down not destroyed we always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body Keller pointed out that we like the Apostle Paul who wrote The Passage we are not impervious to suffering but we are Unsinkable if we have joy from God we could say that Joy is kind of like a diamond it is

multifaceted you know how Diamonds Are Made they're in The Crucible and the fire and out comes Beauty it's not just that we are joyful or we're sad or we're happy joy is a mix and a mingle of emotion and choice it's also an invitation it's an invitation to a deeper abiding relationship with the Holy Spirit we also love the Bible project here at Waterstone and they have some great things to say about Joy so we're going to turn to the screens and we're going to watch a clip from the Bible project being in a good mood is

really great and most languages have lots of words to describe the experience like happy cheerful joyful and so on the same goes for the languages of the Bible in ancient Biblical Hebrew there's a variety of words like Sim s or Gil in the Greek New Testament there's k y or aasis each word has its own unique Nuance but they all basically refer to the feeling of joy in happiness now what makes these biblical Joy words interesting is noticing the kinds of things that bring happiness and also seeing how Joy is a key theme that runs

through the whole story of the Bible let's start with sources of Joy on page one of the Bible God says that this world is very good and so naturally people find joy in beautiful and good things of life like growing flocks or an abundant Harvest on the Hills the poet of Psalm 104 says a good bottle of wine is God's gift to bring joy to people Hearts

people find Joy at a wedding or in their children there's even a Hebrew proverb that compares the joy that perfume brings to your nose with the joy a good friend brings to your heart

however human history isn't just a joy Fest the biblical story shows how we live in a world that's been corrupted by our own selfishness it's marked by death and loss and this is where biblical Faith offers a unique perspective on Joy it's an attitude God's people adopt not because of happy circumstances but because of their hope in in God's love and promise so when the Israelites were suffering from slavery in Egypt God raised up Moses to lead them into freedom and the first thing the Israelites did was Sing For Joy even

though they were in the middle of a desert they were vulnerable the promised land was still far away they rejoiced anyway later biblical poets looked back on this story and they remembered how the Lord caused his people to leave with joy his chosen ones with shouts of Joy this joy in the wilderness this was a defining moment a way of saying that the joy of God's people is not determined by their struggles but by their future Destiny this theme appears later in Israel's story when Israel suffered

under the oppression of foreign Empires the prophet Isaiah looked for a day when God would raise up a new deliverer like Moses that's when those Redeemed by the Lord will return to Zion with glad shouts with eternal Joy crowning their heads happiness and joy will overtake them and while the Israelites waited they chose joy to anticipate their future Redemption this is why quite significant that when Jesus of Nazareth was born it was announced as good news that brings great joy we're told that Jesus himself rejoiced and gave thanks

to God his father when he began to announce the kingdom of God he even taught his followers the same joy in the wilderness saying when people reject you or persecute you for following me Rejoice be very glad because your reward is great in heaven after his death and Resurrection Jesus commissioned his followers to go out and announce the good news that he was the Risen King of the world and as they did so the early Christian communities were known for being full of joy even when they were persecuted like when the Apostle

Paul was sitting in a dirty Roman prison he could say that he's chosen Joy even if he gets executed he called this the joy of Faith or joy in the Lord he believed it was the gift of God's spirit a sign that Jesus's presence is with you inspiring hope in the midst of hardship and when you believe that Jesus's love has overcome death itself Joy becomes reasonable in in the darkest of circumstances now this doesn't mean that you ignore or suppress your sorrow That's not healthy or necessary Paul often expressed his grief about missing

loved ones or losing friends or his own Freedom he called it being full of sorrow and yet rejoicing as he acknowledged his pain he also made a choice to trust Jesus that his loss wouldn't be the final word this is very different from the trite advice to turn that frown upside down Christian Joy is a profound decision of Faith and Hope in the power of Jesus's own life and love and that's what Biblical Joy is all about all right biblical Joy so we see that Joy is an attitude that we as God's people adopt based on

his character and his love and his promises let's break that down a little bit what is attitude as we look at attitude an attitude is a specific disposition that combines factors like beliefs opinions moods and emotions one author and counselor puts it this way sometimes attitude is referred to an Outlook or mental estate that affects the way people perceive the world around them the way they experience life work relationships and more attitude involves a sense of agency it's something that we can choose we can choose to cultivate

Joy how do we do this it's through the attitudes that we adopt and the spaces that we abide attitude is the way we evaluate something or someone whether we respond positively or negatively about certain subjects attitude happens on the inside it's how we think and how we feel and then it moves to the outside of how we respond what is an example of this not long ago I was traveling and I know a lot of us are traveling and I apologize in advance for the a clean stories not long ago I was traveling and I so

excited going to visit family I get to the gate I'm sitting there waiting looking forward to the flight suddenly you hear the announcement you never want to hear right the

announcement that your flight is delayed so grumbling happens throughout the crowd and we wait and we wait and we're thinking when is this going to happen when are we going to get on the plane all right finally the beautiful gate agent comes on and says I'm sorry to tell you you'll need to move Gates we're not getting on this plane oh

bummer so we all get up carry all our stuff over go to the next gate we sit we're waiting we're waiting yay finally an announcement comes you're going to board we're going to be boarding so we get on the plane we settle down into our seats so excited about the flight what happens the pilot come on he comes on and he says I hate to tell you this folks but there is a mechanical you're going to need to get off the plane ah so the lovely lady sitting next to me and her eight-year-old son he starts grumbling and protesting and expressing

all that we are feeling and she in a moment of wisdom looks at him and he says son I know this is hard it's not what we want but we do have something we can control what can we control in this moment we cannot control the circumstances or when we're leaving or taking off on this flight but we can control our attitude I thought it was really great advice I thought maybe she should get on the PA and tell everyone this right we all needed a little help with our attitude so attitude involves a sense of agency we cannot control our

circumstances but we can control how we choose to react to them is there anything in Scripture that speaks to this I think there is one of my favorite passages Philippians 2 6-1 says your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus in your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be used as own Advantage rather he made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness and

being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross therefore God exalted him gave him to the highest Place gave him the name above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on Earth and under Earth and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father what was his attitude like it was one of

humility and obedience which led to favor and exaltation to his father we see that Jesus had an attitude of

self-surrender of self-sacrifice he humbled himself to the will of the father he experienced joy in doing what his father sent him to do the joy of Jesus was fulfilling and what God had called him to do his purpose tied to his joy and his Joy was tied to his attitude so we need I need an attitude check and I remember growing up my mom would always say let's have an attitude check is my attitude more like Jesus one of humility and obedience or is it really my flesh that I'm focusing on getting my way wanting

what I want please note I don't think we need to have a perfect attitude I don't think that's what he's telling us to do that's not the point the point is that we wrestle with our emotions we sit with Jesus and we ask for his thoughts his thoughts are higher than his thoughts we know that logically right he's God of the universe his thoughts well they better be higher than my thoughts but he wants to give us his thoughts he wants to show us and help us with our attitude he wants us to surrender it to him

another question that needs to be ask is am I hanging out with Jesus enough to be influenced by him who are my influencer that's a good social media question right and I will confess to you that sometimes my influencers might be the opinion of others I value what they think of me maybe it is the social media and what I'm seeing on there maybe it's the news am I feeding myself a diet of news all these things they can cause discontentment and grow Us in despair we need to be care careful and asking ourselves what is our spiritual

diet we need to make intentional choices that will impact our attitudes so we can note that Joy is an attitude God's people adopt not because of happy circumstances but because of Hope in God's love and his promises so far we have looked at aspects of attitude we see that Joy is an attitude it's one that we can adopt in God's presence and keeping in step with the spirit next let's take a look at adopting joy and abiding adopting Joy is an invitation to abide in God's presence as his child adopting what does that

mean it means making something your own I don't know if you're familiar with the adoption experience I worked in adoption and foster care for 12 years and would license and supervise foster homes and adoptive homes and it's quite a process some of you may know it you have to be finger printed you have to go through extensive interviews where a person like me total stranger comes in and asks you very personal questions you have to have a home inspection you have to have references all these things to adopt a

child which is important right because it is a child we're talking about although I do think that we have to do these for animals too which is important too these days right but I believe what it starts with adopting Joy is adopting Jesus making him My Own by entering into a relationship with Jesus Through the Holy Spirit we can be adopted into his family so my question today is where are you at with Jesus are you in his family have you accepted his invitation to be a part of his family do you know his tenderness

do you know his love for you that's what he wants is relationship with us he gave his life for us what more could he give looking back to Galatians we see a reciprocal relationship we adopt Jesus and he adopts us adopting Joy means knowing that I am adopted into God's family and I can know my place in his family Galatians says Galatians 4:4-7 says but when the set time had fully come God sent his son born of a woman born under law to redeem those under the law that we might receive what adoption

to sonship because we are his sons God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts the spirit who calls out ABA father so you are no longer a slave but God's child and since you are his child God has made you also an heir so knowing my place in his family knowing my place in his presence biblical Joy means as an adopted child I practice abiding in his presence if you're adopted into a family you spend time with your family members right it's part of being in a family so we can look at scripture again

to some examples of how adopting Joy happened through abiding being present with the with the Holy Spirit i' like for us now to take a look at psalm 16 this is one of my favorite Psalms I wish we had time to go through the whole Psalm and to dive deep but we're going to focus today on psalm 16 and verse 11 the psalm 16 is written by David

King David and it is a Psalm of gratitude he is entrusting himself to God he is thankful to God the key words in this Psalm are refuge and presence David is certainly someone that

each of us can relate to he had a lot of losses in his life he lost a child he was rejected by his father-in-law he was rejected by his wife and his sons rejected him he was actually even um murdered I not he wasn't murder he attempted murder against his life by his family members I love the Psalms because we get to read his journal it talks about his victories it talks about his sadness it talks about his despair it talks about his Joy I have been focusing on these Psalms the last four years losing a

child is one of the most painful experiences I've ever been through it's been hard I have given way to despair at times I have lost hope but as I look at the Psalms and I see how David wrestles with the Psalms it's encouraged me and I think all of us can be encouraged by that verse 16 I mean Psalm 16:1 says you make known to me the path of life you fill me with joy in your presence with eternal Pleasures at your right hand says in your presence is the fullness of joy what does that mean we're given a scriptural picture of

sitting in his presence in psalm 16 David gives himself to the Lord he expresses contentment in God's care and his presence the most common Hebrew word for presence is panim which also translated means face isn't that interesting face it means face implying a close personal relationship with the Lord being present means being near seeing one's faith it means paying attention it means listening it means sharing being present with Jesus influences my attitude in God's presence is fullness of joy not in my

circumstances not in my feelings it's in his presence means relationship it's an invitation so often we want God to fix things that's what we're praying our circumstances we're wanting him to fix this fix that fix this the thing is I don't think God is as concerned about fixing things as he is about Fellowship he wants relationship and if you think about it logically he could have saved us and taken us to heaven but instead there's the Journey of growing of knowing him of relating to him of

relationship how do you sit in God's present what draws you into that space as you think about this maybe it's prayer often times prayer I think is a monologue and we just talk to God and we talk to God and we talk to God and we don't sit and listen he wants to speak to us my encouragement is how are we listening to God maybe it's scripture reading scripture is amazing I love scripture it transforms our mind it transforms our heart scripture is what we soak in it's our spirit spiritual diet what about music for me that's a

way that I really feel ushered into God's presence when my soul connects thank you Maddie and our worship team they do an amazing job here what about nature sometimes being in nature shows us the bigness of God and our smallness nature can Usher us into God's spirit in his presence when we look at Christ we see that he also like many Coloradans liked to go to the mountains right he would go off to the mountains and pray we see that sometimes he went all night long I confess I've never gone

all night to pray we also see before the cross what did he do he went into the garden and he prayed and he invited his disciples into prayer can Usher us into the space of being present with the spirit so this morning we've looked at how the world defines Joy what Biblical Joy means how to have joy in our attitude adopting joy and abiding In God's Presence let's take a moment to look at what Joy is not the opposite of joy is hopelessness it's despair is the complete loss or absence of

hope I will admit I have been in those spaces of Despair I think we all have at some point for me after Luke died I would walk by his room and overwhelming sadness would hit me and I I would think he's not there he's not there and at one point the holy spirit in my mind quickened my heart and it he said he's with me he's with me so I would hear he's not there and I'd hear that in my mind and then I would think he's with me and I want Luke to be in the presence of Jesus in the fullness of joy I want that

for him but at times it's hard because we miss him so much and I think we do have to be careful despair can come in if we allow our thoughts to run wild if we allow our feelings

to be dictators and not indicators I think often times we allow our feelings to become facts I'm not saying we don't acknowledge our feelings they're important if we don't acknowledge our feelings they come outside ways I think the invitation is to acknowledge the feeling but then surrender them to the Lord that's what we see David doing

in the Psalms we recognize our feelings denying them is not healthy but we don't have to make them King we also have to check our thoughts at times and we are called to argue we are called to interrupt those thoughts of Despair because if I allow my thoughts to run wild I will spiral down into despair spiraling thoughts lead to Despair and darkness so if we want more joy what do we do we disrupt thoughts of Despair 2 Corinthians 10:5 speaks to this another one of my favorite verses says we demolish arguments and every

pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ my question is how is your thought Patrol today did you know we need to have thought Patrol when a thought enters our mind we can't just automatically let it pass through the gate we have to evaluate it right we have to say is this thought coming from my flesh is this thought coming from the world is this thought coming from our adversary Satan or is this thought coming from the spirit if we don't do

this we are practicing thought negligence that's what I call it thought negligence when we're not taking them captive so we need to have Source determination where is that Co thought coming from how can I be more intentional with my thought life we've briefly looked at despair and how our thoughts impact despair robbing of Joy what's the difference between despair and sorrow I wonder I'd like to propose that there is a difference sorrow is different than despair sorrow typically refers to feelings of sadness and grief despair

implies a complete loss of belief or hope for the future despair implies that we don't have hope we don't have a future Destiny Tim Keller writes in his book counterfeit Gods there is a difference between sorrow and despair sorrow is a pain for which there are no sources of consolation sorrow comes from losing one good thing among others despair however is inconsolable because it comes from losing an ultimate thing that is Hope

right sorrow is the nature of grief and sorrow is complex it's often associated with pain loss and

grief while it's natural to avoid sorrow there is an intriguing relationship between joy and sorrow just because we have sorrow and it's hard doesn't mean it's bad I've adopted a new phrase in my life bad is not hard I mean hard is not bad hard is not bad sorrow and joy they can run along the same tracks it's often said that our capacity for joy in increases with our capacity of sorrow having lost Luke I now value my relationships I value things that maybe I didn't do that in the same way without that experience

and these past four years I have I have struggled with it and I would like to say that we don't measure Joy by not having sorrow this is uh unfortunate that we do this I think sometimes we measure That Someone's Not joyful because they're sorry and I have had good intentioned people say to me that they wish I was more joyful like the person I used to be I won't ever be that person I won't ever um be in that space again and it feels a little bit like rejection but after a huge loss you are

changed Jerry Stitzer in his book I highly recommend a uh it's called a Grace disguise he talks about sorrow and loss as being an amputation you never get over it but you carry it differently I've seen that to be true in my own life I've also had well-meaning people indicate that I'm not if I'm not experienced happiness or joy that looks like a certain way that I'm being a disobedient Christian and I don't think that's true either Joy does not always look like a smile on my face and in fact in preparing for this sermon the Lord

convicted me of a lie I was believing I have felt that the past four years I haven't had Joy and this friend said to me but you've been in the presence of God aren't you having joy and I realized in my own mind I had to adjust what I think of as Joy it's an inner work that God does what are we using to measure Joy if we look at Christ we see the path that he was on to the Cross he sweat blood he fell down to the ground he screamed out God why have you forsaken me he was in sorrow maybe even despair

but what did he do he surrendered to God he surrendered to his father he went to that cross sorrow is an invitation to surrender it's an invitation to hope we can look at the sorrow of Jesus in Hebrews 12:2 therefore since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders us the sin that so easily entangles us let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us this is the part I rehearse in my mind often fixing our eyes on Jesus the Pioneer and the perfecter of

our faith for the joy set before him what was the joy set before him it was us it was us and being reunited with his father for the joy set before him he endured the cross scorning its shame he sat down at the right hand Throne of God for the joy set before him he endured the cross the promise of future reward Joy gave Jesus strength to suffer on the cross the joy Jesus experienced involves sacrifice and sorrow and just because we have sorrow and have sacrifice doesn't mean we don't have hope or Joy so let's Circle it back

let's come back to the question how can we hang on to Joy when the world grows dark and deep with despair how can we be people of joy in crushing times but also how can we be people joy and daily living how do we cultivate this fruit of the spirit what if we chose to be intentional with our attitudes what if we allowed Jesus to be our main influencer what if we adopted Joy by abiding with the spirit and what if we allowed gratitude to be the soil that cultivates Joy gratitude is the soil of our heart allowing the fruit of

the spirit to germinate and to grow acknowledging God's greatness and his goodness that helps leads us to these spaces of gratitude cultivates Joy you might remember at the beginning of this series Paul challenged Us in the spiritual practice of fasting I want to encourage you if you haven't fasted or if you're struggling with it that it is a practice like no other that draws you deeper into intimacy that is what I have found in my life and remember it's a spiritual practice the first time I did

did an a three-day fast we were at a church that did a three-day fast at the beginning of the year I will tell you I was not very spirit like I felt hangry and I felt irritable and it was not beautiful but that dependency upon God really allows us to hear what he's saying to us I want to encourage you it's a challenge that God will help you in that God will meet

you in along with fasting the other practice I'm encouraging you this morning is towards gratitude I love that this is a part of

the series I love that we're being called to think more about how we can be thankful my husband Lars is amazing at this he will say I want to treat people as gold I want to be thankful how do we do it what practical tools can we have for cultivating gratitude I know some people keep a gratitude Journal where they make a list at the end of the day or the beginning of the day three things they're thankful for five things they're thankful for maybe it's memorizing scripture that helps me a lot another

favorite verse is Nehemiah 8:10 maybe you know that one the joy of the Lord is my strength I rehearse that when I'm feeling weak the joy of the Lord is my strength maybe it's a song a song that you can play over and sit in and soak in mostly I think we need to ask the Holy Spirit how do you want to increase my gratitude he's the one who speaks to us about how we can be transformed so as we have observed the question what is the reason to Hope in a joy in for joy in a culture of Despair and it boils down to God's character we

have to have hope or we sink into despair we draw Hope from God's promises from his love his character one thing is help me tremendously there's a lot of questions that come when you lose a child to Suicide could have should have would have all of those the sight of Heaven I don't know that I will understand but I have to trust God and His word Revelations 21:4 he will wipe every tear from their eyes there will be no more death or Mourning or crying or pain for the old Order of Things has passed away that

gives me hope one day I know it will all be set right one day I know no I will see my son again I will be with him in all of eternity my future with Luke is longer than my past Joy is not determined by our circumstances our feelings our struggles but by our future Destiny Joy is expectant I love that first the sorry first Thessalonians 4:13 and 14 Paul writes that we grieve but not without hope brothers and sisters we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death so that you do not grieve like

the rest of mankind who have no hope for we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep or died in him I am grateful for that we see that Joy is not an option maybe this is why God puts Joy 218 times throughout scripture he says happy Rejoice blessed Joy Is Like Oxygen we have to have it if we don't have it we sink down into despair another flight joke Well story for you I was a flight attendant for a few years and maybe you saw the news on

January 5th when the door blew off the air plane Alaska Airline airplane and I apologize if you're flying it is still safer to fly than to drive just to make a note but the door blew off the airplane they reached 16,000 ft when the door was ripped off officials say the pilot however was able to safely guide the plane and land it who is our pilot who is going to bring us safely home I'd like to propose that our pilot is God that if we know his character we know his faithfulness we know his goodness he's the one who

safely lands the plane he's the one who gives us that oxygen in conclusion how can we have uncrushable joy in crushing circumstances it's by knowing God's character Joy is an attitude God's people adopt not because of happy circumstances or how we feel but but by knowing hope in God's love and his promises and his character I'd like to close today with a quote from a very wise man that I know which is my dad Bill Strickland Joy is infinite and eternal always available in God's economy as we

consider his word and all he has done in the world around us and in us God God's joy Works in us his Spirit Works in us joy is activated by counting our blessings thank you for allowing me this time to share with you and I want to offer an invitation if you haven't adopted Jesus today he wants to be he wants you to be in his family come talk to a staff member a Stevens Minister someone who's sitting next to you we want you to have the assurance of knowing that your plane is being flown by the best pilot by God

Almighty and that you have a Heavenly home that you are going to go to Let's close in prayer thank you Jesus thank you Jesus that you are our joy and you know what Joy looks like thank you for your presence today Lord we confess we confess the lies that we believe about Joy we confess the way that we make feelings the ultimate we confess that we can't do this without you we want more of your fruit more of your joy so come Holy Spirit speak to us in this moment how do you want to be more present with

us we confess that many times we want things fixed more than we want fellowship and so Lord we just lay that before you we invite you Holy Spirit speak to us Lord we love you so much you are so good your character is so faithful thank you Jesus for being with us in your name amen