



KILLJOY GOD

WARMING UP...

1. A common belief blocker when it comes to Christianity, is the idea that God is a *killjoy*. Can you think of a time when someone robbed you of your joy, or ruined a fun or pleasurable situation?
2. Right now it can be difficult to find any sense of joy in our current situation. However, in many passages in scripture we are encouraged to rejoice through all seasons. Think about Philippians 4:4-5 (Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near). Take some time to think more deeply about your life and ask, "what things bring me even a small sense of joy right now?"

GOING DEEPER...

1. One reason for why people may assume that God is a *killjoy* is because they are thinking about "dead orthodoxy" (religious systems based on empty rules, tradition and performance) rather than the church that Jesus envisioned. Have you ever had an experience with dead orthodoxy before? How could this experience affect the way you view God?
2. Dallas Willard comments about the difference between *joy* and *pleasure* by saying:

"Joy is a pervasive sense – not just a thought – of well being: of overall and ultimate wellbeing. Its primary feeling component is delight in an encompassing good well secured."

Re-read this quote so that it sinks in. How does this idea of joy differ from the world's view of joy?

3. The Psalmist who wrote Psalm 4 stated: "You have put more joy in my heart than when their grain and new wine abound".
Do you really believe that God is able to grant you a greater joy than any experience of human satisfaction? If so, why?
4. In Paul's letter to Timothy, he states: Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (1Tim. 6:17)
What does this statement tell us about God and his desires for us?
5. In John 15:11, Jesus invites his disciples to participate in his own joy:

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

For Jesus, the path to true joy was interconnected with selfless love for others. We see this in Hebrews 12:2-3:

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Joy drove Jesus to die for the whole world. It drove him to endure suffering for God and for others. It drove him to conquer shame. Joy was not simply pleasure for Jesus (he had that all taken away!), but was a pervasive sense of wellbeing that transcended suffering.

What do you think it means to have Jesus' joy *in you*? How do you "get" Jesus' joy and how do you become "full" with it?

BRINGING IT HOME...

1. On Sunday we were encouraged to think about the small gifts from God that we can still experience today, even in social distancing and lockdown. E.g. Laughter, Music, Food, Nature, Memory.
How have these gifts led you a place of joy in God?
2. Often we mistake the gifts of God for God himself. How can we better allow these gifts to become a pathway towards God, so that we may find our joy in Him?