



WEEKLY STUDY November 12-18, 2023

(Use this guide to individually or with a group dive deeper into this week's sermon.)

JoyFull: A Generous and Abundant Life

Our sermon series for November is: JoyFull: A Generous and Abundant Life. How would you describe yourself? Your family? Your community. Would you use words like joyful? Generous? Grateful? Full of life? These are attributes we aspire to and want others to see in us. So how do we live in these ways? This November as we enter into another beautiful season of intentional gratitude we will be talking about how to live filled with joy in a hard world; how to live out of abundance rather than scarcity mindset; how to hold fast to hope believe that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion.

Our scripture this week is: 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: ‘They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever.’

Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise god for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

- 1)** We are in our second week with the theme: JoyFull: A Generous and Abundant Life. The title of Pastor Sam's sermon was “A cheerful giver” – a phrase contained in our scripture from 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. Each November our church (along with many others across the U.S.) participates in a giving campaign in order to fund the budget for the coming year. Many times, as speakers get up to talk about giving generously to the church,

there are those in the pew who groan and ask silently, “Why do we have to do this every year.” This Sunday, our 8:30 and 10:30 speakers brought joy to the congregation as they spoke. JD Nicholson and Charlie Bridges are both members of our youth group and they spoke on why Belle Meade UMC brings them joy. JD talked about adults (Mr. Hammond and Mr. Wild) who both would stop and ask him questions about what he was doing. He felt noticed and affirmed by these adults in our congregation paying attention to him. Charlie asked about the church as a great community of people and both JD and Charlie mentioned Worship Without Walls where we as a faith community spread joy into the Nashville community through service. Both made a strong case for giving so that BMUMC can continue to make a difference inside our community and outside in the world.

Question: When you think about the things that you experience through BMUMC, what would you include in talk to the congregation as a means of encouraging joy through giving?

- 2) Pastor Gracie continued the theme of joy through the time with children. She asked them, “What brings you joy?” Their list included a wide variety of things: pets, friends, family, people in our church, peace. She reminded them that to experience joy we need to use our eyes to look for and see joy around us. And she told the children (and all of us) as well that joy is to be shared.

Question: What have you seen this day that reminded you of the joy in life? How have you shared that joy with others?

- 3) Does anyone else get excited when Pastor Sam brings up a visual aid to use during her sermon? I know I do. I love words, but words with pictures or objects for me are even better. I wondered immediately what she would be doing with the clear container of water. Sam asked us the question we’ve been asked probably more times than we like: “Do you see this glass as half empty or half full.” It is the difference between seeing scarcity and seeing abundance. We might think this applies only to finances, but Sam reminded us that it applies to many areas of our life: finances; time; resources; relationships. Seeing abundance instead of scarcity opens us up instead of closes us in. I remember a reoccurring conversation among our stewardship staff each year as they planned for worship resources. While “a cheerful giver” is seen in the context of today’s scripture related to monetary offerings, “a cheerful giver” applies to every aspect of life. Some may give financially but do so as if they are paying their dues. Some may give their time but do so with impatient attitudes and barked orders. Some may give their prayers abundantly but only to those who are like them.

Question: In what areas of life do you find it easy to give with joy? Where are your areas of struggle?

- 4) Pastor Sam reminded us that through Paul we are told that we are saved by grace not by our own works. It’s a reminder that we aren’t to live as though we are earning God’s love. We are reminded that God’s abundant love surrounds and sustains us and in response we live lives of gratitude. And out of our gratitude we give of our resources,

our time, our gifts. We give these not just to God but to a world in need – our families, our communities, our world.

Question: On this day, for what are you grateful? How do you share your gifts out of that gratitude?

Prayer: “O God, open our eyes to joy. Open our eyes even with headlines that make us weep. Open our eyes even on days that when darkness seems more abundant than light. Open our eyes even when family feels more like an irritation than a joy. Open our eyes even when we cannot see or understand our own giftedness. Open our eyes and let us see the joy that surrounds us, washes over us, and flows out of us. Amen.

Weekly Challenges:

In your time of prayer this week, give thanks for Lewis Flack who joined the Belle Meade UMC at the 8:30 worship service. Give thanks as well that Rachael Jorstad has been certified as a candidate for ministry in the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference of the United Methodist Church. Start each day by praying for eyes to see joy around you and ways to spread that joy to others.

(Weekly study guide prepared by Rev. MaryJane Pierce Norton)