

Delight #2 – Thoughtful & Playful Delight

Based on *Delight! – Discipleship as the adventure of living and being loved* by Justin Rossow

Bible Reading

*Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.*

*Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.*

*Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.*

*Turn my heart towards your statutes
and not towards selfish gain.*

*Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.*

*Fulfil your promise to your servant,
so that you may be feared.*

*Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.*

*How I long for your precepts!
In your righteousness preserve my life.*

Psalm 119:33-40

Introduction

Last time we introduced the series, and saw how the God of the Bible is a God who takes great delight in his creation, and in particular in humans, who he has created ‘in his image’. And how the incarnate Jesus, God in human form, demonstrated this delight in his teaching, and the way he lived his life here on earth.

We saw how a possible definition of being a follower, a disciple, of Jesus is...

An adventure of loving and being loved.

After which we explored some Bible verses that expressed God's joyful delight in us, which in turn inspire us to take joyful delight in him.

Today we are going to start by looking at a form of delight that I am much more comfortable with... thoughtful delight :-). This is the kind of delight that we get when we think deeply about something, figure out how it works, and then rejoice that we've discovered how it fits together.

For me that can be anything from assembling an IKEA kitchen island to creating a typographic piece to completing a word puzzle.

Thoughtful delight happens when you step back, see how all the parts have fitted together, and enjoy a sense of pleasure and fulfilment.

Isaiah 42:1 reads...

*“Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I **delight**;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.”*

Isaiah 42:1

The word translated as 'delight' in this verse is the Hebrew word *ratsah*, pronounced 'rah-TSAH'. It communicates understanding and acceptance.

In the Old Testament, God would *ratsah* offerings if they were presented in the right way, he would *delight* in them and *accept* them.

Good parents *ratsah* their children, approve of them, accept them, understand them and take delight in them.

And when Matthew is talking about Jesus' ministry, he sees it as being in fulfilment of Isaiah 42:1, and he quotes the Greek translation of it.

*“Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I **delight**;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.”*

Matthew 12:18

The Greek word for ‘thoughtful delight’ is *eudokeō*

which comes from the prefix ‘eu’ (pr. you), which means ‘good’ and the verb *dokeō* (pr. dough-KEH-oh), which means ‘think’, so when put together it means to ‘think well of something or someone’.

The gospels record this as being the word God the father uses about Jesus at Jesus's baptism and at his transfiguration when he says...

*“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am **well pleased**.”*

God the Father approves of, is pleased with, delights in, thinks well of Jesus, his chosen servant and beloved son on whom God has placed the Spirit to enable him to proclaim God's righteousness to the nations. See how delight is a trinitarian thing... delight is something the Father has for the Son in the unity of the Spirit.

And this has a wonderful knock-on effect into the life of every Christian believer. When Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River he was identifying with every human who repents of their sins and commits their lives to God, even though he had no need to repent of any sins.

When we give our lives over to Christ's lordship, and especially when we pass through the water of baptism, we are baptised into his death and resurrection. Jesus' baptism was part of his ministry to break the hold of sin and death that the human race is under. If you are a

Christian, you are ‘in Christ’, and in him you receive the verdict that Jesus won for you by dying in your place...

*“Beloved child, in whom I delight – which whom I am **well pleased.**”*

As a follower of Jesus, God accepts and delights in you. That is your new and assured status, forever... guaranteed... purchased by Jesus’ life, baptism, death, resurrection and ascension.

Just as Jesus did at his baptism, when you submitted your life to God, you received the Holy Spirit into your life to empower you to resist the devil, and to proclaim God’s truth to the people around you.

God’s delight in you doesn’t mean life will always be easy, but it does change your attitude toward the challenges you face.

The apostle Paul, who knew a thing or two about suffering for the gospel, was able to write:

*That is why, for Christ’s sake, I **delight** [eudokeō] in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:10

Paul is not a masochist, he doesn’t enjoy the insults, hunger and beatings he endured, rather he takes thoughtful delight that God has chosen to make Paul a part of his plan to take the good news of Jesus to the world, a bit like when you work hard to help someone else, maybe pulling a tree stump out of their garden, and when you’re done, you wipe away the sweat and stretch your aching muscles thinking ‘that’s a job worth doing’.

Paul knows that God is present and active at all times, even when it doesn’t seem like it. It is a sad truth that physical comfort often leads to lukewarm faith. Challenges, sadness and confusion are things that often make us realise we are not strong enough to do things on our

own and encourage us to turn to God. As Paul says ‘when I am weak, then I am strong’.

That doesn’t mean that Christians are meant to pretend to be happy when bad things happen in our lives. Being a Christian means we are able to acknowledge that life is sometimes difficult and perplexing, and that we often fall short of the values we believe in.

But through all of this, if we are willing to let him, the Spirit will work in our lives, shaping and moulding us into the people God wants us to be. Being a Christian allows us to be honest with ourselves about our weaknesses and strengths, because we know we are loved by a God who has gone to extraordinary lengths to allow us to live in relationship with him.

Let’s learn to thank God for giving us the power to live honestly and authentically, and to live lives that delight in his loving grace.

Which brings us to another Hebrew word for delight.

Chapter 11 of Isaiah looks ahead to a time when God will introduce a time of peace and security.

*The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.*

Isaiah 11:6

The words paint a beautiful picture, and a couple of verses later we read...

*The infant will play near the cobra’s den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.*

Isaiah 11:8

The word translated ‘play’ describes the kind of delight you get from just having fun. Snakes are no longer a threat. We are completely safe

and free from worry. Think of a young family out for a walk on a warm sunny day... or kids playing with a ball... or kids having a laugh...

The Hebrew word used for play in this verse is Sha'a', pronounced 'shah-AH', meaning sport, take delight in, play...

We mentioned Psalm 119 in the last talk and at the start of this one, the extended love song to God's Word, well this kind of playful delight shows up a number of times in it...

*I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.*

Psalm 119:16

*I delight in your commands
because I love them.*

Psalm 119:47

*Let your compassion come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight.*

Psalm 119:77

*If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.*

Psalm 119:92

Psalm 119 is saying that we should take playful delight in God's Word. Shah-AH can be translated as 'meditating', but not in a pure 'thinking about it' sort of way, shah-AH means playing with the words, exploring them, experimenting with them. Like when children first discover puns, or tongue twisters...

*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked;
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?*

Reading scripture is meant to be an adventure, an enjoyable adventure. Following Jesus is not meant to be just a list of dos and don'ts. It is the greatest adventure of all, with the creator and sustainer of the universe there to help and guide us.

This is why we can face each day with a sense of joyful curiosity... with an optimistic, fearless 'I wonder how this is going to work out?' attitude. And as we read the Bible, we need to bring this sense of joyful exploration with us, asking God to speak to us as he has done to billions of believers through the ages.

And this attitude will help us to relax a little when we don't understand what we're reading, or find it repetitive, boring or just plain mystifying. After all, no one is an expert when they start playing a game, whether it be chess, football or learning a musical instrument.

A few years ago I read an article about how very few people in their fifties could stand one leg. So, I tried it, and guess what, I couldn't. So I decided I would practise until I could. Which involved a lot of falling over, laughing at myself and asking God to help me try again. And, years later, I can stand on one leg without falling over.

Reading scripture is like this. Practice makes perfect, or at least, a lot better than you would have been if you had never started. There are many resources available to help you study better, and the Holy Spirit is there to help you apply what you learn to your everyday life.

As followers of Jesus, we need to get it into our heads (and hearts) that God is on our side. Like a parent cheering their child on in a football game, he wants us to do well. And if we fall over, he's there encouraging us to get up and try again.

At the end of this service (heck, why not right now?) ask Jesus to help you to live a life that reflects the love and forgiveness God has shown you. Ask him to help you read the Bible with a sense of expectation and playfulness.

We need to remind ourselves that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more (or less). Jesus loves you more than you will ever be able to understand. And when you decide to respond to that love with a life that moves towards the one he wants you to live, he will be there cheering you on. Sometimes laughing with you. Sometimes weeping. But always delighting in you.

We need to realise that we don't do things to gain God's delight, we do things because we know God delights in us. That's the adventure of Christian discipleship.

Let me end with a story. It goes something like this...

Once upon a time there was a little town of ducks.

Every Sunday morning the ducks would waddle out of their houses and waddle down Main Street to Duck Church where they would waddle down the aisles and sit in the pews.

The duck minister would then waddle in, open the Duck Bible and read to them...

“Ducks! God has given you wings! With wings you can fly! With wings you can mount up and soar like eagles! No walls can confine you! No fences can hold you! You have wings!

And all the ducks would shout an enthusiastic, “Amen!”

And at the end of the service they would all leave the church and waddle home.

As we study God's word – with an attitude of thoughtful and playful delight – let's ask God for the strength to take its promises seriously, to live lives where we use the good gifts he has given us to be a blessing to those around us. To cease waddling, and start flying.

Amen.