**For the Joy Set before Him**

**The Word**

Read together Hebrews 12:1-3

**The Big Idea**

It was joy that enabled Jesus to faithfully walk through his challenging road to the cross. The risen Jesus offers us his joy today; a joy we can have in the midst of whatever circumstances we find ourselves on our road to eternity.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Consider the picture of Jesus you’ve had throughout your life. How joyful is your Jesus? Where does joy factor into your picture of what he was (and is) like?

2. Review together the three reasons mentioned for why we can experience joy this Easter. Which of those three reasons connected with you most and why?

3. Consider the question raised in the prayer at the end of Sunday’s message: What do you need to let go of in order to receive Jesus’ joy today?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. Resurrection Joy

A. Joy was what got Jesus through his most painful moments (v. 2)

1. The joy of knowing that he would be raised and return to his Father having accomplished everything his Father asked of him.

2. The joy of knowing that, through his death, he would bring forgiveness to the world.

 B. He longs to share his joy with us (see John 15:11 and 17:13)

 C. But we must acknowledge that life is challenging

 1. Life is like a marathon (v. 1)

 a. The hard times create struggles

 b. The good times create other struggles/temptations

 2. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus (v. 2)

II. We can find joy by fixing our eyes on what Jesus did on the cross

A. Shame and guilt are some of the biggest burdens that weigh people down and rob them of joy on their life marathon.

B. The good news is that Jesus saw our shame and took our shame on himself on the cross (he scorned its shame, v. 2)

1. On the cross, he suffers the shame and the just consequences of our sin

2. Through faith in Jesus, we have forgiveness of our sins and freedom from shame

C. The risen Jesus says, “Come to me all you who are weary and weighed down and I will give you rest”

D. Through Christ, we can live with a resurrection joy that comes from knowing we are unconditionally loved by God no matter what we’ve done.

III. We can find joy by fixing our eyes on what Jesus did after the cross: sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (v. 2)

A. Jesus’ sitting at God’s right hand is a picture of him being crowned king and being given authority over heaven and earth (see Matthew 28:18)

B. So, the one who died for us has now been put in charge of the universe

1. Whatever challenging circumstances we go through, we can know that Jesus is in control of our circumstances.

2. Life is like a mud run: these obstacles get put in our way that threaten to take us down.

3. But no matter what we face:

a) Jesus knows what it’s like to be in painful situations like ours, so he can empathize and love us well in those times

b) Jesus is able to work all things for our good (Romans 8:28). He specializes in bringing good things out of bad things.

C. Resurrection joy is not just happiness when things are going well; rather it’s an abiding joy we can have in the midst of painful circumstances.

IV. We can find joy by fixing our eyes on Jesus’ resurrection

A. Jesus has conquered death not just for himself but for us too

B. We can live with the confidence of knowing that when we finally cross that finish line at death, that will actually be the starting line of a new adventure in which we will live in peace, joy, and glory forever.

 1. Consider Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 4:7-8

2. Consider the “cloud of witnesses” in v. 1 who have already crossed the finish line

V. Conclusion

A. The world pursues happiness and thinks happiness is to be found in controlling the circumstances of our lives

B. Instead, Jesus offers us his joy right in the midst of whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

C. We have the opportunity to receive his joy today. What do you need to let go of in order to receive his joy today?