

JOY IS DIVINE July 13, 2008 Rev. Julie Keene

JOHN 15:11 - WORDS OF JESUS:

**I HAVE SAID THESE THINGS TO YOU THAT MY JOY MAY BE IN YOU
& THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE.**

**IN RECENT FILM - THE BUCKET LIST - THE TWO CHARACTERS
PLAYED BY JACK NICKELSON AND MORGAN FREEMAN SHARE A
HOSPITAL ROOM AND ARE NOT EXPECTED TO LIVE MUCH
LONGER.**

**THEY MAKE A LIST OF THINGS THEY WANT TO DO BEFORE THEY
DIE AND END UP LEAVING THE HOSPITAL. BECAUSE JACK'S
CHARACTER IS VERY WEALTHY, THEY FLY ALL OVER THE WORLD
TO PLACES SUCH AS THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA, THE TAJ
MAHAL, & AFRICA.**

**MORGAN'S CHARACTER IS A SCHOLAR AND WHEN THEY GET TO
THE PYRAMIDS IN EGYPT, HE TALKS ABOUT THE TWO QUESTIONS
THE EGYPTIAN GODS ASKED THOSE WANTING TO ENTER HEAVEN:**

1) HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED JOY IN YOUR LIFE?

2) HAS YOUR LIFE BROUGHT JOY TO OTHERS?

GOOD QUESTIONS FOR US ALL TO PONDER. . .

TIEHARD DE CHARDIN SAID THAT JOY IS THE INFALLIBLE SIGN OF

THE PRESENCE OF GOD... JOY COMES FROM THE REGION OF SPIRIT IN WHICH WE ALL DWELL AT OUR CORE - THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

PEOPLE CAN AND DO EXPERIENCE JOY IN THE MIDST OF POVERTY, GRIEF, HARDSHIP,. . . HOW CAN THAT BE?

IT CAN BE BECAUSE JOY IS A SPIRITUAL QUALITY - IT COMES FROM DEEP WITHIN AND IS THUS INDEPENDENT OF OUTER CONDITIONS. .

IT COMES AS A RESULT OF OUR RECEPTIVITY TO SPIRIT WITHIN AND AROUND US. . .

DOES THIS MEAN WE CAN'T BE SAD SOMETIMES? OF COURSE NOT...WE NEED TO FEEL OUR GENUINE FEELINGS. . . BUT REMEMBER,

“WEEPING ENDURES FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMES IN THE MORNING.” (PSALMS 30)

WE NEED TO GO THROUGH OUR PROCESS BUT RETURN TO THE TRUTH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

WE CAN LEARN TO BE OPEN AND RECEPTIVE TO GOD'S COMFORT, IN OUR HAPPINESS AND IN OUR GRIEF, IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, IN EVERY MANNER AND MOOD OF OUR DAYS.

EMILE CADY IN LESSONS IN TRUTH: “ BECAUSE GOD IN US IS THE FOUNTAIN FROM WHICH SPRINGS ALL OUR GOOD, NOTHING THAT ANYONE DOES OR SAYS OR FAILS TO DO OR SAY, CAN TAKE AWAY OUR JOY AND GOOD. “ GREAT FREEDOM COMES FROM KNOWING WE CAN TAP INTO THAT SECRET SPRING OF INNER JOY.

DOES ALL THIS TALK OF JOY AND CELEBRATION MAKE YOU THE LEAST BIT UNEASY? IF SO, WHY WOULD IT??

WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH THAT LITTLE VOICE OF RACE CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN US THAT WHISPERS: “DON’T GET TOO HAPPY - YOU’RE RIDING FOR A FALL. . .” OR - “ THE GODS WILL BE JEALOUS AND STRIKE YOU DOWN IF YOU SHOW TOO MUCH HAPPINESS. . .” OR “IT’S IMPOLITE OR CRASS TO SHOW TOO MUCH JOY BECAUSE WE’RE NOT BEING SENSITIVE TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT JOYFUL.”

WE NEED TO REVISE OUR IDEAS ABOUT ALL THAT. HOW ABOUT THE IDEA THAT AS UNITY PEOPLE WE NEED TO DEMONSTRATE FOR OTHERS THAT JOY IS POSSIBLE AND ATTAINABLE AND SPIRITUAL?

I DON’T BELIEVE WE NEED TO APOLOGIZE FOR OUR JOY. LETS GO FLAT OUT, FULL BORE, AND EMBRACE THE JOY AND JUICE OF

LIFE!

WE HAVE COME INTO THIS EARTH SCHOOL TO EVOLVE - TO KNOW AND EXPRESS WHO AND WHAT WE ARE - TO EXPRESS THE LOVE, PEACE AND JOY OF GOD AS WE ALLOW GOD'S SPIRIT TO WORK THROUGH US. . .

QUESTION BECOMES: HOW DO WE LEARN TO LIVE IN AND EXPRESS GREATER JOY?

1. WE NEED TO LOOK AT DISAPPOINTMENTS, SO CALLED FAILURES AND TRAGEDIES IN NEW WAYS. WE NEED TO SEE THEM AS CATALYSTS THAT CAN MOVE US FORWARD IN OUR EVOLUTION. SO WE NEED TO HEAL , FORGIVE , BLESS , AND RELEASE . WE NEED TO SEE OURSELVES AS SPIRITUAL WARRIORS RATHER THAN PATHETIC VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE. AND YES, THIS IS WORK - IT CAN BE THE WORK OF A LIFETIME BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO GROW SPIRITUALLY, TO COOPERATE WITH SPIRIT, THE PROCESS CAN BE SHORTENED - WE DON'T HAVE TO WAIT AROUND TO BE JOYFUL& FREE WITH THE FREEDOM OF SPIRIT- IF WE MAKE SPIRIT OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY.

2. AS WE DO THE WORK WE BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE

**DON'T HAVE TO SUFFER TO LEARN - WE CAN CHOOSE TO LEARN
IN JOY - ONCE WE SEE EVERYTHING AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO
FORGIVE, TO LOVE, TO GO DEEPER INTO SPIRIT, THE MORE JOY
WE WILL EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. . .**

3. WE NEED TO CULTIVATE THE OBSERVER - THE WATCHER -

**HERE IS WHERE WE CAN SEE OUR EGO AT WORK - THIS IS WHERE
WE CALL A HALT TO SELF-PITY, UNFORGIVENESS, ANGER AND
OTHER DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS. WE SEE THE EGO FOR WHAT IT
IS AND MAKE ANOTHER CHOICE. WE CAN CHOOSE TO "SEE IT
DIFFERENTLY." ECKHART TOLLE REMINDS US: "THE EGO
CANNOT FEED ON JOY. IT FINDS IT QUITE INDIGESTIBLE."**

**NEED TO KNOW THAT EVERY DAY, EVERY MOMENT, IS A NEW
BEGINNING, PREGNANT WITH POSSIBILITIES; WE ARE ALWAYS
FREE TO CHOOSE AGAIN, TO THINK ALONG WITH GOD IN GOD'S
LANGUAGE OF PEACE, LOVE, AND JOY. IT IS INDEED THE
FATHER'S GOOD PLEASURE TO GIVE US THE KINGDOM OF LOVE,
PEACE & JOY.**

A HOMEWORK SUGGESTION:

**THINK OF ONE OR TWO OF YOUR MOST JOYFUL MOMENTS -
SAVOR AND ENJOY THEM - BRING THOSE FEELING INTO THE NOW**

MOMENT.

PUT THEM IN A JOY FREEZE FRAME - MAKE THEM A BRILLIANT ALIVE ESSENCE. MAKE IT A POINT THIS WEEK TO SHARE THESE EXPERIENCES WITH SOMEONE ELSE AND ASK THEM TO SHARE A JOYFUL EXPERIENCE WITH YOU. GIVE THANKS AND BLESS THE JOY. RIGHT NOW, I WILL SHARE WITH YOU ONE OF MY MANY JOYFUL EXPERIENCES. BACK WHEN I WAS LIVING IN HAWAII, I WAS SITTING ON THE LANAI WHICH OVERLOOKED HONOLULU. PUNCHBOWL BELOW AND SLIGHTLY TO THE LEFT, DIAMOND HEAD IN THE FAR DISTANCE - THE ALOHA TOWER AND THE CITY BENEATH. IT WAS TWILIGHT AND THE LIGHTS WERE JUST BEGINNING TO COME ON. I HAD BEEN READING ERIC BUTTERWORTH'S "IN THE FLOW OF LIFE." SUDDENLY, I FELT MY HEART SWELLING WITH JOY AS MY SPIRIT SEEMED TO FLY AND THEN FLOAT ABOVE THE CITY. I AM SO GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR THE JOY THAT I FEEL ANYTIME I GO THERE IN CONSCIOUSNESS. IT'S A PART OF ME NOW.

SO FREEZE FRAME YOUR JOY; MAKE IT A PART OF YOU; CARRY IT FORTH INTO YOUR LIFE IN EVERY WAY YOU POSSIBLY CAN. . .

ROBERT MEYER IS A POET CONFINED TO A WHEELCHAIR

BECAUSE OF MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS. HE LIVES IN A NURSING HOME IN IOWA BUT THIS DOES NOT STOP HIM FROM FEELING AND EXPRESSING JOY.

HIS POEM: *NEVER LEFT THE GROUND*

AT TIMES UPON THE WINGS OF THOUGHT MY MIND WILL SOAR.

I'LL TRADE SALUTES WITH LOFTY CLOUDS IN AIR SO PURE.

I'LL FLY AND WHISPER WITH THE WIND OF LIFE AND LOVE IN AIR SO RAREFIED SO HIGH ABOVE.

I CIRCLE, CIRCLE, CIRCLE ALL THE TROUBLED TRAINS OF THOUGHT THAT CRISSCROSS ON THE GLISTENING TRACKS SO FAR BELOW.

I CLIMB AND CLIMB AND CLIMB.

I FEEL NO FRIGHT OF UPWARD FLIGHT.

I'VE SCRATCHED THE CEILING OF THE SKY AND SAT ON STARS.

HORIZONS KNOW HOW FAR I'VE FLOWN AND SHARED WITH ME THIS OTHER SIDE. I GLIDE AND GLIDE AND GLIDE.

LOOK UP! THAT'S ME, THAT SPECK YOU SEE SO HIGH. YES ME!

I'M FREE. SO FLEET AM I, I'LL SWOOP AND PROVE TO YOU SUCH MOVEMENTS OF THE MIND AREN'T CONFINED TO SLEEPY DREAMS.

I WISH YOU'D LET ME TAKE YOU WITH ME FOR A RIDE, TO DIVE AND SOAR AND CLIMB AND GLIDE.

TO FLY UPON THE WINGS OF THOUGHT TO REGAL HEIGHTS.

MY EAGLE FLIGHTS HAVE TAKEN ME THE WORLD ROUND,

AND I HAVE NEVER EVEN EVER LEFT THE GROUND. . . .(END)

**WHAT A REMINDER THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LIVES
ARE NOT WHAT DETERMINES HOW MUCH WE CAN EXPERIENCE
THE JOY OF GOD. THE JOY OF THE LORD IS THE STRENGTH OF
ROBERT MEYER. LET'S MAKE IT OUR STRENGTH TOO.**

LEAVE YOU WITH A CLOSING PRAYER POEM:

DEAR GOD,

GUIDE ME, HOLY ONE

INTO AN UNCLENCHED MOMENT

A DEEP BREATH, A LETTING GO

OF HEAVY EXPERIENCES

OF SHRIVELING ANXIETIES

OF DEAD CERTAINTIES

THAT, SOFTENED BY THE SILENCE

SURROUNDED BY THE LIGHT

AND OPEN TO THE MYSTERY,

I MAY BE FOUND BY WHOLENESS,

UPHELD BY THE UNFATHOMABLE,

ENTRANCED BY THE SIMPLE,

AND FILLED WITH THE JOY THAT IS YOU.

THANK YOU GOD. AMEN. . .

GOD BLESS YOU ALL - GO FORTH & EXPERIENCE A JOYFUL DAY

CLOSING SONG: # 27: JOYFUL, JOYFUL.