



Reflections

I was watching a "Frisbee dog" a while ago as his master would toss it, then the dog, with what can best be described as joy, would almost fly as he jumped up to catch the disc. He would return the disc to his master and wait excitedly for it to be tossed across the field so that he could catch it again. This play was repeated time and again with the dog always expressing the same excitement. On another occasion, I watched a herd of elk "playing" in a field of new snow. They were kicking up their hooves and chasing each other in much the same way a group of kids would do when playing in fresh snow. As with the dog playing with the Frisbee, their behavior also appeared to be joyful and fun.

While not attempting to attribute human emotions to animals, in each case the behavior seems to provide some sort of excitement, if not something equivalent to joy, to the critters at play. They clearly looked to be enjoying the activities. As God's special creation, we might learn some lessons about being joyful from these scenes where mere animals seem to be enjoying the activities in which they are engaged. Peter declares his own expectation of believers living in joy in his first letter. ...
⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,* ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, (1Peter 1:6-8 NKJ) He indicates that even in the middle of the trials that were being experienced by the believers of his day they could, and should, rejoice with inexpressible joy.

The term, translated into English as joy, indicates in the original language exultation, extreme joy, and gladness. As we examine our lives, what do we find that provides us with such "inexpressible joy"? Certainly we could say that our children, especially at their birth, were a cause for that spontaneous expression of joy. The miracle of the birth of our own little

ones is pretty much beyond expression. It could also be when you first saw your spouse walking down the aisle on your wedding day. Hopefully this wonderful joy was also present at the moment you invited Jesus into your heart and experienced His saving grace and for the first time you felt clean and free of your sin burdens. When Mary considered the tremendous honor given her as the virgin who carried the Savior, she declared... "My soul magnifies the Lord,"⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. (Luke 1:46-47 NKJ) When the magi saw the star over the house in which the young child, Jesus, was, the Scripture says... When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. (Matthew 2:10 NKJ)

It sometimes seems that the busyness of life "robs" us of the many opportunities to live in joy. We get so caught up that we no longer see the beauty of creation. A honeybee on a flower, a humming bird flitting among the blossoms, a snow-capped mountain, or even a flowing stream can be a source of joy as we remember that these created phenomena are God's handiwork and in them He has shown His power and glory. I still marvel at a steelhead on my fly line, or an eagle swooping down on the lake and flying away with a fish he caught, or just looking at a butterfly, for in each case God has placed His "signature" on His creative work. Of special joy to us, are the times when our grand ones join us for a campout and we watch them running, jumping, and laughing with the sheer joy of having fun together.

How sad it is to see so many who walk in unhappiness and without any joy in their lives. Lives that have not experienced joy for a long time. Lives that often do not have a relationship with Jesus to sustain them during times of trouble. Lives that need us to encourage them. How can we open our hearts more effectively to share our joy in Christ with them? This should be the question of the day. Paul tells us to... Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4 NKJ) To steer those who have little or no joy in their lives to Jesus, is to give them the needed hope and joy in their daily walk. If you need more joy, look at God's handiwork, and watch His creation at work and "play". Even a kitten and a ball of yarn can be a source of joy. Remember, it's the joy of the Lord that is our strength! **Pastor Doug**