

Christ's Directives For More Abundant Living.

Text: John 15:11

Suggested Hymns:

115, 386, 162, 441

- 1) God's Abiding Presence
- 2) The Hope Within Us
- 3) A Desire To Serve
- 4) Forgiven And Forgiving
- 5) Prayer Enriches Life
- 6) Guidance And Strength
- 7) More Than Conquerors

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 15:11, ¹¹ ***“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.***

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This Sunday is called *Jubilate*. It means be joyful and jubilant.

However, we may ask, *What constitutes happiness?* I suppose the answers we get would be many and varied. Certainly the mere frivolity of fun does not make for happiness, does it?

The first and all-important ingredient of real happiness is living in a right relationship with God. Therefore Jesus and Scripture make a sharp distinction between fun and inward peace, between contentment of heart and mind, and wild parties of eating and drinking.

At no time does Jesus guarantee to us a life of continuous thrills, perpetual laughter, and endless good times. He has set a different standard of joy than the world.

Perfect, or full joy comes to us by having His joy. Our text says, ***These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*** His joy is to be ours even as we face hardships, exile, and hunger.

To His disciples Jesus said in the Upper Room, on the night of His betrayal, as written in John 16:20, ²⁰ ***Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and***

lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. His joy makes ours complete.

We too are looking for happiness. In the pursuit of enjoyment and fun we time and again find ourselves disillusioned at the close of the day. We have rushed possibly to strange and unusual places in the hope of getting away from the monotony of living and the irritations and worries of work and the household.

Strange to say, we could not escape from ourselves. Therefore we were just as restless, uneasy, and dissatisfied a thousand km away from home. Jesus stresses that genuine happiness is right at our door where we are today. So He comes and offers to make our joy complete.

Let us look at *Christ's directives for more abundant living*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. God's Abiding Presence

In the first directive Jesus urges us to seek God's abiding presence in our daily life. We read in John 14:23, ²³ *Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

We can never be joyous if we shut God out. However, to have God's presence day after day we must be reconciled to Him. This reconciliation we cannot bring about by our own efforts and accomplishments. We have all sinned, and if we say that we have not, we are deceiving none but ourselves. Jesus made peace when He atoned for our sins on the cross.

Now Jesus, pierced and wounded, stands at the door of our hearts and knocks. If we ignore Him, we keep ourselves outside of the Kingdom, where we are afraid of God. And this fear makes us restless. Frightened like Adam and Eve, we hide like them. In this condition man must perish. *"But why should you die?"*¹

This reconciliation is offered to us through the Word. We have the written Word, the Bible. There Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-29, ²⁸ *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹ *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

Some time ago there was an article telling of a woman who went to a nerve specialist to find some relief. To her great astonishment he told her to go home and read the Scriptures until she had thoroughly absorbed them. This alone, he asserted, could free her from the anxieties of her life.

We also have the preached Word. Ministers are to apply the right word to our needs. Then we have the sacramental Word. Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to us in the Upper Room to reassure us that we are living in His grace.

We should remember the blessings of our Baptism often, that we are washed, cleansed, and healed from our many sins, and our souls are made snow-white through the blood of the Lamb. All this calms our nerves, speaks peace to our soul, and puts our mind at ease. Therefore we can be unafraid of tomorrow. No one can pluck us out of our Saviour's arms, in which we nestle in faith and by grace.

2. The Hope Within Us

In the second directive Jesus urges us to speak of the hope that is within us. *"You also will bear witness."*² Then Jesus prays, ¹⁸*As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.*³ Therefore Simon Peter writes to us Christians, *always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.*⁴

As Christians who love Jesus we should have a passion for truth. We have the Word, and in this Word we have Truth. Knowing this truth in all things spiritual, and being certain of our salvation through the resurrection of Jesus, we are made secure against doubt and unbelief. We are able to say with Paul, *"I know whom I have believed."*⁵ Such convictions spell confidence which makes us unafraid of the future. We know where we are going.

Such joy we want to share. We have the best news to tell: how to escape the fear of death and judgement. If you have had some so-called streak of luck or if you had a promotion in life, immediately you tell everybody about it.

Surely, we cannot be silent when we have such a hope and guaranteed salvation! We can go forward with confidence and look upward with certainty. We are at peace with God and therefore also at peace with ourselves. Tell it!

3. A Desire To Serve

In the third directive Jesus pleads with us to keep ourselves busy in a worthwhile service for Him. Jesus says in John 15:5, ⁵ ***“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.***

Our daily papers and monthly magazines are ever and again writing up “success stories,” and we like to read them. However, most of these accounts measure the accomplishment of a man by the amount of money he has made and saved. Often these lives are self-centred, and unmindful of those around them.

Jesus measures success by another standard: the cup of cold water, the visit to the sickroom, the giving of a helping hand to a fallen person, and the guiding of a child in the ways of the Lord. These successes do not make us money-rich, but they make us happy.

These directives of Jesus stress sharing and sacrifice, and putting oneself out by going the extra mile. These activities give you less time to worry about self and to feel sorry for yourself. Jesus, then, insists that no true happiness can exist without a passion and desire to serve others and to ease their loads as they travel with us on the roads of life. A *“God bless you!”* coming from a sincere heart gives real satisfaction to the day’s activities.

4. Forgiven And Forgiving

In the fourth directive for a more abundant living Jesus urges us to be forgiving. He directs us to pray, ***“As we forgive those who trespass against us.”*** We cannot be happy and contented while we are nursing a grudge and are “soured on life.”

No greater joy can be found than to be forgiven and forgiving. The forgiven heart, forgiven of God, is sympathetic. It remembers its own failings and shortcomings. The forgiven heart tries to understand others and overlook their faults.

Forgiving others makes us more thoughtful. Such a forgiving love helps us even more than those whom we forgive. We should not continue to nurse our grudges. We should not be revengeful.

Look at those who are always grouchy. Soon you discover that they are hating someone or *“cursing the day they were born.”* They are always *“on the*

outs” with someone. How miserable they make themselves! Genuine happiness implies that we are at peace with others. And we learn to be forgiving at the cross of Calvary, where we see how much we have been forgiven.

5. Prayer Enriches Life

The fifth directive of Jesus stresses the importance of prayer in our daily life. Life is made more abundant and richer by the Saviour’s assurance that God answers prayer. We believers can come to God, now reconciled through the cross, and speak to Him about the most trivial things and know that God is not wearied with our petty problems.

As children of grace we can come to Him and know He is our Father in Christ. Therefore Jesus says, *Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*⁶ Every human being must have, or at least ought to have, a friend to whom he can go to unburden his heart. If not, the pressure might crush him. As believers we have such a friend in Jesus, whom we can tell all that troubles and distresses us.

The hymnist wrote,⁷ *Oh, what peace we often forfeit! Oh, what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry Everything to God in prayer.*

We can talk things over with this sympathetic and understanding Friend. Because of Him we can sob out the story of our sins and then receive the blessings of the Lord with grateful hearts.

6. Guidance And Strength

The sixth directive is that we daily need guidance and strength to carry on amid the endless problems and temptations of this world. Just as inexperienced swimmers feel more at ease and relaxed if a trained lifeguard is at hand, ready to come to their assistance the moment they cry for help, so we believers feel more at ease if we know at all times, 24 hours each day, that we can come to God with our troubles and problems and realise that He never fails us.

But you say, God does not always give me as I ask. Well, would you as father or mother give your two-year-old a sharp knife if it cried its heart out to have it? Would you let your inexperienced boy or girl eat nothing but cake and pudding? Would you be considered heartless and unkind if you denied such requests? Hardly!

God sees more than we ever can. Therefore we ask Him to help, but not to our harm. That is the reason we pray: *“Thy will be done,”* and know that His will is always a good and gracious will toward us. Our greatest joy will be found in this security that our heavenly Father is wiser than we and at no time grants us that which later on proves to be harmful and hurtful to our body or soul. This enables us to live more abundantly.

7. More Than Conquerors

In the final directive Jesus tells us to go on from day to day with an untroubled heart. Jesus tells us in John 14:1, ¹ *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.* We are more than conquerors through Christ, who loves us and gave His life for our redemption.

Life is precious but uncertain. This makes us afraid until we know Jesus, who is the Way. He takes us by the hand and leads us to glory. No matter what troubles there be, we cannot perish. At the end of the pilgrimage is heaven.

So we conquer our world-weariness, comfort ourselves in our sorrows for we know that the Saviour, risen from the dead, stands on the other shore to welcome us home. At each stage in life, at each milepost of the journey, we are certain of victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that even in the darkest night God has all things in His hand and is in control. Today we look through a glass darkly, but tomorrow we shall understand and then praise the Lord, for He has done all things well.

Ultimately we shall join the triumphant march to the throne of the Lamb, where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes and there shall be no more death. In God’s presence we shall continue to enjoy a fullness of joy that is eternal.

Such a program for a fuller and more abundant living, only a Christian can have, and the believer certainly does have this in Christ.

Daily Jesus comes into our lives and says ³³ *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.* ... ²⁷ *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*⁸ In this Christ Jesus our joy is complete. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Ezekiel 33:11

² John 15:27

³ John 17:18

⁴ 1 Peter 3:15

⁵ 2 Tim. 1:12

⁶ John 16:24

⁷ Hymn 426

⁸ John 16:33; 14:27