

*"...for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10 NRSV*

*For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12 NRSV*

*Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete. John 16:24 NRSV*

*...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control... Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV*

Joy...                    Last week we talked about Love  
                                  I know that I know that God loves me  
                                  But the truth is that I lose my joy—this is the place that I struggle  
                                  When I think about the things that bring me joy...  
                                  Spending time with friends and family—especially camping together  
                                  Play—particularly play that is a bit thrilling like roller coaster rides  
                                  Etc  
                                  As I prepared for this message, I noticed that there were verses that spoke of joy differently...

*My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4 NRSV*

*You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever. Psalms 30:11-12 NRSV*

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. Psalms 51:12 NRSV*

We often equate joy with happiness  
                                  But happiness can be short lived—it comes and goes depending on the circumstances  
Joy on the other hand is something deeper  
                                  It has sometimes been explained as the ocean currents that are deep underneath and steady  
                                  While the surface can be smooth, choppy, or crashing waves  
                                  It is affected by the weather and changes rapidly  
                                  The currents are steady

Joy—                    There is contentment in joy  
                                  A sense that God is with me through everything—the Presence  
                                  A knowing that I am enough—that we are enough  
                                  Hope—hope for the future, hope that we will be ok  
                                  A knowing that our hope and future is not in our circumstances but in God  
                                  Joy that is centered in God  
                                  Joy that is as much choice and acceptance as feeling

I'm reminded of the Africans—Burundi and Congo—their joy in spite of incredible suffering