

Opening Verse

Greetings! Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3

Reflection

It seems strange for James, to tell us to consider joy when we are in the midst of difficult circumstances. The bible contains many other encouragements for us to be joyful. But how can we possibly do this? Well, Christian joy is much more than happiness, but refers to our inner peace and contentment, and the assurance that God is with us whatever our circumstances might be. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

Prayer

Lord, fill my heart with joy, and remind me that my strength comes from you. When I remember the salvation that you have given to me, my heart sings for joy. You are good, and your love endures forever.

Amen

Hymn

Rejoice, the Lord is King:
Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
Lift up your heart, Lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Jesus, the Saviour, reigns,
The God of truth and love;
When He has purged our stains,
He took his seat above;
Lift up your heart, Lift up your voice!
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Rejoice in glorious hope!
Jesus the judge shall come
And take His servants up
To their eternal home:

We soon shall hear the archangel's voice,
The trump of God shall sound, rejoice!

Charles Wesley

Our joy in God's presence can be spoiled when we consider our failings. So let's say sorry to God and ask him to restore his joy to us.

Confession

Lord God, we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

Renew a right spirit within us
and **restore us to the joy** of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,
who in Jesus Christ has given us
a kingdom that cannot be destroyed,
forgive us our sins,
open our eyes to God's truth,
strengthen us to do God's will
and **give us the joy of his kingdom**,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible Reading Matthew 13:44

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

Reflection

The truest, purest joy flows from discovering Jesus Christ. He is the hidden treasure that gives such joy to the finder.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy and peace that I have in trusting you. I lift up those who are going through difficult times or feeling alone or discouraged. May your love fill our hearts, so that we may overflow with your joy, and that times of joyful laughter would replace those seasons of weeping and hardship.

Psalm 100:1-3 (Jubilate)

¹*O be joyful in the Lord, all the earth;
serve the Lord with gladness
and come before his presence with a song.*

²*Know that the Lord is God;
it is he that has made us and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.*

³*Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and bless his name.*

Reflection

William Kethe, a Scottish clergyman and Bible translator wrote the hymn 'All people that on earth do dwell' in about 1560. It is one of the oldest hymns that we still sing. It is based on Psalm 100, and invites everyone to praise God and to serve Him joyfully. In the first verse we are invited to serve him with 'mirth' a word meaning gladness, happiness or laughter. A later verse asks why we should do this, and then explains that it is because God is good. So join in with these words with thanks and a smile in your heart.

Hymn

All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with mirth, His praise forth tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice!

O enter then his gates with praise,
Approach with joy His courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless His name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? The Lord our God is good,
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God, whom heaven and earth adore,
From earth and from the angel host,
Be praise and glory evermore.

Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Amen



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