

Call to Worship

I have said these things to you so that my joy will be in you and your joy will be complete.

Rejoice when it happens! Leap for joy because you have a great reward in heaven.

In the same way, you have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and you will be overjoyed. No one takes away your joy.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in faith so that you overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

Prayer of Thanksgiving

We thank you for the beauty of the earth, for the glory of our faith, for the awe-inspiring sacrifice of the cross, and the wonder of the resurrection. We thank you for the individuals who share this faith community with us. We thank you for our blessings, both those we count and those we never consider but take for granted. For the height and depth and breadth of all we know and those things which we have not yet discovered, we praise your name, giving thanks for your trust in us as stewards of all that is seen and unseen. Amen.

The Word

from the Psalms

Common English Bible

God changed our mourning into dancing; took off my funeral clothes and dressed me up in joy.

Weeping may stay all night, but by morning, joy!

Sing to God a new song! Play your best with joyful shouts!

That's why my heart celebrates and my mood is joyous.

But let those who want things set right for me shout for joy and celebrate!

Let them constantly say, "The Lord is great."

We feast on the bounty of God's house; let us drink from the river of pure joy.

Let me come to God's altar – let me come to God, my joy, my delight!

Living the Word

There he stood, in a black tee shirt and unzipped hoody, a short, but large man with a big grin on his face. A singing Taxi driver from Miami, Florida, that said he loves to sing all of the time while he drives. His riders told him he should go on America's Got Talent. So there he stood before the world. Classical music began and I had my doubts, but as his deep tenor voice began to sing with deep vibrato, my heart swelled. The audience stood, the judges stood, and I was in tears as he held everyone spell bound through to the last note.

I admit, that I have a soft heart and I cry with joy over many things. If you asked me to make a list of the most moving things, my list would be much the same as the ones you have shared with me this week. Your combined list reminds me of the many reasons to not just be filled with joy, but to celebrate more things with all of my emotions. I hope you will agree with the list. As you hear each one, try to connect with the feelings of what it must be like for the one who has shared it with us.

Sunlight sparkling like diamonds on the water
Sunshine reflecting off the lake early in the morning
Blue Skies
Seeing Twin Baby Fawns
Summer Days

Flowers Blooming
Bright Starry Nights
The Glistening of Fresh Snow on a Cold Winter Day

Lord, these things **make me weep with joy.**

Good News from a Doctor's Visit
Seeing the Love at Weddings
Birds at our Feeders, but not Squirrels
A Well-Executed Curling Shot
Beautiful Music, Well Done.
A Good Book
Parades and the American Flag
The Thought of my Favorite Dog

Lord, these things **make me weep with joy.**

Being Present at the Birth of a newborn. It never ceases to be like a miracle.
When my eyes saw each of my Grandchildren for the First Time
Watching my Grandchildren
Watching my Grandchildren Grow and Show Curiosity of Life
A Granddaughter Playing Cello
Seeing a Grandchild Aim and Reach their Goals

Lord, these things **make me weep with joy.**

Remembering my husband's safe return from Vietnam
Reading my Son's letters from Iraq
Sister's College Graduation
Friends Far and Near
Memories of my Mother singing in German
Singing my Mother's Favorite Hymns

Lord, these things **make me weep with joy.**

- Seeing Challenged Children having a Fun Time
- Reading about a person who has overcome family difficulties (usually parent problems of neglect) at an early age. They persevere and succeed because of their own grit and determination. Their field may be medical, business, sports or ministry.
- Remembering the Good Samaritan story of the Bible, then seeing and hearing the ones brought to us daily through TV and computer and cell phones makes me 'weep for joy' and makes me want to jump in and do something for someone else.
- The Feel of God's Presence

Lord, these things **make me weep with joy.**

The Bible is also full of stories of people that must have been touched by the events they experienced. There are really too many to share this morning, but I chose some from the Gospels, that tell how Jesus' life touched other lives in such a way. Our response changes to: Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**

Luke 1:44 Elizabeth, pregnant with John, in her old age to the unwed Mary, her cousin, upon Mary's arrival during her pregnancy with Jesus: "*As soon as I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy.*"

Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**

Matthew 2:7-10 Part of the story of the Wise Men: *Then Herod secretly called for the [wise men] and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too, may go and honor him." When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.*

Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**

Luke 2:10-11 Imagine you are a shepherd, who has heard the stories handed down for centuries for a promised sign from God. On this night you are watching your sheep by night and suddenly there was a great light: *...the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for **all** the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.*

Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**

Luke 8:49-56 Suppose you were the Jewish leader named Jairus and the parents of a 12 year old girl who is very sick. You have heard that this Jesus is a healer, so you go to fetch him. *While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the synagogue leader's house, saying to Jairus, "Your daughter has died. Don't bother the teacher any longer."*

When Jesus heard this, he responded, "Don't be afraid; just keep trusting, and she will be healed." When he came to the house, he didn't allow anyone to enter with him except Peter, John, and James, and the child's father and mother. They were all crying and mourning for her, but Jesus said, "Don't cry. She isn't dead. She's only sleeping."

They laughed at him because they knew she was dead. Taking her hand, Jesus called out, "Child, get up." Her life returned and she got up at once. He directed them to give her something to eat. Her parents were beside themselves with joy.

Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**

Luke 10:1,2,16,17 The disciples had been learning from Jesus for 3 years. He was ready to send them out to fish for people, along with many others. Would you feel ready if you were one of them? Here is what happened: *After these things, the Lord commissioned seventy-two others and sent them on ahead in pairs to every city and place he was about to go. ² He said to them, "The harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.*

Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." The seventy-two returned joyously, saying, "Lord, even the demons submit themselves to us in your name."

Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**

Luke 15:7 Jesus told many parables. Two of them were about lost things found: lost Sheep and a lost coin: *In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes both heart and life than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need to change their hearts and lives.*

Our emotions and how they are expressed are gifts from God to help us share our lives. God wants us to have joy in our lives and has given us numerous ways to express it, some of the best joy is expressed through our tears.

John 16:17-24 One last scripture – ponder with me: *Some of Jesus' disciples said to each other, "What does he mean: 'Soon you won't see me, and soon after that you will see me' and 'Because I'm going to the Father'? What does he mean by 'soon'? We don't understand what he's talking about."*

Jesus knew they wanted to ask him, so he said, "Are you trying to find out from each other what I meant when I said, 'Soon you won't see me, and soon after that you will see me'? I assure you that you will cry and lament, and the world will be happy. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.

*When a woman gives birth, she has pain because her time has come. But when the child is born, she no longer remembers her distress because of her joy that a child has been born into the world. In the same way, you have sorrow now; but I will see you again, and you will be overjoyed. **No one takes away your joy. In that day, you won't ask me anything. I assure you that the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Up to now, you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive so that your joy will be complete.***

Lord, this story **makes me weep with joy.**