

Youth Montreat Youth Conference Debrief Sermons  
August 6, 2023

Sophie Coradi- Day 1 Where does our Joy come from?

On day one of Montreat, in morning keynote we discussed how the world defines joy vs what biblical joy is. We learned that our joy comes through God rather than ourselves. We read from the book of Luke and the story of the lost sheep. What we learned from the story was that sometimes we find ourselves as the lost sheep and turning our back on God and follow what society tells us to do. Such as always saying yes and to keep going rather than taking a sabbath day.

The keynoter held up a mirror that said, “I am a child of God” and told us a story about a Sunday School teacher that taught the PreK kids every year to look into the mirror and say “I am a child of God” The source of our joy is God—biblical joy is the belief that we belong to God and that God is faithful. This was one of the key concepts of the week.

So how do we live into this identity of a child of God? In worship we dove into scripture of Miriam and how she lived into that. God gave us the commandments as an expression of God’s love for us. Often the world goes against these commandments. As children of God, we are to follow the commandments but in society they often go against scripture. To wrap up our discussion we learned that to keep our relationship with God and follow what he tells us to do. We need to read scripture to strengthen our beliefs and not allow ourselves to do what the world tells us to do because we are children of God. Our preacher, Loli said that if we can’t remember all these things—Jesus gave us a shortcut—love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself. On these two concepts hang all of the commandments.

Ellie Fisher- Day 2 How can Joy survive?

What is the definition of joy? At first you may think that joy and happy have the same meanings. However, the feeling of happiness is short term. Happiness is an emotion. Joy is a mindset a long-term feeling that can co-exist with other emotions like happiness, fear, and sadness. How can joy survive? That was our question for day 2 of the Montreat 2023 youth conference. Well let me ask you this, how was Paul so joyful when he was imprisoned, when everything he owned was taken from him and his life was put on the line. Paul believed he believed in God’s plan he knew that God was there protecting him and watching over him. The opposite of joy is hopelessness and Paul was not hopeless because he trusted in God and this gave him joy.

Later during worship, we talked about Mary. Often Mary is described as meek and mild, just a scared young girl. But when the angel told Mary that she would become pregnant, and she

said yes she put her life on the line. Mary could have said no, but she believed in God so faithfully that she would potentially die for him. What about that is meek or mild. Change is scary even if it's for the better. Do we want change. Do YOU really want things to change. If so, then why are things still the same. Are we waiting for someone more experienced to do it. Change requires YOU to do something different. Mary took a role in God's active redemptive work. Will you?

And if you don't that's ok, but you can't just sit around waiting for someone else to start the work for you.

Courtney Cato- Day 3 How do I find joy?

On day 3 of Montreat we focused on how can we cultivate joy? We found this answer by reading the gospel of Matthew and taking an in depth look at the wise men we see during the Christmas pageant every year. we examined where they came from, their beliefs, and the sheer intelligence they would need to even survive in the desert. we then connected that to how we as a church both individually and as a group bring many gifts to the table, even if they're more theoretical than gold, frankincense, or myrrh. then, during worship we focused on how these gifts can help us "work out our spiritual muscles" to gain muscle memory when it comes to spiritual practices that come with being a Christian, whether it be praying or devotionals. we wrapped up this day focusing on how important sabbath is to us and how we should take it as a commandment, not a suggestion. this day off allows us to recognize Gods gifts and grace that are present every day.

Garrick Bellew- Day 4 Where do we find joy?

The 4<sup>th</sup> day of the Montreat Youth Conference is about where we find joy. In Keynote, they talked about how we put a lot of effort into dividing ourselves and that we should see others as children of God instead of dividing ourselves. The part of the bible that we talked about was in Genesis 33, there are 2 brothers named Jacob and Esau and that they don't get along. In worship, they talked about Paul. Unlike Jesus who kept his ministry within 100 miles, Paul traveled over 10,000 miles mostly on foot. They also talked about compassion and how we can't have compassion while judging.

Livy McGreevy- Day 5 why does our joy matter?

I learned so much about joy, happiness and acceptance on Day 5 at Montreat and I wish to share what I learned with you all today. On day 5 we talked about the impact of our joy—why does our joy matter? In keynote we read the story of the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in the book of Acts.

The eunuch was a gentile ALONG with being eunuch, which was a double outsider according to Jewish law. Yet, Phillip still taught the man about Jesus and baptized him. Walls of exclusion are torn down, leaving room for acceptance and grace. This story is an amazing thing currently because thousands of years later we are STILL excluding others for being different.

The presbyterian church is not perfect. We have excluded groups of people in the past, yet we are working hard to change our ways-to welcome all children of God.

Welcoming all people helps you understand more about this world, helps you make more friends, helps you spread more happiness and joy. And above all, makes our lord happy. We help others see the good grace of God by being more accepting. Sometimes it's just a simple 'hello' that will give someone happiness and joy. But what's the difference between the 2? They are similar after all.

The difference is that happiness helps us see that a more hopeful future is possible. Joy gives us the motivation and fire to make it real. Joy helps you be active for justice, daring you to live your life for the better.

Let joy and the lord's grace guide you in your everyday life. Wake up and choose joy, choose kindness and acceptance. Just by being hopeful and happy, you might just spread that to someone else as well. Remember, be what you want to see in this world.