

Transcription of 17GS1022

1 John 1:1-4

"That Your Joy May Be Full"

March 5, 2017

Good morning. It's a pleasure to be here to teach this morning and to be with you. I know I'm preaching to the choir (literally), but it's such a blessing to be here and to be able to open God's Word and hear from the Lord; to actually open this Book and understand what God desires us to know today and every day of our lives. I love Sunday mornings. I love getting together with the church and with the people of God - for this very reason - to draw close to the Lord.

So in thinking about what I wanted to teach this morning, I picked four verses here (only four verses) out of 1 John 1. So if you would, why don't you turn there, and we'll look at the first four verses of this book. 1 John is a pretty powerful book. It was written by the apostle John when he was pretty late in years; he was pretty old - he was in his late nineties when he would write this epistle. And along with the rest of the other apostles that he spent time with Jesus with, he was sentenced (apart from Judas) to a martyr's death. And they tried to put him to death even after taking him out of a pot of boiling oil (which wouldn't take his life). He was banished to this deserted island called Patmos, and that's where he would write this letter and would live the rest of his days there. According to historians (not the Bible), in John's old age, he was taken from church to church throughout Asia Minor. And when he would arrive in a city, you would imagine that the people would come out by the droves to listen to this aging apostle; to have the opportunity to sit and listen to his stories and his accounts of his time spent with Jesus in ministry and the things he heard and the things that he saw. Yet time after time, as the people came and waited to listen, the historians say that John simply just stood to his feet, looked over the congregation and uttered this sentence, "Little children, love one another." And that really was his message. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised that John is referred to many times as the apostle of love. He referred to himself that way time and time again in his gospel. He would reference himself and say the "apostle who Jesus loved." And that wasn't to say that he felt like Jesus loved him more than any others or that he loved Jesus more than others. I think John was just amazed that God would love him that much, that he loved to refer to himself that way. "Hey, Jesus loves me!" And he would refer to himself again and again in that same manner. I like that a lot. Because that's what our relationship with God is based upon. It's based upon Jesus' love for us. Our love for him - it can waiver. It can have times when we're

so fervent in our love for Him and other times where we kind of put Him on the back shelf. But John realized that Jesus' love wasn't like that. He was rather amazed that Jesus would love him and God would love him so much. John and his brother, James, in the gospels were called the Sons of Thunder (and for good reason). John wasn't always known for his love. In Luke 9, when they would leave a Samaritan region with Jesus, and they had rejected Christ's message to them, it was John and his brother who suggested that they should call down fire from heaven upon these people and upon this city to punish them. "Lord, should we call down fire from heaven? They wouldn't listen to you. Let's just destroy them." It doesn't sound like the apostle of love, does it? But more and more, something happened to John as he began to spend time with Jesus. He became more like Him, and, rather than wrath, love became his message. And that's the message that he lived out the rest of his life. Something should happen to us as we spend more and more time with Christ through His Word. We should become more and more like Him. The wrath that we're so used to should take a back seat and begin to fade away in the light of the love that God has for us. And that was John's message, and that was his desire. In his old age, he would want to write to us so that we might know the love of Christ and have that same kind of relationship with God that he had.

Now, like I said, we're only going to be looking at the first four verses here of 1 John. But I'd encourage you this week, in your reading time, take some time and just go through and read this book. It shouldn't take you too long. It's not too big. But I think you'd be blessed to go through and just read this epistle from this loving apostle, John. But for now, like I said, let's just look at the first four verses here as John begins this letter.

So let's pray. Father, thank You for being with us here this morning, Lord. We ask, God, that Your Holy Spirit, Father, would be present here in this place to teach us, to encourage us, God; Father, to show us Your Word and Your ways. Father, You tell us that's why You've sent Your Spirit and put it in our hearts; that, Father, it would remind us of the things that You have said. So Father, we open up Your holy Word, and we ask, God, that, Father, you would equip us, Father, through it to have a relationship with You that is real and vibrant, Lord, one that we're willing to share with others. So, Lord, open up our hearts and our minds, Lord, to what You have for us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

All right. Verse 1, John writes, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life - the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." You know, right off the bat when you begin to read this letter, you see that this is different from most letters and epistles that we read in the Scriptures. In the New Testament, many times when we open up a book to read it from the beginning there, you hear an introduction of the person who's writing it and then who it's being written to. But John doesn't do that here. There's no declaration of who he's addressing. He just starts right out with his message. In 2 John 1, you read, "The Elder, to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth." In the next epistle, in 3 John, verse 1 you read, "The Elder, to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth." And it wasn't just John who opened up his letters this way, but many of the other apostles and writers of the Scriptures here. Peter and James and even Paul would start with an introduction and then talk about who they're writing to. Peter would write, "Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained like precious faith ...." (2 Peter 1:1). Again, "Peter," he says, "an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion" (1 Peter 1:1). James would write the same thing in his epistle. "James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes" (James 1:1). And, like I said, Paul, "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians" (1 Thessalonians 1:1) or "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus" (Ephesians 1:1). A very common opening to most of the letters. But here John just gets right to the purpose in which he's writing. He doesn't waste time with, "Hey, it's me, John. I'm the old apostle. I want to write to these people or tell you about these things." He just says, right off the bat, "Hey, I want to tell you about having a relationship with God the Father, and that comes through Jesus Christ." He minces no words. He gets right to the point.

And he starts with this phrase, "That which was from the beginning." We are told in Genesis that, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1), and, as the LORD introduces Himself there in Genesis as the Creator, John starts here as well, declaring that God was there at the beginning and that everything begins with Him. Everything. In John's gospel, he chose that same way

to begin his gospel there as well. He said in his gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He goes back even further than he does here in this epistle with creation, or even further than Genesis tells us. He goes back before the heavens and the earth were created in his gospel. He says, "Before time started, before our minds could even begin to comprehend what that was like, before anything was created, in the beginning was the Word. It existed before the heavens and the earth, and it was with God, and this Word was God." Now, I don't know how long you can remember back. I find the older I get, the more fuzzy things begin to get. I would imagine you guys would probably say the same thing. There're times when I try and recall something, even something as recent as last week or last night. It can be difficult to recall those things. But not John, here. John goes way, way back. In his advanced years, almost 100 years old, it's his joy just to look back and say, "Hey, you know what? Let me tell you about the beginning and who was there in the beginning. In the beginning was the Word. It existed. And this Word was God." And here, in this same way, he recognizes God as the Creator and Christ being there as well. Way, way back before we can even acknowledge or understand time. It's hard to wrap our minds around those kinds of things, isn't it? With our finite minds, to understand where that came from. I don't know how many times I've been asked, "When was God created? When did He start?" And the answer is obvious. "Well, God was never created. He always was." But even saying that just sounds like, "Really? How does that work? How did that ever happen?!" But it's just the truth. And just because we have a hard time understanding it with our finite minds doesn't mean it's not true. And John reinforces that here - that way, way back, that which was from the beginning, and he goes on to talk about how that which was from the beginning has revealed Himself to us. Now that is something that I want to know. That's something I want to grasp. That's something I want to understand. Because if God always was, and He always existed (though I don't quite grab that), but to know that He wants to know me, and He wants to reveal Himself to me, now that's something I can get behind, that's something I want to understand.

And look how John says God revealed Himself to us. Look at verse 1, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life." John says, "We've heard Him, we've seen Him with our eyes, we've looked upon Him." That word "looked upon Him" kind of sounds redundant, but the word "looked upon Him" means to observe intensely or closely; not just that we've seen

Him, but boy have we seen Him. We've studied Him. We were able to see Him clearly. "That which was from the beginning." All those things. He says, "We've handled Him or we've touched Him." Is that just amazing to you, that John was able to say, "We handled, we touched, we heard, we saw, we observed that which was from the beginning, that which was way back before we could ever understand time, this Word of life." And why does John go into such detail concerning how God has made Himself known to us? Well, I guess you have to kind of go back a little bit and understand the times in which John was living. And, to tell you the truth, it's not like a foreign time to us. It's something that we're experiencing today. Back when John was writing this letter, and what the church was going through, there was this time when there was a battle going on with the Gnostics of the time. Gnostic means knowledge, so Gnosticism means having knowledge or those who are claiming to have superior knowledge. They claimed to have more intellect; they were the true thinkers of the time. They had higher intelligence than others. They were the Gnostics. And they were the enlightened ones. They had knowledge that came from other sources that we didn't have. So they saw fit to try and convince us of their ways. They maintain they had more and better understanding than anyone else. I guess it does kind of sound like today. You run into a lot of people like that today. But they claimed that there was no way that God could have become flesh in Christ. It just couldn't have happened. They were the enlightened ones, like I said, and they claimed that if Jesus was God, those who believed in Him being God were extremely naïve. To even begin to think that they might know that God has taken on a physical body, they just saw that as an impossibility. And that was what John was dealing with in those days. Because anyone who had any kind of intelligence understood that anything that was from the material realm was evil. So to say that God would take on material flesh, they were just fools. Why would they ever believe something like that? They believed in God, but they had a very twisted understanding. They believed that there was one great god, the true god, and he was good and perfect. But the problem was he was very impersonal. The Gnostics believed that he was impersonal, and he really didn't want to have anything to do with us. He was the god who was in heaven, but he didn't want to be known to us. But then they believed that there was this lesser god, this lesser deity, kind of a cheap knock-off of the true god. And this was the one who created the heavens and the earth. He wasn't perfect like the true and living god that they thought. But, like I said, he was just kind of a secondary god. And they said that he created man, but he accidentally infused humanity with a spark of the true god of his spirit; and he made man inherently good, but he was wrapped up in this flesh that was evil. Don't you hate it when those secondary gods

mess up? Doesn't it just ruin your day? But that's what they taught, and these were the true thinkers, these were the ones that said, "We know everything. And if you believe that God would become flesh in Jesus, you guys don't know what you're talking about." So what they would teach is, "Hey, whatever is done in the spirit is what matters. But the things that are done in the flesh, the things that are done in the material realm, that doesn't matter at all because the material realm is evil." So they would either deprive their bodies of pleasure, or they would go on the other side - way, way on the other side - and they would say, "Hey, since it doesn't matter, you can allow your flesh anything. You can allow your flesh anything it desires." So the Gnostic would say it's impossible that God would actually become a Man. But they would say, "So Jesus flowed from God. He was not God incarnate, He was not God in the flesh, but He was the Son of God." They would say that but not that He was God Himself. And I say we're not too far from that today because that's what you hear from almost every single cult that's out there. They'll acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God. But when you push them to say "is He God in the flesh?" they'll say "Oh, no. He's the Son of God." From the Mormons to the Jehovah's Witnesses to the Christian Scientists - they'll all say the exact same thing. "Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God?" "Oh, yes. He's the Son of God. He's the mind of God. He has the Spirit of God." "Is He God Himself?" "Oh, no, no. He's not God Himself." And that's what the Gnostics believe, and that's what we believe today. So there's no trinity, there's no Father, no Son, no Holy Spirit - three in one, as the Bible teaches. Because they had a better knowledge. Why? Because they had prophets that were more knowledgeable. They had writings that they had been given that nobody else had been given that told them this great truth, that gave them this knowledge. And they had teachers who reinforced these things. Doesn't it sound like today? That was the same thing that John was dealing with back there in the early church, as he's writing these letters.

But look, John writes here "the One who existed from the beginning - He's the One who we have seen and we have heard. We saw Him with our own eyes. We touched Him with our own hands. He is Jesus Christ. He's the Word of life." See, John flies in the face of every single thing that the Gnostics were teaching, and John wastes no time with greetings or salutations, but he gets right to the point at the outset of his letter. "Let's get this straight. Jesus was not a phantom, He was not an emanation, He wasn't a vision or a ghost. He was God in the flesh. We heard Him, we saw Him, we touched Him, we examined Him, we walked with Him, we talked with Him, we hung out with Him," John says. "We lived with Him day in and

day out, and we want you to have that same kind of fellowship with Him that we have had." See, I said at the beginning, I really want to understand this God who wants to know me so intimately, who I can know in this manner. Because the Gnostics were teaching something very, very different; opposite to that. "There's a great god, but he doesn't care about you; he doesn't want to reveal himself to you. This second-rate god is the one that did that, and he's a mess-up." But John says, "Nothing could be further from the truth. This is the God that we have known and seen and experienced, and we want you to have that same kind of fellowship with Him as we did." And John knew this was a great privilege - of being there with Jesus. There weren't many that were given this privilege - these twelve apostles that God had given to Jesus that He would walk with and talk with and teach and instruct for those three and a half years. He saw this as a great privilege. But he saw that he was put in a place, not so he could just say, "Hey, I was one of the guys, I was there with him; boy, wish you'd have been there," but he realized he was put in that place so he might share that experience and that knowledge with others - with us, today. At this old, old age, the Holy Spirit would come upon him, and he would write these things out, that he would remember these things that he had been taught and he had seen - that Jesus, who he had touched, and say, "I want you to have that same experience that I did." He wants us to experience exactly what he did.

Now you might think, "Gosh, how can I hear Jesus speaking and see Him with my own eyes, so I would be blessed like John? How could that ever happen?" And I think many times, when somebody talks about those things, or we read these kinds of verses in the Scriptures, right away we begin to think, "Well, yeah, I can't wait for that. I'm hoping for that day. I can't wait till I can see Jesus face to face. I can't wait till I can stand before Him and touch Him and listen to Him - when I'm in heaven with Him. I can't wait for that!" But John wasn't writing so that we might look forward to this time. John didn't write these verses to us so we might say, "Yeah, I hope it happens today. He could come in the clouds at this very moment. Or maybe it'll be ten, twenty, thirty, forty years down the road." John wasn't saying, "Hey, I want this to be something for you to look forward to." John was writing to us instead so that we might have this same fellowship that he had with Jesus - today - in our relationship and our walk with Christ today. Does that sound unreachable to you? Does that sound like, "Wow, that would be great, but how do I do that? How could I ever touch Jesus? How could I ever see Him?" John was unique in that way. He spent time with Him. He spent three and a half years with Jesus. But you have to remember one thing. Though John spent time with Jesus

for those three and a half years - ministering with Him, meeting the needs of others - John saw these things, he heard these things, he touched the Lord; that was only for those three and a half years of his life. And Jesus would walk close to him and feel him and hang on to him, but John wanted us to experience that same thing. He wanted us to understand what that was like. So John writes, "This life was manifested," he says; which means to appear or to be shown, "and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life (Jesus) which was with the Father and was manifested to us." That was John's calling - to share this experience with the Lord with us so that we might have that same joy that he had as he wrote this epistle, as he understood and remembered the time that he not only spent with Jesus but those years afterward that he did.

Look at verse 3 real quick with me, "that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." That which he has declared to us. Notice the twofold fellowship that John is talking about here, that he speaks of. First, he says, "that we may have fellowship with one another." John says that we, as believers, might have fellowship with John and all that he's experienced. You know, that word "fellowship" there is the Greek word "*koinonia*," and one translation of it is joint participation. That's what John wants us to have with him - a joint participation in what he experienced being one of the twelve apostles. He says, "That's what I desire for you, this same fellowship." And then number two, he says, "That fellowship comes out of our relationship with God." John says, "We're telling you about what we ourselves actually saw and heard so that you might experience the exact same thing, so you might have fellowship with us, '*koinonia*,' joint participation with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son - that's Jesus Christ." And we say, "Well, how can we have that same experience that John did? We weren't there. We didn't touch Him, we didn't hear Him, we didn't see Him with our own eyes like John did. How can we have this fellowship, this '*koinonia*,' this joint participation with John when we weren't there with him?" But like I said, we have to understand John walked with Jesus for three and a half years of his life. That's it. That's the only time when he saw Him with his own eyes, when he touched Him with his own hands, when he heard Him with his ears. It was only during those three and a half years. The rest of his seventy to eighty years of his life were lived by faith. He didn't see Jesus anymore. He saw Jesus ascend up to heaven, and He was gone, and he didn't see Him again. So for seventy, eighty years of John's walk and relationship and fellowship with God, it was all done by faith. So Paul would write to us in 2



Corinthians 5, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. For we walk by faith, not by sight" (verses 7 and 16). And that's how John walked with Jesus for most of his life, yet John wanted these saints that he's writing to, and us who are reading these verses, to have that same kind of fellowship - to walk with Jesus, to talk with Him; not to believe what the Gnostics are teaching - that you can't know God, and God doesn't want to know you. No. To know Jesus still is to walk with Him by faith; that we should join John in this awesome fellowship with God, and, because of that, that would produce great joy in us.

Do you still think that it's unattainable to know God like that, to hear His voice, to see Him, to walk with Him and enjoy fellowship with Him? Because John didn't see it like that. John still experienced that same kind of fellowship all the way up until he was writing this epistle. That's what God wants us to know. He's not this God that doesn't want anything to do with us. He loves us, He cares for us, He wants to draw us in close. John says, "I want you to have this same fellowship with me that I had with Jesus because our fellowship is there because of what God has done. It comes through a relationship with God through Christ, the Word of life." How awesome is that! How amazing is that! That should drive us every single day to draw close to God through His Word. God has put His Holy Spirit within our hearts - not just as a down payment, that we belong to Him, but so we might know Him better. Imagine that. We have the Author of this holy Word of God living within our hearts, to instruct us and to teach us and equip us in the things that we should know about Christ, to walk with Him every single day. Boy, if that doesn't produce joy in your heart, I don't know what will. And that's exactly why John is writing this epistle to us - so that we might have this same joy that we can get no place else, except through a relationship, that "*koinonia*" fellowship that we have with Christ.

Look at verse 4 here. John says, "And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." "All of these things I'm writing so your joy might be full." I'd ask you - do you remember the day you got saved, the day that your sins were forgiven and that Christ came and dwelt in your heart? Do you remember that day? I do. I was - gosh, it was a long time ago - it was back in 1986. At the end of 1986 is when I got saved. But I remember it like it was yesterday. Do you recall the feeling when your sins were taken away? That joy that came over you, knowing that you didn't have to pay for those, that God loved you so much that He sent His Son to die for your sins? I remember that! I remember exactly what it was like. I'll tell you. It

was a Wednesday night. It was a Wednesday evening. I went to church over at Calvary Chapel Downey. I had been going to church there for almost six months. I wasn't a Christian. I had been invited there and was taken there by some friends and eventually just continued to go on my own. But I wasn't saved. I just knew that there was something I was missing in my life. And week after week, Sunday morning, Wednesday night, I would go to church. I lived in Placentia at the time and would drive down the 91 Freeway, get off over there at the exit, and go to Calvary Chapel Downey and sit and listen. And this Wednesday night was just like many, many others that I had spent there. One difference. I went and bought a Bible before church. I didn't have a Bible, and I'd like to tell you I went and bought a Bible because I knew I was going to get saved that night. That wasn't the thing. I bought it because I was tired of looking different from everybody else. Everyone walked into church with a Bible, and I always walked in with just nothing. And I thought, "Gosh, I stick out like a sore thumb. I'd better get a Bible." So I went over to the Chapel Store, bought a Bible there. I didn't know what to get. I don't really know Jesus very well." So they gave me this Bible. They said, "You should buy this one." It was one that had three different versions in it. It had the New Living, it had the NIV, and it had the King James Version. So you can imagine how thick this thing was. It was like one of those family Bibles you sit on your table at home. But I didn't know any difference. I'm walking in with this big old Bible. "Look at me. I'm a Christian. Look at that!" (Laughing) But I went in and sat down, and the teacher began to teach, and, at the end of his message, he gave an invitation for those to raise their hand if they wanted to have God forgive their sins, if they wanted to become a Christian. And I raised my hand. I sat there, and I raised my hand, and I said, "That's for me." I came to the point where I realized, "Man, I'm a sinner. I need God's grace." And at the end of the message, and after he sang the last song, he said, "If you guys raised your hand, come down. We want to pray with you." And I didn't want to go up first, but I ended up going down, and I prayed with a gentleman down there. He was an elder from the church, and he gave me some Bible verses to look at in my new monster Bible, and I got in my car, and I went home. But I remember driving home that night. I got on the 91 Freeway, and I was driving, and I was just so happy. But I realized, all of a sudden, my face hurt. I was like, "Why is my face hurting?" Seriously. It hurt! And I looked up in the rearview mirror, and I had the biggest smile on my face. It was like an ear-to-ear grin, and I realized my face hurt because I was smiling so big. And it just made me smile more. It's like, "Ow! Gosh. I smiled more!" And I began to laugh, and I remember just thanking God for loving me. I remember thanking God for taking away my sins. It was just this joy welled-up in me that I'd never

experienced before. I can imagine what the people in the cars next to me thought. They were looking over at me, "What's wrong with this?" This is before cell phones. They didn't call 911. But, "This guy must be on drugs or somethin'. Look at him, laughing like an idiot over there in his car, driving down the freeway." But I had this joy that was indescribable, and it was because I now had fellowship with God. I now had a relationship with Him. I knew that He was dwelling in my heart. And though I didn't know a lot about Him yet, I was determined to know everything I could about Him. The joy I felt was like nothing I had ever experienced.

Now I'd like to tell you this morning that I experience that same joy every single day when I get up. I'd love to tell you that. But I can't. I want to. It's my goal. Not to smile like an idiot every time I wake up in the morning, but to know that joy - indescribable joy - every single day. Because I know that that's what God desires for me, and I don't know why I don't every day. God is exactly the same. My sins are still forgiven. He's still in charge of my life. I know I'm going to heaven. I know that His Holy Spirit still dwells within me. But I tell you that living in this world, and the things of this world, can steal our joy from us. We can listen to those Gnostics or those others that tell us, "God doesn't really want to know you that well," and then it begins to kind of sneak into our hearts. And we begin to more have fellowship with the world than we do with the Lord. Those kinds of things can start to steal our joy away. But John says here, "Hey, let me tell you about our experience with Jesus, how we talked with Him, and we saw Him, how we listened to Him, how we touched Him with our hands. And I want you to have that same fellowship with us that we had with Jesus because it's found in a relationship with God through the Word of life, through Jesus Christ Himself, God made flesh."

I want to encourage you guys. You can talk with Jesus today. You can hear His voice. You can touch Him and see Him touching others. Now I'm not saying He's going to show up before your face and sit on the end of your bed at night. But it's through this fellowship that we have with God, as we walk closely with Him, as we realize His love for us and what He's done for us, that this fellowship becomes so real and so intense that we can't help but have this joy bubbling up within us. What do we have to fear? What do we have that could steal that joy away, that is better than God loving us? Than Him taking away our sins? Than the promises that He's given to us? Not just to see Him in the future, that we can experience Him today. That's why John wrote this letter. I tell you - spend time with Jesus every single day. Every moment have fellowship with Him. Seek it out. Stop and pray. You can have fellowship with God as you just stop and thank Him for what He's

done for you. Every single moment of the day, just acknowledge Him, and you'll watch Him direct your path and your steps; equip you for the things that are coming that day. And at the end of the day, you can lay your head down on the pillow at night and just rejoice because you had fellowship with the Lord that day. And then go out and be like John. Share your fellowship with others because God doesn't want you to keep it to yourself. Like John, He's given you that fellowship with Him so you might go and tell others how great our God is. Let the joy of the Lord be your strength, and the things of this world - they won't cling to you, and you won't cling to them. Because the Holy Spirit and the Word of God will be written all over you. That's the joy that I desire every single day. Do you desire that same thing? Because you can have it. Right now. Today. Draw close to Jesus. Experience His love, and you'll have joy everlasting, joy incomprehensible, joy that nothing can steal. John says, "I've written this to you. These things I write so your joy may be full." Experience that today in Christ.

Father, thank You for being with us this morning, Lord, for your holy Word, God, that not only, Father, saves us but, Lord, continues to walk with us and equip us every single day. God, I know that You've put us in this world with a purpose, with a desire, God, that we might share our lives with those that need You so badly. And I thank You, Lord, that You've given us this Word that John has written down so that we might have this intimate fellowship with You as he did. God, we want to see Your face. We want to touch You, Jesus. We want to hear Your voice. We want to walk with You and see You work. Father, that's our desire, and I know that that's Yours. So Father, would you take away anything in our lives that would hinder that fellowship, that communion, that "*koinonia*," God, that You want to have with us right now and every day of our lives; that we might have joy everlasting, fullness of joy, and that the world would see that and desire that same fellowship. God, do that in us, we pray. And if you're here today, and you don't have that fellowship with God, you don't have the joy of Christ in your heart, knowing your sins are forgiven, knowing that God loves you that much that He sent His Son, that's easily taken care of. You just cry out to Jesus right in your seat. You raise your hand and say, "Jesus, I want you. I want you in my life. I need you. I need my sins forgiven. I want to walk with you and talk with you. I want to see Your face. I want to know Your love and have Your Spirit dwelling in my life. I need Your joy." And Christ will come, and your sins will go, and this fellowship that we have with Him you can have as well. Do that this morning, and then come down and talk with one of the guys down front. Let them know the decision that you've made, and begin this walk with God that will last you for all eternity, that you might

be free of the things of this world and consumed with the things of God. Joy.  
Fullness of joy. Thank You, Jesus. We love You.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
March 6, 2017