

### Media and Graphics Notes

<b>Sermon Starter Video?</b>	Yes
<b>Sermon Notes?</b>	There are no notes on screen during the sermon
<b>Other Notes</b>	

## Key Questions

### ***What is this sermon about?***

This sermon is about rejoicing in God - in all circumstances.

### ***Why is this sermon important?***

It is important because it can be difficult to find joy in all times of life. Our joy rests on the reconciliation available in Christ.

### ***What is the context of this sermon?***

This sermon is essentially one of the chapters of Steve Harper's book, "Five Marks of a Methodist." I used the iBooks edition as the basis for this sermon, which can be found online at [https://itun.es/us/\\_NnO3.l](https://itun.es/us/_NnO3.l)

### ***What are the next action steps?***

Rejoice in God

### ***What is the good news (bottom line)?***

The good news is that the basis for our joy is our reconciliation with God.

### ***What are other key takeaways? (140 characters or less)***

- [text here]



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## Metadata

### **Topic(s)**

1. Change Lives

### **Sermon Books of the Bible**

1. Nehemiah

This content is adapted from *Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper.

8th Sunday after Pentecost

July 10, 2016

Five Marks of a Methodist - A Methodist Rejoices in God

Nehemiah 8:10

First United Methodist Church of El Dorado

Preaching Target Word Count: 1,843

Text Online at <http://bit.ly/28Qef7F>

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## Tags

sermon, worship, church, Methodist, UnitedMethodist, UnitedMethodistChurch, FirstUnitedMethodistChurch, ElDorado, Kansas, GreatPlains, AnnualConference, GreatPlainsAnnualConference, love, joy, rejoice, happiness, happy

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## Nehemiah 8:10, CEB

“Go, eat rich food, and drink something sweet,” he said to them, “and send portions of this to any who have nothing ready! This day is holy to our LORD. Don’t be sad, because the joy from the LORD is your strength!”

### Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

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## Introduction

### Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

### Series Review

Buildings last because they sit on a firm foundation. Without a good foundation, buildings may exist for a while but they can’t stand for long. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, understood that this is also true for our life of faith.

In 1742, he wrote *The Character of a Methodist*, which describe the “distinguishing marks” of a Methodist person. His original document remains a gift to us today. This sermon and series are adapted from the book *Five Marks of a Methodist* by Steve Harper.

### Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

#### *Take Notes - Bulletin*

I invite you to take notes during the message today. You can find a place in your bulletin or if you have a mobile device you can open the Bible App and use the Events feature to take notes

#### *God Speaking*

Listen for God’s word for you – something that helps you live as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Whenever you hear it, write it down.

#### *Tool for Spiritual Growth*

Then, take it with you so that you can grow in your faith outside of worship by reflecting on what you heard today, praying for others connected with our community and reading scripture

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## Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

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## Opening Story

### Correspondence - “with His joy”

“When one of my best friends sends me a personal note or e-mail, he ends the correspondence by using these words: “with His joy.” For him, the phrase is much more than a happy-go-lucky way of ending a communication. It captures the spirit of biblical living. My friend has lived long and deeply in God. He and his family have experienced the ups and downs of life, the successes and failures, the joys and sorrows. But on any given day, if I receive a message from this mentor, it will likely end with the words “with His joy.”

### John Wesley and Joy

While standing in the stream of the Christian saints, John Wesley included joy in the first mark of discipleship when he said, “God is the joy of his heart.” But rather than let it go at that, he made rejoicing in God the second mark of discipleship.

### *Flows from and distinct from God’s Love*

He shows us that joy (like everything else) flows from the love of God, but rather than being blended into love in some kind of amorphous way, joy stands on its own as a distinctive evidence that we are living as Jesus’s disciples. With an echo of Nehemiah’s words to the people, Wesley was saying, “The joy from the LORD is your strength.”

## Strength to Love

### *Joy is an expression of strength*

When I was in seminary, I read the book, *Strength to Love* by Martin Luther. Martin knew what every saint has learned: it takes *strength* to love, and the primary expression of strength is joy. This is one reason why the civil rights movement included both sermons and singing. It is why the early Methodist movement included John the preacher and Charles the hymn writer. *The Character of a Methodist* is a treatise that begins and continues like a sermon, but ends with a song. Before Jesus and his disciples left the upper room and headed for Gethsemane, they sang a hymn (Matt 26:30).

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## Role of Joy in Discipleship

### Joy is our response to God's love

What role does joy play in following Christ? Simply this: discipleship is a whole-life response to grace. We make a mistake when we define the spiritual life only in terms of its religious dimensions. We fail to grasp what God is offering us when we limit to the cognitive element.

Joy is the word used by Christians in every age to describe the comprehensive response we make out of our whole being to God's love. That's why Wesley made joy the second mark of a disciple. And from that simple word *joy*, he moved on to further define it.

### Happiness: A disciple is happy in God

He begins with happiness. He says that a disciple is "happy in God." Wesley was trained in classical thought, which understood happiness in terms of the Greek concept of *eudaemonism*. Don't let the strangeness of the word throw you. It is the reason why Wesley was quick to name joy as a mark of discipleship.

#### ***Classical "happiness"***

Far from being a fleeting or superficial emotion that only occurs when we are getting our way, classical "happiness" is an ... ethical word that means the harvest of a life given over to righteousness. The bond of being loved by God and loving God in return produces a quality of life that can only be found in a relationship with God. But when it is, happiness is the life of virtue and goodness that emerges.

#### ***Happiness in the Beatitudes***

For Wesley, happiness of this sort was so powerful and transformative he used the word to begin each of the Beatitudes in his translation of the New Testament. For him, it was the hallmark of the more-often used word *blessed*. The Common English Bible also translates the Beatitudes with the term: "Happy are people who have pure hearts, because they will see God ... Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven" (Matt 5:8, 12).

### Peace: Love casts out fear

When we have this happiness, we have peace – peace based on the fact that perfect love (the union of God's love for us with our love for God) casts out fear (1 John 4:18). Joy is a mark of discipleship that gives us confidence and courage. This is an essential ingredient because as long as we evaluate our Christian life in terms of what others think of us, we will play it safe, which is to live in fear. Perfect love is the genesis of courage – courage rooted in love – courage that fills us with joy. It is different from a

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bull-in-a-china-she spirituality, which claims to be courageously prophetic when it is actually only obnoxious. Instead of this, we live in joyful peace knowing that when we are faithful to God we are living not only as God intends but doing so in the right spirit.

**Example: E. Stanley Jones**

E. Stanley Jones made this kind of happiness one of the hallmarks of his message. By using words remarkably similar to Wesley, he wrote, “It is no mere accident that joy follows [from] love. Joy is a by-product of love.” He tells of passing by a place in Los Angeles that had this sign on the outside: Jones Jolly Joint. He wrote, “I laughed and said, ‘That’s me on the inside.’” Wesley would have liked that way of putting it, for the joy he has in mind for disciples comes from deep within – from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who produces the fruit of the Spirit in and through us, beginning with love, and then joy - joy with peace and patience.

## Conclusion

### Good News

The good news is that the basis for our joy is our reconciliation with God.

The basis for our joy, Wesley writes, is the atonement, the moment and the process where we are reconciled with God. Jesus’s death upon the cross is the objective proof of God’s love (Rom 5:8), and because he died for us, we can live for him. We do this because we know our sins are forgiven. Wesley observed that the disciple rejoices over deliverance from “the horrible pit” with “all his transgression blotted out as a cloud.” Here is the basis for our assurance, and here is the motivation for our readiness to forgive others.

### Lord’s Prayer

This is why we pray through the Lord’s Prayer, “Forgive us the ways we have wronged you, just as we forgive those who have wronged us” (Matt 6:12). The little word *as* takes us in more than one direction. It means in ways that are comparable. So we pray, “Help us forgive others in ways similar to God’s forgiveness of us.” It can also mean simultaneity. So we pray, “In the midst of experiencing God’s forgiveness, give us the desire to forgive others.” we are God’s forgiven and forgiving people! This reconciliation with God and with others is the source of our joy.

### Assurance

This assurance becomes the incentive for our hope. Wesley says that our redemption not only provides present blessings, it also gives us a vision of “the glory that is about to be revealed” (1 Pet 5:1). Again, drawing on ideas given by Peter, Wesley calls this a *living* hope. It is an experience of God that isn’t deferred but rather one that is real in the present moment. Anticipation doesn’t produce postponement. And all of

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this, Wesley writes, is for *me* – not in the sense of selfishness but in the sense of being applied uniquely to each and every one of us. Like fingerprints that make us unique and unrepeatable sons and daughters of God, we are given a distinctive soul print – not just the life of God in the human soul but the life of God in *my* soul.

## Wesley and Spangenburg

Wesley had a conversation with the Moravian minister August Spangenburg upon arrival as a missionary in Georgia. Spangenburg asked Wesley if he knew Jesus was his savior.

Wesley replied, “I know he is the savior of the world.”

But Spangenburg wouldn't let it end there. He asked again, “But is he your savior?”

Wesley responded in the affirmative, but later wrote in his journal, “I fear they were vain words.”

The Spirit of God began to move in Wesley's heart, showing him that God isn't interested in a vague, impersonal relationships but is interested in a heart-to-heart, life-to-life relationship that connects to the unique people that we are. On this basis, we can move into each day of our lives “with God's joy.” A disciple rejoices in God. Charles Wesley took this conviction and set it to music:

Rejoice the Lord is King!  
Your Lord and King adore;  
mortals, give thanks and sing,  
and triumph ever more.  
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;  
rejoice; again I say, rejoice.