

## **147 "that my joy may remain in you ...."**

It was the evening of what we now know as the Last Supper, and Jesus and His disciples were gathered in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem to share the Passover meal. There was clearly a sense of foreboding in the air, for it was common knowledge that Jesus was a "wanted man" by the authorities: His presence, His teaching and His deeds were proving too much of a challenge for them, and they had reached the stage of "Enough is enough" (verse 2).

This background makes Jesus' manner and words, as given to us by the Holy Spirit in St John's Gospel Chapters 13 to 17, all the more remarkable. The Lord was completely calm, though fully aware of what was about to befall Him, made worse by His knowing that Judas Iscariot, one of His own chosen ones, was about to play a key role. His concern that evening was to prepare His disciples, and to reassure them that the awfulness of the morrow would be nothing like the final end of everything - despite what it would seem.

And Jesus spoke to them, as the storm clouds crowded in - of joy. "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full .... Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full .... And now (Father), I come to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 15.11 / 16.20 / 16.24 / 17.11).

We gather that Jesus wants us to be His people of joy! Now we know that such joy is much more than mere happiness, precious though that is; and that joy does not require us to be "laugh a minute" people, with something the matter with us if we are not always cracking jokes and doubled up with laughter.

Rather, joy is about a settled, thankful, well-founded cheerfulness as we go about our daily lives. We can think of a great sailing clipper of bygone days, pounding along through seas either calm or rough, ever strong, confident, competent, and effective. And why was that? It was because the builders of that great ship knew what they were doing, in building her to cope, to withstand and to overcome anything that she might encounter in her working life. No wonder then that her crew, bringing in turn their own vital skills to their tasks, had confidence and settledness in their work.

Just so with us today. We know full well that the seas of life can sometimes be very rough for our little ships, particularly these days with tides and currents flowing strongly against the living God. But those ships have been brought into being by the Master Builder, who not only built them but is even the Captain on board every one of them, ensuring that each one is brought safely home (Philippians 1.6 / Joshua 1.5 and Hebrews 13.5b, 8).

No wonder then that in the midst of the inevitable storms, we can remember what we are - people of joy - and why - because of our God-given faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, and in all the promises associated with Him, be they past, present or future. Such faith is utterly well-founded in the facts of real history and of daily experience.

The Lord longs for each of us to dwell within His joy. This joy has to be learned and practised, for it is one of the "fruits of the Spirit" (Galatians 5.22), and fruit takes time to grow! That reminds us of the Lord's instruction (John 15.1-6) to "abide in Him", so that the Holy Spirit-Sap of the Vine can flow through the branches and bear His fruit.

Jesus' wish is that His joy shall remain within us. With His help and our obedience, that is just the way things can be.

**2015 Faithful Sheep Ministries - [www.fsmins.org](http://www.fsmins.org)**