

To many, the Christian life is a life of grim determination; there is no fun to be had, no joy to embrace; just enduring this terrible existence until we are rescued by death. They think that it is a sin to have the kind of happiness that keeps a smile close to their lips. Christ was very serious, in their minds, and kept to his business without any kidding around. I don't think that this is the right idea at all! Throughout the Bible we are told to rejoice and be happy, and how we must live to be happy!

It interested me greatly to know that on the night that Christ was arrested and taken into custody for trial, he was concerned with our happiness. Not just our salvation, but our ultimate joy from this life. In John 17 we find recorded a prayer of Christ before he and his disciples leave the upper room. In this prayer, of course, he deals with the future of his close friends, the apostles, and the church which they will help establish. But let me read verse 13, 'and might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.' To me it is somewhat incredible that Jesus, in the midst of his own problems, prays that we might be filled with the joy that he himself has. I think that the word 'filled' is significant here. He wants us to have joy overflowing in our hearts. In verse 22 of chapter 16, in talking earlier with his disciples, he also had mentioned joy, comparing it with some of the sorrow that they would also endure. This joy, he says, no man can take from us. It is joy so powerful and filling that it is in a sense permanent. We can give it away, but it cannot be taken from us. Satan actively tries to take it, leaving us an empty shell which cannot be like Christ at all. But we must plant it firmly in our hearts. Are we living the life of joy which is promised us? Are we taking advantage of Christ's great concern, even at this own time of suffering, for our hardness. I hope so.