

Sermon Title: Joy and Expectation – September 21, 2014 (Scripture is from the ESV)

Introduction

Good afternoon! It's my joy to preach the first "live" sermon at our new New Philadelphia Sillim campus. I'm excited for what God has in store for us here!

As I preach my first few sermons here at Sillim I've felt it's important to share some of my own personal journey with you all. I want you all hear what I've gone through and what I've learned so that you won't have to go through the same struggles as I have.

Today I want to share a bit of what I learned when I first moved into an orphanage here in Seoul where I lived and served for three years. I also want to share a bit about what I've learned in my pursuit of my wife Sky and doing marital counseling. What I'm going to share is going to help shape your expectations for this church community and for your future.

The title of today's sermon is, "Joy and Expectation." Joy and Expectation.

Please open your Bibles with me to Psalm 62:5-8...

Psalm 62:5-8 – For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; **I shall not be shaken.** On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Trust and expectation can go hand in hand, and the Bible is clear to put your trust, your hope, and your expectation in God, and not in man. **The fullness of our hope must be dependent on God.** Then we will never be shaken.

As we all start a new chapter of our lives here at Sillim, I want us to start with healthy expectations, rooted in the Lord. I want us to be in a place with the Lord where we will never be shaken regardless of what happens around us. God is a refuge for us, and I hope as I share some testimonies from my past that you may be encouraged in Him.

Going to Korea

I moved to Korea to live in Geon Christian Children's Home at the end of 2005. I had graduated from Virginia Tech earlier that year and worked for a bit before God made it clear I was to go to Korea. I may share my testimony of how God led me here in a later message, but if you really want to hear it then listen to the sermon "Waiting for the Marshmallow" from 2013. That message is particularly for those who are praying into the future and who are waiting for God's calling to unfold.

Geon Christian Children's Home, an orphanage here in Seoul, had 88 kids when I first arrived. Their ages ranged from babies to high school seniors. The staff mainly consisted of paid social workers who took care of the kids. I was welcomed to the home as an English teacher for the kids, serving as a volunteer/missionary to them. I only knew a few words in Korean when I first arrived. The kids and the workers knew almost no English. My first couple years in the children's home were really difficult, to say the least, but God was shaping my heart and training me.

I arrived in Korea with pretty much no heart for kids and no heart for this nation. I had barely any experience working with kids and I was probably the least equipped for what I came to do. But I knew that true love comes from the Lord and that He would give me the love I would need. 1John 4:19 says, "We love because God first loved us." And so from the first day I arrived I began praying for the kids and asking for God's heart. It only took a few days for me to begin to genuinely care for them. God's love is amazing. My heart for Korea would take more time to develop, but over the years God has done such a work where I am now completely sold out for Korea. God is faithful, but this all did take time.

When I first lived in the children's home I was hit hard by the difference between the American culture I grew up in and the culture here in Korea. My love language is physical touch and hugs mean a lot to me, but Korea is very different from America. There is not so much physical touch here. I went from living a life with friends and family where there was so much love expressed to being in a setting where there were a lot of people I didn't know and very little touch. It was a hard transition, especially as I was very lonely from the lack of friends and from the difficulty communicating at the home. But God provided.

I remember going into the baby room at the orphanage for the first time. There were a lot of boys in the room at the time and only one girl, a one year old named Yoon Ji. As I entered Yoon Ji latched on to me very quickly. This shocked the workers at the home because she was known as a tomboy who was very independent, not taking interest in any visitors and not being that attached to the workers either. But for whatever reason, she attached to me right away. When I would come into the room she would jump up and waddle over with her arms reached up to me, wanting me to pick her up. She would hold on to me tightly and she loved to play games with me. I realized very quickly that God was looking out for me through Yoon Ji. Whenever I would feel low or depressed while living in the orphanage, I would pray for a bit and then visit the baby room. Just being with her and the other little ones would comfort and strengthen my soul.

But around the summer of 2007, after living in the children's home for a year and a half, I heard from one of the social workers that Yoon Ji would be leaving the orphanage to go back to live with her relatives. I remember when I heard the news my heart dropped. This little girl was so dear to me. The full reality of it didn't hit me until the day came for her to leave. I went down to the baby room in the morning to say goodbye to her. She was still too young to understand what was going on, so she just played with me like usual. I finally picked her and gave her a hug and spoke love over her before saying goodbye. She said goodbye and went back to playing with the other little ones and I went back to my room to have some prayer time. I remember as I started praying I could feel a heaviness in my heart. I then felt God tell me, "Let it out" and I knew God was referring to Yoon Ji. Immediately tears began streaming down my cheeks and I began to cry. I expressed to the Lord how much she meant to me. I almost wanted to be angry at the Lord for taking her away from me, but I knew in my heart I needed to thank God for letting her be in my life for the time I knew her. I began thanking God for different precious memories with Yoon Ji and thanking God for His goodness in providing me with her during my tough first year and a half. After taking some to thank Him, I expressed to the Lord that He is good. He gives and He takes away. I expressed my trust in God that He has greater relationships in store for me. I knew if I were to hold on to Yoon Ji that I would miss the greater things He had for me. So I committed her to the Lord in prayer. I prayed for her and blessed her life.

That was a tough day, but it was so important for me. I've had to say goodbye to many more children, a number who graduated from high school and left the home and many others who returned to live with their relatives or who ran away. I was ready for some of their departures, while for others their departure was abrupt. But for each, I chose to process their departure in the same way as I did for Yoon Ji: praising God for our time together and the privilege I had to love them and be a part of their life, and committing their future to the Lord and praying for His grace and covering over them.

God has never failed me. I have experienced so many beautiful relationships while living here in Korea. God has always provided for the needs of my soul. **And I've recognized through people like Yoon Ji that my expectation for provision of my needs must never be dependent on man.** My expectation for provision of my needs must always be in the Lord. If our trust is fully in God, then we will not be shaken.

At some point Yoon Ji would have grown to a stage where our relationship would have had to change. At some point I could not continue to be dependent on her for the love I would receive being with her. I think we as humans know that everything we have here on earth has an expiration date, but in the moment we still can get wrapped up in relationships, jobs, places, and objects for our joy. And while we might be happy for a period of time, at some point what we have will be taken from us. At some point we will have to let go.

The story I just shared of Yoon Ji leaving might be sad for you. The day Yoon Ji left was indeed a sad day for me. Losing a loved one should be sad. But my story of Yoon Ji is not sad to me at all; **rather it is one of the sweetest stories of my life.** If all my hope and expectation had been in Yoon Ji, then I would have never been able to treasure my memories with her after her departure. I would have been too wrapped up in my loss and hurt. But because my hope and my expectation were in the Lord, all those memories remain sweet and safe.

As you each are committing to this new campus here at Sillim, I want you all to believe for and claim new and deeper friendships. Jesus said in Mark 10:29 that those who have left family in this world for Him will receive even greater family in their lifetime. Expect this and pray into this. God doesn't mean for us to forsake the past, we just need to understand that as we move forward obeying His will that He has even greater things in store for us, particularly in friendships and in caring for the needs of our soul. The Lord is our shepherd and we shall not be in want! Amen!

We will always look to Him to meet our needs. Our expectation is in God, not in man. Some of the friendships you will grow here at Sillim may only be for a short time, while others will be for much longer. Regardless of how long we will have with each other, we are called to love each other to the fullest, not holding anything back. We won't have to fear heartbreak if the time comes for parting, because our joy is rooted in the Lord and our trust is in Him that He has even greater things in store for all of us.

Expectations for Marriage

Now, as well as I did in entrusting Yoon Ji and so many other kids and friendships to the Lord, there was one area in my life that I unknowingly couldn't fully put my hope in the Lord with, and that area was marriage.

When I was in high school I was a bit girl crazy. I dated a couple times and had interests in others, but nothing worked out. In fact, I got hurt a bit from some of those relationships. I buried a lot of that hurt as I continued to seek fulfillment in other relationships, but after breaking up with my last girlfriend during my first year in college I felt God calling me to lay down dating while in college and just pursue Him. This was really hard for me since I had expected to marry while in college. My parents married when they were 18 and 19 and both my sisters married when they were 21. But I knew it was the Lord and so I committed dating and my future marriage to Him. I began to go all out for Him.

I never once regretted that decision. I would have never been able to grow with God while in college if I had continued to constantly be looking for joy in dating. Instead my joy was fully set in the Lord. And because I wasn't thinking about dating, I was able to invest in some great friendships while I was in college and enjoy my time there without any heavy cares.

After graduating from college I knew that vow was lifted, but I soon realized I had lost a lot of my interest in dating and in marriage. My heart was set on missions. But even after moving to Korea and living in the children's home for a few years, I still found my heart closed to dating and to marriage. It wasn't until 2009 when God began to do a deep work in me and unearth lies and fears that had destroyed my expectation and hope for marriage.

God revealed to me that I didn't fully trust I would be satisfied being married. From some of the hurts I had experienced from dating many years earlier, I had felt that it would be impossible for me to truly make someone happy and that I too would never be fully satisfied being married. And to be honest, there was a lot of truth to what I was feeling. No person could truly make me feel satisfied. And there is not one woman I could completely make happy. We could make each other happy to a degree, but never completely. There would always be areas that couldn't be fulfilled. I knew this as truth in my heart, and so I was refusing to open my heart to marriage. True satisfaction in marriage seemed futile to me. We are imperfect people, so we are bound to eventually disappoint one another. So why should I even try?

But then God turned the tables on me. Where I thought my low expectations were rooted in the futility of my future spouse and I truly satisfying each other, **my low expectations were actually rooted in the fact I didn't believe God could satisfy me in marriage.** I believed God could satisfy me in so many other areas of my life, including my relationship with the kids at the children's home and with friends and family, but I didn't believe God could satisfy me in marriage. **I was believing more in my hurt and disappointment from the past than in God's goodness for my future.**

My issues were far more spiritual than physical. God took me through a season in 2009 where I had to go back into a lot of memories from my past and renounce different lies that I had unknowingly been carrying from the hurt and disappointment. In past relationships our satisfaction had been based on each other's actions, but now God was telling me that my satisfaction and my wife's satisfaction would be from Him. Just like God used Yoon Ji to bless me God would use my future spouse to bless me, but my expectations would always have to remain on the Lord rather than on her for me to keep my joy.

Expectations put on people create burdens. Imagine dating someone who expects a ton of you: "He must have flowers, he must open the car door, he must write me sweet letters, he must cook for me, he must smile at me at all times, he must know how to read my mind and care

for my every emotion” and on and on. To say there will be disappointment and unhappiness if those expectations aren’t met creates a ridiculous burden for the other person. There should be healthy expectations in relationships, **but if your joy is dependent on an expectation in another person, even your spouse, then you are demonstrating that you expect more from that person than you do from God.** Let me say that again: if your joy is dependent on an expectation in another person, even your spouse, then you are demonstrating that you expect more from that person than you do from God. If your joy is dependent on someone other than God, then you are either idolizing that person or you are demonstrating a lack of faith in the Lord that He can satisfy you in that area.

I know some people who won’t date out of fear that their spouse will fail them by looking at porn or by having an affair or by suddenly no longer being romantic. For some such people their parents or close friends had divorced or endured a really hard time because of sin, so there is a fear of going through the same. When such people come to Sky and me seeking full assurance that they will be safe, **we honestly can’t give it to them.** We are all human. We all make mistakes. As much as some people seem really perfect, in the end they have their own flaws and temptations. We reassure such people that at least our church has a good system of accountability and covering, so we keep track of each other and are there for each other when there is temptation or failure. Accountability and covering are huge helps and should provide some level of comfort. But to expect a leader or pastor to keep someone in the church in perfect order is a burden that none of us can carry. We are not the author and perfecter of a person’s faith. We can be used by God, but in the end it is the Lord who is the author and perfecter. In the end our expectations must be in the Lord. We cannot live in fear that someone, including our spouse, will disappoint us. **Fear demonstrates a lack of trust in God’s love.** 1John 4:18 says perfect love drives out fear. When we are filled with the true love of the Lord, then we can trust in Him even when those dear to us fail us. We can trust that God will take care of us and that He hears our prayers.

Let me be clear, love is both a choice and a risk. Love is not circumstantial. Love has no guarantee of being reciprocated. Love is meant to be constantly coming from us, regardless of how we are being treated. Jesus commands us in Luke 6:27 to love our enemies. In Luke 6:35 Jesus calls us to **love expecting nothing in return.** Putting contracts or expectations on those you love is not love at all. One of the most basic marriage vows is, “For better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish from this day forward until death do us part.” The most beautiful marriages are when two people surrender their fears and their futures to the other and choose to love their spouse fully and completely. There is freedom in such a relationship. That love is not based on performance; it’s based on grace, just as God’s love for us is based on grace. God will love us no matter what. When we do sin and evil we do hurt Him and we do require discipline, but His love is still there as we are repentant.

Fear must be given to the Lord. Psalm 37:4 says, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you desires of your heart.” As you set your trust and expectation on the Lord and not on man, you will find yourself opening up to others in ways you couldn’t before. Not just in marriage, in other relationships as well you will begin experiencing deeper intimacy and deeper fulfillment.

Now on the flip side, there are others who put their full expectation and joy into their future spouse, believing their future spouse is going to make their life so much better. I have to laugh when I hear new couples describing each other with such over the top affirmation. “She

is beautiful, sweet, kind, artistic, fashionable, a good cook, athletic, smart, patient, Christ-like... she is perfect. She is just the right person for me.” While the person they are with may be almost all of the attributes they described, they will soon discover that the right “person” is in the end a person, human, and not perfect. At some point the blemishes are revealed. The different character flaws that may have been hidden early in the dating process start to come out. There will be conflict. There will soon be the realization that this person is not perfect and cannot completely satisfy. **And it is coming to grips with this realization that will enable you to fully enjoy your relationship, because you have come with grips that your true joy and satisfaction are based on the Lord and not on your spouse.** This realization removes the burden and expectation of perfection from the person you are with. It creates freedom in the relationship.

From counseling a number of relationships I’ve learned that nearly every husband and wife has separately had a moment in their relationship, whether while dating or after they married, where they wondered if they were really meant to be with the other. It’s in this moment where their love for the other is tested. Is their love based on circumstances, or is it based on their choice to love the other and leave their fulfillment to the Lord? These moments of testing can sneak up on you and can often seem like they are from the devil, but I really believe the moments of testing are from the Lord. **Because every time a couple endures such a test and chooses to remain committed to each other, they are demonstrating that their expectations for fulfillment are based on the Lord and not based on each other.**

I absolutely love being married to my wife Sky. We have so much fun together. We are truly a match made in heaven. And it’s when we meditate on that truth that God brought us together and that God is good, our marriage is so strong.

And while we are a match made in heaven, we still live in these physical bodies here on earth. When we act according to our flesh it isn’t pretty and we can unknowingly put unhealthy expectations and burdens on the other. We can act in unloving ways and hurt each other. **Matches made in heaven are still imperfect here on earth when we live according to our flesh.** In the physical when these imperfections and struggles come up, it can look hopeless, that we might as well give up. That is why so many couples divorce. They are looking at each other according to the flesh and realizing they are both a mess. **But it’s that moment we choose to look at each other through God’s eyes, according to His grace, that we are able to see hope.** This hope isn’t based in the other; it’s based in God’s grace working in the other. And that’s when we remember it’s God who brought us together and it’s God who will carry us through. What God has brought together let man not separate. We are safe and free because God is working through us. Once again, if our expectations are on the Lord then we will be safe and fulfilled. But if our expectation is on a man or a woman, then we will end up being disappointed.

The greatest marriages are never based on the physical attributes like the world’s standard of beauty. We all have an expiration date. We are all aging. If love and attraction are based mostly on how someone looks, then the love will expire as that person ages. **Love is not meant to be circumstantial. Love is not meant to be according to the flesh.**

The most beautiful people I have seen would probably not be deemed beautiful according to the current standard of this world. The standard of beauty in this world is always changing and is impossible to fully attain, especially as we continue to age. True beauty is not physical, it is spiritual. It is reflecting Christ. There have been times in my life where I have seen

people glowing with the love of God. Such people were usually in a season of deep intimacy and growth with the Lord. Some were going through suffering and persecution but choosing to worship and keep their joy in the Lord. They were truly reflecting Christ, and the glow was visible to me. And they would look far more beautiful than any model I had seen here on earth. **In this world, there will always be blemishes. But in the spirit, we are spotless.** We are pure. We are truly beautiful. It's when two people can see that true beauty in each other that their love will never die. Even when they are old and wrinkly, their attraction and love will still be strong because it was never based just on physical beauty.

To say, "We are a perfect match" is both a lie and a truth. It's a lie according to the world. No match of imperfect people can be perfect. No matter how great the attributes of each other are, there will always be differences and areas of lack. But in Christ, there are true perfect matches. When our love is based on His grace and His hope, He is able to fill every imperfection and keep our love and our joy strong.

Those of you who are single should have good expectations for your future spouse. But, your expectations for your spouse should always be a degree less compared to what you will give to your spouse. Your desire and ability to love should always be greater than your desire to receive. And in the end, your contentment must be anchored in the Lord. No person will ever be able to fulfill every area of your heart or your soul; otherwise that person would be replacing God.

Why This Message?

I feel God put this message on my heart because He wants this community to start out on the right foot. God desires us to have healthy expectations in Him. God desires us to experience freedom to love and invest in each other without fear of being hurt. God desires for us to not put our expectation and our hope solely in others here, but in what God is doing in our lives and in this community. Just like your spouse will not be perfect and may let you down at times, the pastors and leaders here are not perfect either and will make mistakes. We are not perfect! Our mistakes or flaws should not cause you to want to run away; rather they should be cause for you to pray for us. Your commitment here is not based on man's performance, but on God directing you and His Spirit giving you peace to be here.

This community will be a place of safety and committed love not based on the superficial and not held back by fear. There will be strong friendships with people that at first glance you would not have expected to connect deeply with. There will be marriages in this house that will be safe and committed, selfless and free. All of these friendships and relationships will be grounded in God's grace.

This sermon was titled **Joy** and Expectation. The first fruit of the spirit is love, and what follows love is joy. **This will be a community of joy because the basis of our love is in our hope and expectation in God.** When love is based on the Lord and not on man, it is a pure love. Pure love releases safety and evokes unshakable joy. The basis of our love here is in our hope and expectation in God. He will never fail us!

Please turn in your Bibles with me to Ephesians 3:14-22...

Ephesians 3:14-22 – For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may

dwelling in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. **Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think** according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

As I invite the praise team up here, I want us to take a moment and reflect on our expectations for this church and for your future.

Are there any disappointments or fears or unhealthy expectations on man that you must lay down?

Declare that the basis of your love is God's unfailing grace. We must trust in the One who will never fail us. Then our joy will be unshakable.