

“Gospel Medicine”

Proverbs 17:24

by Steven T. Norris

Ecclesia Baptist Church

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Good morning, Ecclesia!

Haven't asked it in a while - Where have you seen Ecclesia lately?

I've got something to tell you this morning:

It's Good News!

I need your help here.

Christ is Risen!

He is risen, indeed.

Some of you thought Easter was over last Sunday.

The Cadbury Eggs are gone

The Peeps have been eaten

The eggs found.

Oh no.

We're just getting started.

Easter is a season that runs for 50 days from Easter to _____ (Pentecost)

Throughout the season on Lent,

we spent a lot of time looking at one of the most difficult books of the Bible

The book of Lamentations

It was so heavy, and depressing,

And yet, I think it resonated with a lot of us because that's where we are.

We need to hear the rest of the story.

We need some Good News, don't we, Ecclesia?

Let's take a look at our scripture for this morning:

It's from the book of Proverbs.

Can I get a volunteer to read it loud for us?

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. (Proverbs 17:22)

Let me ask you this:

If you had to explain the Gospel to someone in 60 seconds, what would you say?

God loves you.

But because of your sin you are separated from God.

Jesus died so that you could be forgiven and spend eternity in heaven.

This is absolutely true.

I believe this with my whole heart.

But it's only part of the story.

You've heard me say it time and time again, Jesus' primary message was about what?

It starts with a "K"

The Kingdom of God.

Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

The Kingdom of God is like a treasure buried in a field

The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed

The Kingdom is like leaven

The Kingdom is like a man sowing seeds

The Kingdom is like a net thrown into the sea

The Kingdom is like a banquet

When is the Kingdom going to get here?

Trick question: it's already here.

In Jesus, the kingdom came bursting into the world.

In Jesus, heaven collided with earth.

As Jesus' people, we are called to embody the kingdom now.

To often, however, we live like, "This world is going to hell in a hand basket"

We've just got to get inside the safety of these walls and hold on till Jesus gets back.

Then, he will take us out of here.

No, Jesus, said, "The Kingdom is at hand" (Matthew 3:2)

Jesus said, "The Kingdom is near" (Matthew 10:7)

Jesus said, "The Kingdom is within you" (Luke 17:21)

Now, it will not be fully here until Jesus returns, but it is already breaking in.

Jesus said something else about the kingdom:

"Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Mark 10:15 ESV)

A few observations about children and the kingdom:

You don't have to teach children how to play - it's what they do.

(Maybe there are a few exceptions to this, but by and large this is true)

Kids naturally play.

They aren't self-conscious.

They don't really care about how appropriate it is or not.

They don't typically care if someone else is looking or not.

For example, this past Friday, we out to dinner with the Hutchinson's

At first, our kids were a little shy, but they soon warmed up to each other.

By the end of the night, Elijah and Elli Grace were playing,
running around the table,

under the table,
taking pictures on the ipPone
throwing a hat back and forth
laughing and giggling

They were doing what comes natural to kids.

Now, compare that with our last Dawnings meeting.

I asked some folks in our church what they loved to do -
you know, the kind of thing that they could seemingly lose track of time doing
because they loved it so much.

Almost everything they mentioned was related to play of some sort
beach, camping, playing music, etc.

And yet...

And yet, almost every single person said something like
“Yeah, but I don’t do that anymore. There’s just not enough time.”
We’ve scheduled this natural tendency of play right out of our lives.

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Another thing you don’t have to teach most children is how to laugh.

If you hang around children for very long, it’s one of the things that is so endearing.

Just hearing children laugh and giggle at things that tickle their funny bone,
(will make your day).

I absolutely listening to my kids laugh.
They do it all the time.

Did you know that according to one study I read children laugh on average
about 300 times per day,

while adults laugh about 15 times per day?

As a famous villain from the Batman franchise once said,

“Why so serious?”

Other studies have identified the medical benefits of laughter.

From the Cancer Treatment Centers of America:

Physical Benefits of laughter:

- Boost the immune system and circulatory system
- Enhance oxygen intake
- Stimulate the heart and lungs
- Relax muscles throughout the body
- Trigger the release of endorphins (the body’s natural painkillers)
- Ease digestion/soothes stomach aches
- Relieve pain
- Balance blood pressure

- Improve mental functions (i.e., alertness, memory, creativity)

Laughter has also been shown to reduce stress, improve sleep, strengthen relationships, make you more attractive, help defuse conflict, and generally contribute to a better quality of life

The medical benefits are becoming more and accepted to the point that
There is now such a thing as laughter therapy.

People literally get together and laugh on a regular basis.
Imagine walking by a room of people
- all they are doing is laughing hysterically

Even call in to a laugh hotline just to laugh for 20 minutes.
I'm not making this stuff up.

I truly believe that one of the secrets to a good marriage
is the regular habit of laughing together

This is something Michelle says all the time.

"I think that one of your chief goals in life is to make me laugh."
and she is right.

Silly voices, inside jokes, inappropriate humor - I love to make her laugh.

I can't tell you how sad it makes me when I talk to couples
and I ask them when do they just laugh together -
and they can't come up with anything.
This grieves me.

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

You don't have to teach a kid to dance.

They may not do it well, but you don't have to teach them.
Turn on some music and most kids will dance.

But we Baptists, we'll train it right out of 'em.

You shouldn't dance because it leads to all those other sins.
It's like a gateway sin.

So Michelle and I couldn't have our wedding reception at the church
because we wanted to have dancing and that was against their policy.

When was the last time to let it go and just danced?

It doesn't have to be in front of other people, maybe just at home.

When was the last time you allowed yourself to get silly?

When was the last time you played?

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” (Mark 10:15 ESV)

Ecclesia, I really believe that we need a good dose of this kind of Gospel Medicine this Easter season.

We need to remember to laugh again as a congregation.

We need to remember to play again.

We need to remember to dance.

We need to recapture the joy that comes from life in the Holy Spirit.

We need to recapture a spirit of celebration, not one of defeat.

Too many of us are living “dried up” lives

we’ve allowed our spirits to be crushed by circumstances

by hardships

by trials

by disappointments

by failures

We need to pray, as Psalm 51 teaches:

“Restore to us the joy of our salvation”

Christians should be the most joyful people on the planet,

Christians should throw to the best parties.

We, of all people, have every reason to celebrate.

We have been redeemed

We have been forgiven

We have been restored in our relationship with God

We get to experience the Kingdom now - right here - with one another

We have been adopted into this great family of God

We have been filled with the Holy Spirit

and the fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

Folks, it’s time to Get this Party Started!

A joyful heart is good medicine but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Over the next few weeks, we are going to look at what the Bible has to say about joy:

Joy that is not based on our circumstances

Joy that connects us with all of creation

Joy that is manifest in love toward one another

Joy that doesn’t care what others think, but is willing to be completely undignified for God

Joy that fills us with gratitude and thanksgiving to God.

I hope that you will join us over the next few weeks

I hope that you will be willing to get a little silly with us

I hope that you will let your hair down and join the party.

In fact, I encourage you to throw a few parties of your own
parties that lift high the Savior,
that Celebrate life,
and proclaim to the world:

Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed!

(Intro to The table:)

Christ has given us this table.

 This place of remembrance.

 This place of belonging.

 This place where we are reminded that on the cross

 He took our sin upon himself

 He bore our griefs

 He bore our illness

 He bore our shame and our guilt

 And he replaced it with love

 forgiveness

 acceptance

 healing

 joy

 celebration

On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus took bread...

So, Come to the table of healing

 Come to the table of joy

 Come, exchange your shame for Christ's righteousness

 Come, exchange your sorrow for Christ's joy

 Come, exchange your sickness for Christ's healing

 Come, exchange your pain for Christ's comfort

Come.

Let us bow together and pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray, saying:

 Our father...