

Filled with Joy

When we are facing uncertainty we tend to look to the past or the future instead of remaining in the present. Let's digest today's texts to illustrate this.

Regarding the past, we learn in Isaiah that the Hebrew people were rescued from Egypt. God made a way for them through the sea, a path through the mighty water. Egyptian chariots and horses were not able to pass through the mighty water.

In the Gospel of John, we learn about how Jesus raised Lazarus after he had been dead for an extended time. Jesus' response to Lazarus' death was emotional, indicating human relationship.

In the passage from Philippians, Paul tells about his past- his Hebrew background, his pedigree being the tribe of Benjamin. He tells about his past zeal for persecuting the church.

Our own thoughts about the past may include what God has done for us. They likely include our own good and bad memories, maybe even trauma that is stored in our bodies. When we consider our relationship with God, the past is who we were before Christ.

We focus on the future. Isaiah reminds us to forget the former things; do not dwell in the past. "See, I'm doing a new thing." God will still show up and provide, it just may not be the way he has in the past. God is creative and can do anything.

In the story from John, the perfume symbolizes Jesus' death. Judas is so concerned with money that he just doesn't get it; he will betray Jesus.

In Philippians, Paul writes about becoming like Jesus in death, attaining goals he has set for himself.

Our futures are unknown. This often means worries and anxieties, but also hopes and dreams, and it may mean achieved goals. Sometimes we get too focused on a brighter future- like we won't be happy and content until x, y, or z happens, or until we have x, y, or z.

The present is where joy is. Here again, resting in Jesus in our current circumstances.

Isaiah says, “I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” God is telling us that He provides water and gives drink to his people.

Our story from John tells about the importance of spending time eating with Jesus. Mary worships and honors Jesus by washing his head and feet with perfume. She is not worrying about tomorrow or money. She knows it is the time to just enjoy Jesus’ presence.

The message in Philippians is that the past doesn’t matter; it is loss. Paul talks about what he has gained knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. He reminds his readers to “press on toward the goal to win the prize.”

We should recognize what God is doing now. We should ask to see and hear Him. This happens through signs, nature, and coincidences. We need to take time to be in relationship with Him through Bible, prayer, and worship. We can make an action plan and take steps.

As you remain in the present you become more joyful, the kind of joy that the Holy Spirit fills you with.