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Where Does True Joy Come From?
John 4:27-42
August 31st, 2014, Jeff Germon

Ruth and I spent most of our vacation this summer around Campbell River, with the exception of three days at Alert Bay on Cormorant Island we didn't leave Campbell River. It was great. I did a lot of fly fishing on the river. We've given quite a bit of fish away, but our freezer still well stocked for the winter, and we also canned a bunch of jars. We are happily becoming Campbell Riverites.

On one of my mornings on the river I was contentedly fishing, catching lots of fish, when I noticed something shiny and pink on a rock in the river. It was a very nice fly. I stood there for a while, looking at the fly and wondering if I should try to rescue it, not knowing if it was too far out of my reach. Well, it turns out that it was. I bent over and slowly stretched my arm down trying to feel for this fly and then I noticed that the little fly pack I had on my chest filled with water, and my fly fishing vest was also submerged, so I reluctantly gave up my pursuit of the shiny thing, emptied my chest pack of water and continued to fish for a couple hours.

After I was finished I cleaned my catch and started to walk back to the truck and tried to call Ruthie. I emphasize "tried" because my phone, unbeknownst to me had marinated in river water in my vest pocket for the last couple hours. I posted my conundrum on Facebook and several people suggested I stick it in rice for a few days and see if it would dry out and remedy itself. I tried that for a couple weeks to no avail. I learned a few things from that very expensive experience. Firstly, marinating your cell phone in water for two hours is not recommended. Avoid this practice.

Another thing I learned is that when I am fishing I shouldn't get distracted from what I am doing. While I was fishing I was feeling quite contented, and joyful. There is something very satisfying and therapeutic about being in God's creation and throwing your line out in hopes that a fish will take it. I don't really know what it is. I just know that after a couple hours on the river I feel better than when I started. And then there is the feeling of exhilaration when you feel a fish tug on your line. For those of you who enjoy fishing you know what I mean.

Now, it might be ok to scavenge for shiny things if I am prepared for it, but when I am fishing I need to focus on fishing, otherwise it's just an expensive distraction. The joy is in the fishing.

Jesus taught the disciples a similar lesson in John 4, not about fishing, but about being distracted from the job he's given us to do.

Let me set the scene for you. This passage is very well known to many of you. It's his encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Jesus had been in Jerusalem with his disciples and John 2 says that they left Jerusalem and headed to the hills in Judea for a while. They were preaching the good news of the kingdom of God with great success and baptizing lots of people, so much so that it seems as though John the Baptist's disciples started to get jealous and told John that Jesus and his disciples were out-baptizing them. "More people are going to Jesus than to you", they said. And John, of course, was not disturbed by this at all. As a matter of fact he said that this is the way it had to be. He must become less and Jesus must become greater. This was God's plan.

Jesus, though, heard that John's disciples were jealous and didn't want to get in the way so he took his disciples from Judea up to Galilee and on the way had to pass through Samaria. Now normally, Jews would not travel through Samaria because they thought the Samaritans were unclean and despicable. They would walk miles out of their way to avoid anywhere Samaritans were.

Think about the situation between the Palestinians and the Jews today. It was very similar relationship that the Jews of old had with the Samaritans. They hated each other.

But, Jesus took his disciples right through Samaria and into a village centre where the well was. He sat down at the well while his disciples went off to buy some food.

Soon after this a Samaritan woman happened by and Jesus struck up a conversation with her. Now, there are a number of odd things about Jesus talking with this woman. She had a lot of strikes against her. She was a Samaritan, she was a woman, and she had lived an immoral life. She was not the kind of person a respectable Jewish man would want to be seen chatting with. Jesus disregards all of those social mores because he had a divine appointment with her. There was something greater at stake here than his reputation. There was the life and eternal destiny of a woman, and a whole bunch of people in the village that God loved so much that Jesus would soon die to save. So Jesus set aside any thought of his reputation and talks to this woman and eventually reveals to her that he is the Messiah. And then we pick it up at verse 27 of chapter 4.

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John 4:27–42 (NLT)

27 Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, “What do you want with her?” or “Why are you talking to her?” 28 The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone, 29 “Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?” 30 So the people came streaming from the village to see him. 31 Meanwhile, the disciples were urging Jesus, “Rabbi, eat something.”

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32 But Jesus replied, “I have a kind of food you know nothing about.” 33 “Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other. 34 Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. 35 You know the saying, ‘Four months between planting and harvest.’ But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest.

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36 The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! 37 You know the saying, ‘One plants and another harvests.’ And it’s true. 38 I sent you to harvest where you didn’t plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest.”

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39 Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” 40 When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, 41 long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. 42 Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.”

I want to bring out a few things from this section.

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Go back up to the part where the disciples come back and ask Jesus to eat something. It was a perfectly normal request. There was nothing wrong with what they said. Likely they had been walking all day. They were all exhausted and hungry. What’s wrong with asking Jesus to eat something? His response very naturally confused them. ***“I have a kind of food you know nothing about.”***

33 “Did someone bring him food while we were gone?” the disciples asked each other.

Now, you gotta admit that you would be a little baffled by how Jesus responds if you were the disciples. What’s really going on here? Look at what Jesus says next.

34 Then Jesus explained: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work.

Yes, Jesus was physically hungry. And there is nothing wrong with eating. As a matter of fact eating is kind of important. Jesus took this opportunity to teach his disciples a very important lesson.

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The eternal is of far greater importance than the temporal.

Jesus wasn’t telling his disciples that they did anything wrong. He wasn’t trying to shame them. He used this teaching moment to let them know that these people, who the Jews would normally despise, are of infinite value and it is worth the risk of reputation, embarrassment and even some discomfort if there is a possibility that someone will find Jesus and be saved. That is worth everything.

Each of us has neighbours who are infinitely loved by God so much so that Jesus gave up his life so they could have theirs. We have colleagues, classmates, friends and family who don’t know Jesus. God is at work around us setting up divine appointments with people around us.

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And what Jesus is saying is that **it is worth the risk of embarrassment, reputation and discomfort to reach out and love those people God has placed us around.**

Again, it’s not like the disciples did anything wrong by going and buying food, but Jesus said there is something more important than these temporal things. We can easily be distracted from what is really important in life by survival. We have to earn a living. We have to eat. We have to take care of our families. We have to make sure that we are excelling at our jobs and at school, that the bills are paid, and that we have adequate savings for retirement. All of these things are important and

should not be minimized, but we can get so busy trying to survive and keep our noses above water that we forget what is really important, that there are those around us who don't know Jesus and we might be the conduit through which he wants to reveal himself.

And here's the deal. Look at what Jesus says in verse 34.

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34 Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work."

Jesus said that his satisfaction, his meaning in life, his nourishment comes from doing what God called him to do. As important as it is to eat and earn a living and take care of our retirement, and rest, and have fun, and all those other things, they do not ultimately satisfy like investing in the life of someone who needs Jesus. And then he makes it personal. Look at what he says.

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35 You know the saying, 'Four months between planting and harvest.' But I say, wake up and look around. The fields are already ripe for harvest. 36 The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! 37 You know the saying, 'One plants and another harvests.' And it's true. 38 I sent you to harvest where you didn't plant; others had already done the work, and now you will get to gather the harvest."

What Jesus is saying here is that just like he received satisfaction from living out the purposes of his Father, so can we. God built us for something greater than we can ever imagine. ***"Wake up! Look around you,"*** he says. There is lots to do. God is working all around us he is setting up divine appointments for us.

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Don't get distracted by temporal things. And again, he's not saying that we shouldn't eat or earn a living or take care of our families or make sure that we have sufficient funds to retire. He is simply saying make sure that they don't distract us from what is really important. Keep your eyes open to what God is doing around you. Love your neighbour in practical ways. You were put on this earth to love - period. That is what life is all about. If we miss that we miss everything. We have wasted our lives.

And here is the most exciting part. Jesus says in verse 36 that this is where true joy comes from. First he said that he gets his satisfaction and nourishment from doing what his Father sent him to do and then he says the same thing holds true for us.

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What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike! We are duped into believing that joy comes from temporal things. We are duped into a meaningless existence when we think that happiness comes from shiny things or stockpiling our savings accounts, or fame. Those things are distractions. ***"Look around you,"*** Jesus says. True joy is there for the taking if you will just do what God created you for in the first place, and that is to love the people around you.

It makes good sense doesn't it, that joy would come from living the life that God created us for. We were created for eternal things - relationships. There is nothing that brings me more joy than knowing that God is using me for the purposes he created me for.

While I was on vacation the church received a financial gift from someone who had been saving for a car. I don't know who it was, but the note basically said, "I was saving for a car, but felt like the work of the kingdom through what God is doing at CRBC is more important right now." Enclosed was a gift of \$10,000. What a great eternal investment.

In closing let's take a quick look at *The Parable of the Talents*, because this is Jesus' message in this parable. He is basically asking, what are you investing your life in?

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Matthew 25:14–30 (NLT)

14 "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. 15 He gave five bags of silver to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip."

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16 "The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. 17 The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. 18 But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money. 19 "After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money."

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20 The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.' 21 "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my

good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!' ²² "The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.'

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²³ "The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

That was the New Living Translation. The ESV, instead of **"Let's celebrate together!"** says **"Enter into the joy of your master."**

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In other words, **true joy, meaning, satisfaction, fulfilment, purpose, or whatever else you want to call it, the thing that everyone of us longs for is only ours when we are doing the thing that God created us to do and that is to love those around us by helping them see Jesus in us.**

"Look around you," Jesus said in John 4. "There is lots for you to do too. And we need more workers. Pray that God will raise them up. True joy awaits those who are willing to give themselves to the great cause, the kingdom of God."

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We are never more fully alive than when we are doing what God created us to do. That is, in a big part, what it means to be made in his image. We are the imago dei, the image of God. That is where our joy, fulfillment and satisfaction comes from. Everything else is a mirage.

Last week at our baptism service at Mclvor Lake Dale said, "This is what it's all about." We have had over twenty people this summer take a step of faith and follow Jesus into the waters of baptism, publicly declaring that they are one of his and there will be no turning back. It was a thrill to see people come forward as we called out to the crowd.

God has been at work at CRBC. He is still at work and he is never going to stop working. Our job is to do what Jesus did with the Samaritan woman. Open our eyes. Look around us and watch what God is doing and then join him. Trust me. He has just begun to work. We are going to see more of God's blessings as we submit to his leadership in our lives, both as individuals and corporately. And that is where true joy and satisfaction comes from.