



***“I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.”
Joel 2:28***

A preacher asked a woman I know to teach a Bible Study at his church. He hoped it would be appropriate, as congregations all over the world were inviting her to speak. He made sure she knew, however, that he did not believe that women should teach in the church.

She told me that he sat in the front row during Bible study but kept his head turned toward the audience to see what their reaction would be to a woman minister. Frankly, he seemed to be the only person with an “issue.” Once he felt assured that people were listening and participating with enthusiasm, he started doing likewise.

At the end of the evening he approached the preacher and asked her if this was the kind of thing she’d been doing all over the world. “Yes!” she replied. “Well, this is powerful,” he admitted. “If you keep this up you might even make me change my mind about women preachers.” She graciously assured him that it was not up to her to make him change his mind; that was the Lord’s business.

Isn’t it wonderful that God doesn’t discriminate? He uses men, women, boys, and girls to carry His message and minister to people. He uses everyone who is willing to carry His gospel with humble joy. So, tell me, right here and right now are you willing? Are you carrying His message; sharing your faith with a sense of joy in your heart?

I remember back when I attended Vacation Bible School for the first time. We learned a lot of really cool songs that week, but the one that stuck with me was the “Down in My Heart” song. You know the one that goes:

*I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart,
I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,
Down in my heart, (where?)
Down in my heart to stay.*

Over and over again we would sing the words louder and louder making it as full and as complete as we possibly could. Making sure that everyone in our midst would hear them and even join in the fun and excitement of singing them.

But I don't hear too much of that joy lately – I don't hear people shouting about the joy of the Lord – the joy of faith in their lives – and encouraging others to join in the fun and the excitement of that news. Life is serious, unknown, frightening even. There seem to be so many unanswered questions and problems that seem to surround us; so much just hanging there keeping our joy at bay.

Well maybe today is a good day to remember that our Lord in no way discriminates and that he is truly in need of all of us to share the news of his exciting message. Maybe today is the day to take a step toward renewing that sense of joy in our hearts. Maybe it's time to do some cleaning and sorting. Maybe it's time to put our doubt and hesitation aside and to turn our attention to the only one who can restore our hope and bring back our joy.

I suspect we all have things that need to be let go of – things that we need to discard. Things that keep us from sharing our faith and the excitement of our Lord; from truly living with His love in our hearts. Think about it within your own life. When is the last time you truly felt that sense of humble joy in your heart? The last time you shared your faith with a sense of gladness – proclaimed the hope and promises of a God who continues to love you unconditionally.

Our God calls each and every one of us within the realities of our lives to share His message. He shows no discrimination only the desire for us to spread His word with a sense of conviction and true joy.

So that being said, I would like to encourage you to take some time and to honestly think about your own life. Where is that sense of joy? More importantly are you living with it in your heart? Just how is your Lord using you? Are you carrying His gospel – His word – His love to those who you find in your midst? Do you realize just how blessed you are? And perhaps most importantly, is there a deep sense of joy within your heart due to those blessings?

Someone told me a long time ago, **“True joy is the greatest and the best gift of God that we can share – it's the key to opening hearts – bridging fences – and most importantly spreading His word. With joy in our heart we can do anything – accomplish anything.”** My friends, truer words were never spoken!!

Prayer:

**Gracious and loving God,
Please use me today to share the joy of belonging to you.
Amen**