

Unnoticed Joy

STUDY QUESTIONS

Lent 2/Easter 2022 (3 - 30 April)



Our Lenten Daily Worship has been divided into two parts. The first part of our study during the month of March engages with our [Restless Souls](#), exploring the idea that we are citizens of heaven with eternity written in our hearts. In these readings we are seeking to minister to the feelings of stress and anxiety that so many of us have had to deal with during the past two years.

Our scripture passages this month seek to help us discover responses of love and hope that will strengthen our faith and give us cause to believe that our restlessness can be used to turn us into active participants bringing about a more generous and just society; a restlessness in pursuit of the joy Jesus speaks of in John 16: 21-24, about the joy that comes through pain.

Augustine – the great Christian thinker, philosopher and Bishop of the 4th century – speaking to God wrote, “You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” So in our March reflections while we wrestle with so much uncertainty, we long to encounter the rest that Augustine speaks of which brings us joy. First we may have to travel through the wilderness like the Children of Israel, or discover that we each have our time like shooting stars living to the praise of his glory, or like a mother in childbirth, we must travel through the pain to enter into the joy.

Part two invites us to consider God’s new thing! The eternal cost borne by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit to redeem humanity. In seeking to bring peace to our restless

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God has displayed his amazing love for us. During the month of April, in part two, we trace the journey that God the Son has made in becoming one of us in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. We reflect upon the joy that sustained his ministry, through the presence of God the Holy Spirit and the love of God the Father.

During Holy Week as we read and enter the story of our redemption, the road of sorrow, shame and betrayal he chose to travel for us, we find ourselves broken at the foot of the cross. It is there in our brokenness that somehow we get a glimpse of the joy that awaits us in our healing. Evil can never outdo the power of the cross to redeem the restless hearts of a lost and broken humanity or a broken individual.

Peace leading into joy then becomes the dominant theme from Easter Sunday onwards. In a short sub-theme we begin to use the empty tomb to speak to us of the peace that goes unnoticed before us in our everyday lives: ending up with the thought of the unnoticed Saviour. Mary mistakes the identity of Jesus only to find her joy is lifted to another plane as she is reminded of the true identity of Jesus. His time had come to ascend to the Father. Yet he would not leave them comfortless. Joy would be made complete by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Lenten study comes to an end by focusing our attention on the call of the Christian to be ready to give a reason for the hope that lies with us. To be aware that we are treading on Holy ground and that the veil between heaven and earth is thinner than we might ever imagine. We are called to look up and see heaven's open door. To look up in expectancy for the coming of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to transform our restless hearts into hearts stilled by the peace and joy knowing that heaven is our destination.

Let's take time to notice the joy.

These discussion questions adapt our monthly themes for small Connect Groups or personal Bible study (look up the [Unnoticed Joy Resource Pack PDF](#) for more information on this month's theme). The questions are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme. They are offered as a guideline and there is no need to go through all the given questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose, or adapt to what interests you or your group.

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Part 1: When Sorrow and Joy Go Unnoticed

The passages below point to the ultimate joy of knowing that God is doing a new thing, pointing to the joy of his coming kingdom. Sorrow and pain are for a season, but the steadfast love of God endures, outlasting pain and sorrow.

Read Isaiah 43: 18-19

God's new thing.

Why is it important on occasions to look more to the future than the past?

Read Psalm 126

When sorrow turns to joy.

Can impossible good things happen after great sadness?

Read Romans 15: 5-13

Being filled with joy and peace.

What does it mean to 'overflow with hope'?

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Part 2: When Love Goes Unnoticed

These readings are picked out from a week that changed the history of the world. A week when Love went unnoticed. As people rooted in time we are often too blind to see the signs that point to another place. As a result we miss out on the eternal things.

Read Luke 19: 28-35

The Lord needs it.

Consider what the scene that day would have been like from the perspective of the owners of the colt.

What would they have made of what was going on? What would they have noticed?

Read Luke 19: 36-40

What was it they could not see?

Check out Zechariah 12: 10. What of the sorrow that John refers to in his prologue John 1: 10-13?

How easy do you think it is to have religious eyes that are blind?

Read John 13: 3-17

The betrayer at the table.

How sad to be so close, yet so far away from Jesus. In our actions and activities can we sit at table with Jesus but still misunderstand and become a betrayer?

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Part 3: When Peace Goes Unnoticed

Our weekly selection of passages invite us to reflect on what happens when peace is overlooked in the midst of fear. So then what of Joy waiting in the wings knowing fear has been defeated?

Read John 20: 1-2

The unnoticed peace of an empty tomb.

The Prince of Peace had arisen but no one noticed. Do we wait long enough to read the room, encounter the peace, or do we jump to conclusions?

Read John 20: 3-10

The unnoticed headwear.

What do we learn about the Prince of Peace from the folded head cloth? Why did it go unnoticed by John?

Read John 11: 11-20 & Hebrew 12: 1-3

The joy that flows from the peace.

Mary running to tell the disciples and us running the race that has been set forth for us!

What can we gain from reading these two passages side by side?

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Part 4: When Heaven Goes Unnoticed

Taking into account the unexpected power and presence of the Spirit of God that brings protection and insight in times of great trouble and persecution. The readings for this week remind us that discipleship is not for the faint hearted. Yet it is often to the fainthearted that God appears in order that his glory can be revealed.

Read Acts 5: 27-32

The Peace, the Presence, the Power.

Do you think the presence of heaven is sometimes closer to us in our speech than we ever imagine?

Read Revelation 3: 19-22

Standing at the door.

There is an unnoticed caller at the church door. It's time to open up to the one standing knocking. It's time to let Jesus into the Church.

What would happen if we did?

Read Genesis 18: 1-8

The heavenly visitors.

Here's a thought: should restless souls have joy filled hearts because heavenly visitors may move among us unnoticed? (See 2 Kings 6: 15-17.)