

Title: **Life . . . Light . . . Joy!**
Text: **Acts 5:17-42**
Date: **January 21, 2024**

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Big Idea

Our lives play out in the shadow of death. It's ironic. And tragic. We all want to be free from its sway. We all want to come out from under its dark cloud. Light is breaking in Jesus at the cross. There is life to be had. There is joy unshakeable. But if we are to truly lay hold of it, we must first be willing to accept (and admit!) some harder things about ourselves. God help us!

1. Life

We're all going to die. I wonder how many of us have really squared with this brutal and unapologetic fact? This life is lived as a man fighting to keep his head above the waves. And we all know: in the end, the waves win. We can try to deny it or distract ourselves away from it. But we can't escape it.

We blame death on many things: old age, bad luck, cancer, too much sun, too much loneliness, too much red meat, failing health, etc. But how many of us are prepared to trace it down to the root and finally admit: we die ultimately because of the anger and wrath of God against our sin?! Why are our days numbered? Because our God is holy . . . and we are not.

But these apostles have good news to share. The angel calls them to "speak to the people all the words of this Life" (Acts 5:20). These are the words concerning Jesus—both his death and resurrection (Acts 5:30-31). Jesus is shifting the context of our lives (from death to life!), he's changing the backdrop, he's rewriting the soundtrack . . . because he's lifted the curse, he's removed the wrath, he's defeated death, and he's making us alive!

2. Light

Jesus was raised up alive forevermore at early dawn (Luke 24:1). And here these apostles are preaching "all the words of this Life" at early dawn (Acts 5:21). A new day has arrived. Morning's light is breaking

in. And many are responding to that light, opening to it. But others, like these religious leaders here, would rather still sit in darkness. They draw the curtains shut. They deadbolt the door. They aren't welcoming the truth of the gospel. They are threatened by it.

But all of this begs the question: If everyone of us is struggling with life playing out in the shadow of death, and Jesus offers a way out, a way to break free—when the truth of that first "dawns" on us, why don't we all leap at the chance to let it in? Why don't we receive it like the gift that it is with great gratitude and joy? Why would we rather nurse our wounds in the darkness than find healing in the light?

The old Puritan, Richard Sibbes, can help: *"It were an easy thing to be a Christian, if religion stood only in a few outward works and duties, but to take the soul to task, and to deal roundly with our own hearts, and to let conscience have its full work, and to bring the soul into spiritual subjection unto God, this is not so easy a matter, because the soul out of self-love is loath to enter into itself, lest it should have other thoughts of itself than it would have."*

3. Joy

David Powlison, commenting on Richard Sibbes' words quoted above says that, while to some his words seem to be a "depressing insult," to others they are *"a doorway into unexpected joys."* Why *"unexpected joys"*? Because you finally come out of hiding and you own up to the junk of who you really are . . . and you find, to your great surprise, you're not rejected for it (as you had feared), but instead you're welcomed and accepted and forgiven and loved . . . back to life!



Reflection Questions

- Would you say that you've honestly squared with the fact that you are going to die? Are you tempted to try to deny it or at least to distract yourself away from it? Why do you think?
- Read the quote from Sibbes above again. What do you think he means? Do you agree with his assessment? How have you seen this playing out in others? How have you seen it playing out in yourself?
- Read Acts 5:41 carefully. What in this verse encourages, convicts, or confuses you? What do you make of this joy? Have you ever known anything like this? How can Jesus help?

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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.

FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

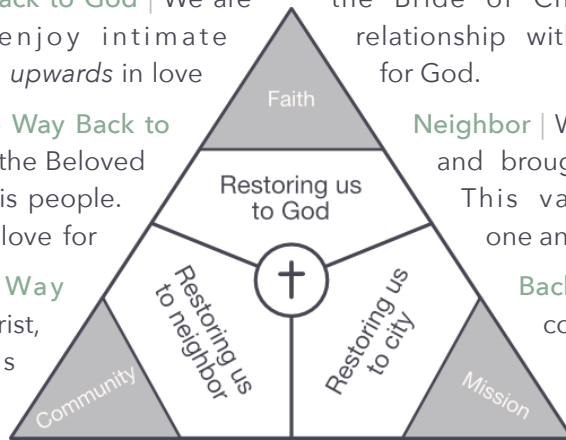
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

All Church Prayer - Tonight!

Prayer is the start of everything good (Acts 1:14). It is the death of self-reliance and the lifeline of faith. It is the moving of our eyes outward and upward. It is the stretch of our empty hands towards a Father rich in mercy. As a church we prioritize this regular prayer meeting because of our deep-seated conviction that, while man can plant and water, it is only God who can cause the growth (1 Cor. 3:7).

This Sunday's prayer meeting will held in-person at 6:00pm at the Wilson Residence.

Scan the QR code below to learn more!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

Short-Term Missions Interest Form!

Prayer Village Sign Up - Last Call!

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Or find it online at mercyhillchurch.org/communications-hub.