

Who doesn't want to find joy in life? Everyone does. Fact is, most people have no idea how to get it. Many think being self-indulgent will make them happy. It feels good for a while,

but in the long run, it feels rather empty. Others think financial success or having the right "stuff/address/job" will give them the status that will make them feel good. People tend to like them for their stuff and that doesn't make for strong relationships OR lasting happiness. Some think they will find "real life" in doing something exciting or dangerous that will give them the adrenaline rush they crave. But that all gets old after a while. So where does that deep sense of inner joy come from? How does one get it? Jeremiah has a clue for us...

Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart... (Jeremiah 15:16)

The metaphor of eating God's truth brings to mind the actions of eating: taking a bite, chewing it up, swallowing it, digesting it and being nourished by it. Taking the Word and making it part of what sustains our very lives will give us joy. This is the example Jeremiah set for us all.

So what do I want you to "chew on" this week? How about this passage that Paul wrote to the people in Rome. He is very direct, writing imperatives for the people to follow.

Romans 12:9-21

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

So chew on this for a while. Notice it is for us to be generous and good, serving all the people in one's life, not just the ones we like and who like us back. Also note that this is how the community is supposed to act toward the wider community, not only individuals one to another. Living in peaceful harmony with all is bound to bring joy in life.

I must say a word about verse 20. It may be one of the most misunderstood verses of the Bible. Having burning coals heaped on your head sounds like punishment to us, but to the people in Jesus' day, it meant something entirely different. Remember in the story of the call of Isaiah, in a vision a burning coal was touched to his lips. It was a matter of purification and calling. When we are generous to our enemies we make it possible for them to receive a calling

from God. What a gift. That kind of giving really brings us joy!

blessings to you from Pastor Karla