



Looking out across Derwent from the bench at Friars Crag, Lake District

There is no greater Joy...

⁸ Though you have not seen him [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. **1 Peter 1:8-9**

In preparation for another summer in Norway, we've been thinking lots about *joy*, our theme for Discipleship Week. The Bible has a lot to say about joy, and there are many references to joy, gladness, delight, happiness, celebration and pleasure. One of our favourite references are the verses above. The believers, to whom Peter was writing had been facing *all kinds of trials* (v6). It is likely that persecution had played a big part in why they were now scattered across a wide area. Peter reminds them about their new birth into a living hope. He also explains how, through their trials, the proven genuineness of their faith might bring praise, glory and honour to Jesus. Then, Peter tells them that, though they had not seen Jesus, like he had, they love Him, believe in Him and are *filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy* (v8). That sounds like a pretty incredible joy, and it is linked to receiving *the end result of our faith, the salvation of our souls*. For Peter, joy is wrapped up in a deep knowledge of Jesus Christ, and a confident longing and expectation of His return. The picture presented of our eternal future in the New Heavens and the New Earth is one of everlasting joy. It is a joy rooted in the fact that we will spend eternity with the source of joy Himself. It is a joy rooted in the fact that, finally all things will be restored and made new. Everything in this life will pale in comparison with all that awaits us in the new Creation. One author writes: "We should thank God for every stream of joy in our lives while recognising that Christ is the ocean from which every stream flows."

As Christians, we should be some of the most joyful people around. However, there are things which rob us of this incredible joy. Firstly, we might think about our failure to understand what it means to live under grace. We come to salvation through grace, but then it is so easy to return to living by works. When we get stuck in legalism or licence it can leave us devoid of the joy that is ours in Christ. Grace matters, not just for our salvation, but for our sanctification! Secondly, we can be robbed of our joy as we go through trials and sufferings. We might think that joy and suffering are opposed to one another, but the New Testament writers urge us to instead consider our sufferings as pure joy. We are never promised that God will take away our sufferings, but there is a sense in which our joy is rooted in something, and someone beyond our circumstances. Thirdly, the Bible has much to say about how Scripture should be our joy, and heart's delight. In this respect, we are robbed of our joy when instead we find ourselves listening to the lies and falsehoods arising from the world around us. Finally, we can find ourselves robbed of joy when we chase after the lesser joys promised by the world around us. In contrast, the New Testament speaks at length about the joy of generosity and contentment. All these ways diminish our experience of an incredible joy, which in reality transcends them all.

Family & Ministry Update

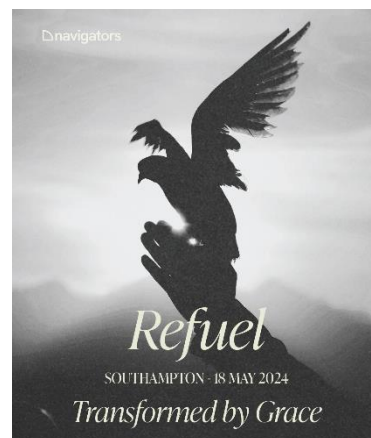
Paul speaks of how he continues with the Philippians for their *progress and joy in the faith* (Philippians 1:25-26). Our prayer is that we too would be motivated by the desire to see progress and joy in the faith of those we are working with. John writes: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth" (3 John 4). What a privilege, and delight it is to be involved in the lives of others! We continue to be involved in a portfolio of things which we trust are helping folk to continue walking with Jesus, and become more effective at helping others to do the same. Following our National Conference in March, many of these things now fall under our new City Collective remit. Essentially, the Navigators UK have reorganised by city, (rather than by region), and Steve is now the city leader for Southampton. We have begun gathering interested folk and are about to have our second meet up.

This year we have organised two Refuel days; one on "Identity in Christ", and one on "living and experiencing the grace of God". These fantastic opportunities have been well received, and there has been good synergy with other initiatives also. The Building to Last community has continued to meet online and we are drawing to the close of our *Far from Home* series



looking at lessons from the Babylonian exile.

Our Formation School cohort of twelve students is now coming to the end of their year. What an inspiring and encouraging group they've been. We love the opportunity to get close up to folk who are learning and growing rapidly in their faith. Our attention is now shifting towards those who might be involved in 2024-25.



You will know from our previous update that Debs has been enjoying a well-earned sabbatical since January. This is drawing to a close at the end of next month as we venture out on another Norwegian adventure (see our recent Prayer Update for more on that). It has been a good change of pace for her, as she thinks and prays through her various commitments. The rest aspect has also been particularly helpful, and she has enjoyed reading some good books along the way.

The kids are continuing to enjoy themselves in all their activities, sports clubs and church groups. The coming summer will involve lots of change for them. Ben is gearing up to enter year 11, whilst Naomi will be moving into year 9. Sam will be making the big jump of beginning secondary school. Jacob, meanwhile, will be entering his final year at primary school (year 6) whilst Aaron moves into year 4. The four oldest are back at their West Runton Dolphin Launchpad camp from 12-19 Aug.



Prayer Requests...

- **International Missions:** We currently have teams in Italy, Hungary & Slovakia. Please pray for safety, protection and a great team experience for all. Pray too for us as we continue to support long term partners also.
- **Formation School Southampton:** Please pray for the existing students (Mohsen, Rob, Lydia, Phoebe, Ruth, David, Julz, Madeleine, Miki, Daniel, Jusci & Kennedy) to finish well and for a great crop of new students applying to begin in September.
- **Southampton City Collective:** Having made a start in April, please pray for a growing sense of togetherness for those seeking to be alongsiders in the Southampton area. Pray especially for Gez and Simon serving on the City Collective team.
- **Speaking engagements:** Please pray for Steve who will be speaking at Above Bar East (7/7), Building to Last (12/7), Norway (28 Jul & 2 Aug) and Portswood Church (25/8) over the next couple of months.
- **Norway:** Please pray for a great time for the whole family in Norway this summer (25 Jul to 7 August). Pray for all joining us from around the world, and that we would each experience more of what Peter calls an *inexpressible and glorious Joy*.
- **Family transitions:** Please pray for Debs as she comes to the end of her sabbatical, and transitions out of this restorative period. Pray too for the kids making big changes at school this summer.

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