



Greater Joy
Part 6 – Boasting in Christ
Shay Robbins

Good morning, everyone. Welcome to Woodland Hills Family Church. My name is Shay Robbins; I'm a part of our teaching team. I come in from time to time, as you can tell from the technical difficulties. Do we have a talented team running around here? I cannot get over it. How does Matt Gumm move his head like that? I feel like he has a double-jointed neck or something.

We're excited to have you here for *Greater Joy* as we continue in our series. As a part of our service, we take an offering. Thank you for being joyful givers. Travis updated us on the four ways to give and I'm going to do the same here. We have offering boxes located in the back foyer. We have the Church Center App. You can also give online at woodhills.org. You can also text an amount to 84321. We'll actually know how relevant, hip, and cool you are based on which method of giving you use. So, no judgement, but we can learn a lot about you.

I also wanted to tell you that next Sunday, December 5, we're going to move our 10:00 am overflow from The Gathering Place back to The Chapel. We're filling back up at our 10:00 am. So, know that the outdoors will continue to be an opportunity for you to hang out. The weather looks fantastic for the next 10 days, so we'll be excited to see you out there.

Today, I am going to share on *Boasting in Christ*. Specifically, we're going to talk about the difference between self-righteousness and righteousness found in Christ.

I want to give you a little Thanksgiving update before we dive into our text. I spent the week with the in-laws. We had all the in-laws come to Branson, Missouri. We rented a VRBO and we piled in there. It could have gone horribly, but it was actually just a wonderful week. We had an awesome time together.

Then, this weekend, during youth hunting season, part two, I had two kids shoot a deer, so that was fun. Lulu and Knox both got a deer this weekend. Knox shot his first buck as a nine-year-old. You know, in the Ozarks, the way you determine how big your buck is? You count its points. Should we count them together? One, two... It's a two pointer. It doesn't matter. When you're nine years old and you shoot yourself your first buck, it seems like a wall-hanger. There's nowhere to go but up from here. That was pretty fun and we're super excited about that.

I want to just talk about this idea of self-righteousness. I want to share a story with you. A couple of weeks ago, I had a little bit of work to do that I was procrastinating on. I've been known to procrastinate. We live on the east side of Branson, over by Holiday Hills on a small farm off of T

Highway. We have a long, private, gravel drive that goes back into the woods. When visitors come over, I tell them, "Drive down the road until you feel like you're going to get shot and then just keep going." When you finally get to our house, it's just this quaint little drive, but it's a long gravel road and it's hilly. So, when we have torrential down-pours or the gully-washer as the Ozarkians call it, that gravel road gets rutted up and it becomes a nightmare. I'm constantly maintaining it, which is a little bit of work. I'm happy to do it, but I was kind of procrastinating. We had a good rain several weeks ago and the ruts were getting pretty bad.

My wife, when she loads the kids up and takes them to school in our swagger wagon, it's like they are going on a safari, you know what I mean? They are bouncing all over the place. And of course, there are Gold Fish just flying everywhere. Before they get out at school, I feel like they get up and then they just stomp the Gold Fish into the carpet and then they get out and go to school.

Anyway, my wife is nagging me. She's like, "Are you going to take care of the road?" I finally get out there and get our tractor... Old Blue... right dad? I got Old Blue out and I took the brush hog off and I backed up to our blade. Our three-point hitch, you've got to fight it just a little bit. So, I'm going around it and trying to get the blade and it's super heavy and tedious and I'm adjusting the right height on the three-point. I finally get it lined up and I look down at the blade and at the base of the blade is a rattle snake coiled up. It had been there the whole time. I was completely oblivious and unaware of the danger.

I tell you that story because when we talk about self-righteousness, it's something that can seep into our lives. It is a quiet, subtle danger. If we are unaware, it can strike and hurt us. Self-righteousness finds its way into some interesting places. It finds its way into 1) Good Christian homes, 2) Bible teaching churches, 3) Well meaning communities. So, you ask yourself, *How does that happen? Those are some of the most wholesome places there are on this earth.*

Self-righteousness is bred through a number of things. There are three overarching categories that I thought of. 1) Religion. A religion of dos and don'ts. 2) Social causes. 3) Worldviews. These are overarching, but then when we get more granular, you've got things like 4) Perfectionism. 5) Rule following. 6) Behavior modification. 7) The need to justify sin, which is probably the most significant on the entire list. The need to justify sin, I believe, is built in mankind. When we sin and the Spirit convicts us and we know that it is wrong, there is this desire that is woven into our nature that needs to justify that sin somehow. Self-righteousness, just simply boiled down, is justifying that sin on our own.

That's where we jump off into our text this morning. We start in Philippians 3. Paul gives us a charge and then a warning. His charge starts like this: **Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord!** Again, there's our theme. He's reminding us to rejoice in the Lord no matter what. And then he says, **It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.** In other words, he's warned the church about this before, but he says, "I'm going to learn you again." Here's how he phrases it and we're going to look at the entire text in the NIV, but with this specific passage, I pulled the NASB version because I like the language it uses. It says, **2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision...** Beware, beware, beware.

What had happened was that in this growing young church in the City of Philippi, there was a group of Judaizers. Judaizers were people who claimed to be Christians, but they were forcing people to not only believe in Christ, but also to add, to tack on, the 613 Old Testament Jewish laws as well as circumcision. Circumcision was an Old Testament covenant promise that God gave to his chosen people that they might be identified by it. And these Judaizers were saying that Jesus isn't enough; you need to do x, y, and z additionally in order to be saved. They were false teachers, and they were stirring up false doctrine that was drawing people off course.

And here's what Paul says. ***3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh...*** This phrase of circumcision, he's using it this way. He says we are the chosen people of God. You see, when the Old Testament was set up, it was 613 laws that were meant to show God's chosen people that they can't do it on their own. They can't be perfect, they can't be whole. They are sinners and they are broken and they have a desperate need of a Savior. That was the Old Testament. Testament simply means covenant or promise. So, when Jesus came, he established the New Testament or the new promise. Jesus came that he might fulfill the old law and be the long-awaited Messiah, and that established a new covenant where they were made righteous simply by way of faith in the Messiah.

As the church, we understand this. We understand that we are chosen and what that means is we serve God by his Spirit and we boast in Christ Jesus alone and we no longer put any confidence in our flesh or our in our ability to earn our way into heaven. With that understanding, how would it make its way into well-meaning homes and churches and communities? Well, in this narrative, there are two groups of people. The Judaizers represented a group of people who were self-appointed. In other words, they took all of these rules and added it on to religion. They took a stance of elevation and power. They self-appointed themselves. Then Paul says, "But we are the true circumcision and we've become that because we are chosen through Christ. It's the difference between being self-appointed and being chosen.

Now what God revealed to me as I was studying this text was that I can be guilty of making these subtle, little self-appointments to elevate myself. And when self-appointments go unchecked, they become self-righteousness. So, here's what a self-appointed attitude looks like. It is entitled, proud, unwilling to listen, critical of others, self-promoting, self-serving, and self-affirming.

Coming off of Thanksgiving, as you read through that list, you might see some family members faces flash in your mind's eye. Entitled – "Yeah, that 13-year-old and teenagers..." Then there's the proud – "Oh My father-in-law..." And then unwilling to listen – "My mother-in-law won't listen to anything." And critical of others – I can't think of anybody that fits that category. Self-promoting, self-serving, self-affirming.

As we read through these and if we are honest and take a self-reflective look at it, I have to be honest. These can be my attitudes. A healthy Christian lifestyle has to ask self-reflective questions and the question is this: "Lord, is this me?"

I want to break down some things that we ought to be aware of as we do self-reflection. I want you to think through your home, your workplace, your presence online, your attitude with your spouse, and look for these things. Here are a couple of warnings to be aware of:

1) Discontentment. What am I unhappy with? To be honest with you, over the last couple of weeks, this has been an issue for me. I've spent a lot of emotional energy thinking about the things that I don't have. And I've been discontented with parts of my life. Here's another one that popped up:

2) You're weighed down with the burden to always be right. So, you think about the house over Thanksgiving. It's filled with all of these people, these loving family members who gather with different faith origins, different political backgrounds, different opinions about the Corona virus pandemic, and these little conversations are taking place at the table and in the kitchen and over on the sofa. You overhear it and you think, *I need to get over there and tell them what's right. I need to educate these people. I have this burning desire to tell you what's true and what I think.* Guess what that is. It's self-righteousness, and we can all fall into that.

3) You're constantly telling yourself why you're right. I'm just going to put you on the spot. Raise your hand if you did that this week. That's called self-justification. We're all there, right? I talked about it earlier. We have this internal drive to justify our sin. We also, when we have the desire, that strong sense to always be right, in your head, you're going to have a conversation and you're going to convince yourself why you're right. In fact, you're going to have a conversation with other people who aren't present in your brain and you're going to tell them why you're right too. Well, guess what that is. It's self-righteousness. It's the very definition of what we're talking about.

4) Putting people down. There are three ways we do that. We put people down in our thoughts. That's pretty convicting. We put people down when we're with other people. So, when you are in a huddle over here with one or two people and you're telling them all the reasons why this person is wrong or foolish or a pain or selfish. And then the other time is when you use your position. That might be your role in your family or in your job or on your team or at your school. You put other people down and it makes you feel empowered and important. I have to be honest with you, as I read through this list, I think I'm guilty of all of them.

Here's what a chosen attitude looks like. It's humble, thankful, eager to listen, encouraging to others, content, joyful, and affirmed by the value of being adopted. Isn't that a great list? I read that list and I think to myself, *That's the way I want to live. That's the attitude I want to carry myself about with.* I think all these things, all these emotions and feelings and they all hinge on being chosen and sitting in that. Oh, by the way, every single one of you is chosen, all the time. In Christ, you have been chosen and these attitudes are yours to live out.

I was thinking about when I first asked Ashley out. When she said yes, I felt all of these things. And then about a month into our dating life, I asked her to be my girlfriend and she said yes again. Guess what? I felt all these things. When I got down on one knee and asked her to marry me and she said yes a third time, I felt all of these things. You know why I felt them. It's because she chose me.

Church, I want to remind you that you are not insignificant. You haven't been left behind. You're not ignored. You're not overlooked. God loves you and he is choosing you to be adopted into his family. Having been chosen, this is yours.

I want to jump back into Verse 4. It says, — **4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.** Paul is going to go back and say, “Here are all the reasons why I would have reason to boast in my Judaism.” He says, ***If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee...*** In other words, he was a purebred Jew who studied the scriptures, was elevated to the lofty position of Pharisee, was thought well of. **6 ...as for zeal...** He was well known for ***persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.*** He was blameless. In other words, people looked at him and they saw as close to perfection as could be. And he had earned this through blood, sweat, and tears, and had a lot to gain from it, frankly.

But here's what he says, **7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.** In other words, everything that Paul ever worked for, he had to give it up when he chose to follow Jesus. He left it all behind. **8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.**

I want to speak to two groups of people. The first is those of us who struggle with self-righteousness and self-appointment working its way into our life. The correction here is quite simple. 1) You are humble enough to admit that this is an issue with you. 2) You confess it to God and others if necessary. 3) You turn and run the other way. It's very simple. And I find myself practicing it on a daily basis. I think that's how we need to go about it because it's so invasive in our life.

On the other hand, I want to speak to the individual that perhaps couldn't care less about self-righteousness and has just completely embraced lawlessness. In a church this size and people watching online, there are plenty of people in here that have said, “Heck with it. I'm going to do it my own way. I don't care anymore.” I want to share part of my story.

I was raised in a great Christian home and came to faith as a little guy and then just did the classic prodigal son and ran away from my faith. I moved out to California, and I ended up surrendering my heart wholly and completely to the Lord. For three months, I experienced a lot of freedom from shame and guilt, but I also had some hard times. I struggled with loneliness. I struggled with boredom. A lot of life and adventure, I didn't know where to find it.

I made the decision that I was going to move to Branson on January 1. My friends were going out on New Year's Eve. My whole reason for moving to L.A. was... I had a corporate job, but my dream was to do sketch comedy and live a celebrity lifestyle. That's really why I went out there. Along the way, we met some celebrities and started running around with them. On New Year's Eve night, it was kind of like the pinnacle of my experience in that we had become friends with a guy who was a member of

arguably the largest band in the world at the time. We went to his house for New Year's Eve. We were down at the beach, we got picked up in a limo, we drove through Hollywood and up through Beverly Hills. We pulled up to this estate and at the gate was a security guard. They checked us in and opened the gate. We drove up this winding drive up to a mansion. We got out and there were all these beautiful people there. At one point I turned around and I was looking right at Macaulay Culkin.

That night, after three months of walking with the Lord, I went off the deep end. Really, my intentions for going out there was I was living my dream. But the following morning, when I woke up, it was probably one of the top three lowest moments I've ever had in my life. That morning, I made the decision that I was going to leave Beverly Hills for Holiday Hills. And while my life has been far from perfect since then, I've never gone back. That was the morning where I traded it all in.

I want to speak to the man or woman who has knowingly wandered from God. You're not too far gone. You've been chosen.

10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

For those of you who didn't grow up in church or maybe didn't pay attention at all or who are new to church, if you're sitting in here and reading that phrase, *attaining to the resurrection from the dead*, and you're like *What in the world does that mean? This sounds like crazy talk*, I want to explain it simply in this way. We all know that when we do something wrong, it's sin. It doesn't matter what religion you're from, what your upbringing was, the Holy Spirit is the Convictor of the world and we know, if we are honest with ourselves, that what we're doing is wrong and that there is a cost for it. The reality is that in the presence of a holy God, the cost for sin is an eternal punishment, which is death. God sent Jesus to live a perfect life, to be completely sinless, but go ahead and die the death that you and I should have died to pay the penalty for our sin.

For three days, he laid in the grave and on the third day, he physically rose again, overcoming death and the grave so that all the world would know for the millennia to follow, 2,000 years later, we're all sitting here because he rose from the dead to show that he is the Son of God and what he says is true. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him.

So, if you and I are going to attain to the resurrection of the dead, it looks like this: Recognizing I am a sinner. I admit it. And I've been running from you, Lord. But in that confession of sin, I am ready to die to my old way of life. What was gain to me, I now consider loss. I consider it but rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

While Jesus was physically raised from the grave, you and I can be spiritually raised from the dead and brought into new life. I want to make it oh so clear that if that is you sitting out there today, if you feel like you don't have that; you don't have a relationship with Jesus, you can have it today. Today can be the day that changes the course of your life. I just want to invite you. If that's you, at the end of the service, we have a prayer team that waits down here and we want to process that with you.

We want to encourage you to be brave enough to take some time and to walk down here and let us walk through the process with you.

I also know there are people in here that know the Lord that are living in rebellion, and their self-justification wheels have been spinning a million miles an hour. I want you to know, too, that the Lord wants to have you back. He chooses you too. He wants to restore your humble heart.

So, in light of all that, live today like you've been resurrected from the dead. What would that be like? To be chosen, to be pulled out of the grave to be alive again. Everything tastes better, every relationship is sweeter, every hug is more tender, the sunshine on your face is warmer. And you get to have that because you've been chosen. You get to have it today.

12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Father, we come to you today and we thank you for choosing us. I want to pray for those that have unfinished business with your, Lord, that they would take care of that business today, whatever that would require, and that you could reintroduce them to a greater joy.

Jesus, we celebrate you today and we are filled with Thanksgivings. It's in Jesus' name we pray... Amen.