

## **Sermon: “Filled With an Unquenchable Spark of Contentment”**

**Text: Acts 16:16-40**

### **Introduction:**

Take some time to read, digest and discuss this powerful description of the difference between “Happiness” and “Joy”, quoted from the Compassion International website—  
[https://www.compassion.com/sponsor\\_a\\_child/difference-between-joy-and-happiness.htm](https://www.compassion.com/sponsor_a_child/difference-between-joy-and-happiness.htm)

*There’s a difference between joy and happiness. But what that difference is, is difficult to definitively define. For every person who says joy is an underlying truth that good or bad circumstances can’t dictate, and happiness is rooted in circumstance, there will be others who think the opposite.*

*Despite the different perspectives, the idea that holds greater sway today is that happiness depends on external factors to exist. Happiness happens to us. Even though we may seek it, desire it, pursue it, etc., feeling happiness is not a choice we make.*

*Joy, on the other hand, is a choice purposefully made. Joy is an attitude of the heart and spirit, present inside of us as an untapped reservoir of potential. It’s possible to feel joy in difficult times. Joy doesn’t need a smile in order to exist, although it does feel better with one. Joy can share its space with other emotions – sadness, shame or anger. Happiness can’t.*

*Happiness is not present in darkness and difficulty. Joy never leaves it. Joy undergirds our spirits; it brings to life peace and contentment.*

*Joy requires a connection. Often the connection is with other people, but it can also be with pets, creation, creativity, etc. Joy is present. In the moment. Happiness mostly just passes through.*

*When happiness is present, it is larger than life. Nothing seems better or worthy of attention. But happiness is also fickle. It can be present for weeks on end and gone in an instant. Joy is constant.*

*Understanding the differences between joy and happiness has a greater purpose than being fodder for an intellectual debate. The distinctions between joy and happiness have a real-world application, particularly for children living in poverty.*

*Poverty is often synonymous with despair. A heavy word, but also a word with a bark worse than it’s bite.*

*Despair is like happiness in that it’s temporary, although it never feels that way. Despair is a product of circumstance, and it can’t hold a candle to joy. Joy can overcome anything and everything in this world, if it’s allowed. If it’s chosen.*

*With joy, there is hope. With joy, hardship offers growth and opportunity. With joy, self-esteem and self-respect are indestructible.*

### **Examination:**

- Read **Acts 16:16-24**

- Paul and Silas were in the city of Philippi. They were there because of a vision that Paul had—of a man in Philippi (which was in a larger region called Macedonia) begging Paul to “come to Macedonia and help us.” Paul took this as a sign to go to Philippi, concluding that God had called him and Silas to preach the Gospel to them. How helpful is it to be completely confident that you are exactly where God wants you to be—especially in the midst of trials?
- One of the people they met in Philippi was a fortune teller—who brought in a good amount of money predicting the future. How did she do this according to v. 16? Do you believe this is a real thing—or just a hoax?
- What do you make of this fortune teller's insight regarding Paul & Silas (v. 17)?
- What did it take for Paul to have power over this evil spirit (v. 18)?
- Was it any surprise that Paul & Silas were dragged before the authorities? How does all of this reflect the Upper Story battle that was going on?
- List all of the things that Paul & Silas had to endure in vv. 22-24. Take some time to discuss (or think about) each one. How humiliating is it to be stripped in public? How painful would it be to be beaten with a rod? What is the intended goal of a severe flogging?

- Read **Acts 16:25-40**

- What kind of minor (or major!) miracle was it that Paul & Silas even had enough coherence and energy to pray and sing hymns to God after all that they had endured that day?
- What do you suppose was going through the minds of the other prisoners—as they listened to Paul & Silas singing and worshipping?
- How severe of an earthquake would it take to loosen a prisoner's chains? What does this earthquake say about God's power and command over nature?
- Would it be reasonable to state that the question that the jailer asked in v. 30 is THE MOST IMPORTANT question asked in the entire Bible? What caused the jailer to ask it?
- What is the answer to his question? Is this something that you have done?
- What, according to v. 33, was the first thing that the jailer and his family did? Is this something you have done?
- What was the result of the jailer's faith (v. 34)?
- What does v. 37 tell us about the kind of person that Paul was?
- How does this amazing account illustrate the unquenchable spark of contentment that fills us when the Holy Spirit comes into our lives?
- Discuss some ways that you can find and live out the joy of the Lord in your daily life—even when your circumstances are far from “happy”.

**Application:**

*Joy can overcome anything and everything in this world, if it's allowed. If it's chosen.*

Choose joy today. Allow joy to control your heart. BE a joyful person, in spite of circumstances.