

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

“Count It All Joy” 4/17/23

Count it all joy, my sisters and brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,
for you know the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

And let steadfastness have its full effect, so you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(James 1:2-4)

Maybe I haven't said it in a while, but life is hard. One day you're riding high and the next day the rug gets pulled out from under you. Life is also full of options. Do I run from the difficult and hide, do I drown my sorrow in drink or drugs, do I make a habit of bad choices, or do I learn from my mistake, or the action of another, or whatever it was in my world which did not go according to my plan, and become wiser, stronger, better. Did I learn anything? What did I learn and how to I apply it to my life so I am a better person, so I am prepared for the next time and don't get my heart broken, or lose control, or multiply mistakes, or decide to end it all. Life is tough. People don't always react how we expect. We don't always act or react in an appropriate manner. So do we throw in the towel or learn our lesson and allow it to make us complete?

The saying is, the end justifies the means; I think this could go sideways. I do know, however, the means will create a better end, if we learn from them.

The Stoics, also, wrote a lot about this. They saw the result of being a person as taking the good and the bad along the way, to form them into being better people. Seeing the correct end game is important. It is not having more money, being more attractive, or having the most toys which counts, it's being a better person, a better friend, a wiser confidant, it's being able to hold a more stable rudder in the storm.

Stoic and Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, would have us ask ourselves, “why are we trying to be a better wrestler but not a better person, a better forgiver of faults, a better friend in tight places?” What are we trying to prove, to accomplish, to leave as our legacy? How do we want to live? For what do we want to be remembered?

She was gorgeous, but what a temper. He sure knew how to make money, but I wouldn't trust him with any of mine. They're sure busy, but their work is shoddy. He's quick to talk, but slow to produce. We know people, and at times, unfortunately, are those people, who promise things which we do not deliver.

Life is hard and so is making a point sometimes. Difficulties come; how do we react? We start out with good intentions and then take a detour. Others lie to us, intentionally or unintentionally. Somedays nothing goes right, or doesn't go our way. Every happenstance, everything which rubs us the wrong way, every misstep, every snub, all of the rushing water and each howling wind is used to form us into the people God created us to be, so count it all joy.

Please pray with me:

Creating God, thank You for forming me, even when it is against my will, even when I'd rather stay in bed, even when it hurts. Help me to accept Your working in my life with joy. Help me to remember this, no matter how painful, will help me to become perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Amen.