



# Simple Gifts

Words to Inspire the Spirit

IMMANUEL CHURCH-ON-THE-HILL

May 4, 2021

## **A Cheerful Heart is Good Medicine**

**By The Rev. Sam Sheridan**

A cheerful heart is good medicine,  
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

Proverbs 17:22

(New International Version)

I was giddy with anticipation the moment I awoke Saturday, April 24. It was joy and expectancy much like my childhood memories of Christmas, albeit with no theological significance. I had waited an entire year – and this was finally the morning, this was finally the day. This was the “Josh Fight.”

You may have seen it on TV or social media. Last year on April 24, a civil engineering student named Josh Swain, was frustrated that someone else among the apparent multitude named “Josh Swain” had captured an online screen name he wanted to use. So, he created a Facebook chat with every American on Facebook named “Josh Swain.”

“You’re probably wondering why I’ve gathered you all here today,” he typed to the assembled Swains.

“Because we all share the same names....?” replied another Josh among the many.

“Precisely, 4/24/2021, 12:00 PM, meet at these coordinates, (40.8223286°N 96.7982002°W) we fight. whoever wins gets to keep the name, everyone else has to change their name, you have a year to prepare, good luck[.]”

This conversation received tens of thousands of likes and retweets in a matter of days. Literally millions of people had seen the announcement, by now tens of millions. The owner of the field where the Josh Fight was announced to take place, in Lincoln, Nebraska, told the Lincoln *Journal Star* that he would never sanction "such a ridiculous event" on his property, so it was ultimately moved to a nearby park. Memes and jokes about this event saturated my news feeds and private conversations – ultimately coming to a crescendo in the days leading up to the Josh Fight.

And then the day came – 1,000 people showed up! And two of them were actually named Josh Swain. And they battled each other with pool noodles. And a four-year old named Josh who had been treated for seizures at Children's Hospital & Medical Center in Omaha, was declared the winner. And “Young Josh” was crowned with a Burger King crown and given a replica of an AEW (All Elite Wrestling) World Championship belt. AND, best of all, so far, participants and others captivated by this story have raised more than \$14,000 for [Children’s Hospital](#) & Medical Center Foundation.

Internet culture seems to move much faster than other kinds of culture; memes and impromptu slang create pockets of shared experience and language across the globe sometimes overnight. (This is why I strongly recommend any parents of children or youth be extremely hands-on and reflective with their child(ren)’s online content.)

Yes, there are many things on the Internet I find inappropriate, depressing, or actually terrifying, but there are also incredible places filled with the joy, positivity, and creativity of the whole world.

Joy. Positivity. Creativity. God calls us to these in scripture over and over again. The message from Proverbs 17:22 reminds us “A cheerful heart is good medicine.” The Psalms and wisdom books of the Bible call us to joy. The prophets speak of coming singing, dancing, and celebrating. St. Paul seems to yearn to enjoy people’s company (even if he’s sometimes throwing a lot of lowkey shade). Even Jesus is depicted in the Gospels as clearly fun, charismatic, and loved by people from all walks of life. Joy seems to follow Him. It’s part of His dream of a Kingdom of God.

God created us to have good in our lives, have fun, be silly, dance, celebrate, create music and art, enjoy one another’s company and fellowship, go to parties and feasts, and even occasionally head to Lincoln, Nebraska to challenge other people named Josh with pool noodles!

As a student of the Bible, one thing that’s interested me this past year while waiting for the Josh fight is the etymology of the name “Josh.”

Here’s why: The name “Jesus” comes from the Latin, “Iēsūs;” which is from the Greek, “Ἰησοῦς;” which is a transliteration of the Aramaic, “ܝܫܘܥ;” which is a form of the Hebrew, “ישוע” or “Yehoshua;” which is actually the same name we translate everywhere else in scripture as “Joshua” or, in other words, “Josh.” Christians have distinguished between the name “Joshua” and “Jesus” in over 200 languages, for more than 1700 years. No matter what, I do think Jesus would have felt invited to, and enjoyed, the Josh Fight.

Jesus is for all for us having some weird, nonsensical fun in our lives. Having a good time isn’t the only thing life is supposed to be about. And yet, it is **allowed** – and sometimes, it’s a good reminder that a cheerful heart is good medicine.