***Where Is Your Joy?***

**Lament. 3:22-33 &**

**1 Peter 2:11-20 &**

**John 16:16-22**

Jubilate – 05.08.2022

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jubilate – “make a joyful shout (noise) to God” Sunday. So, I ask you, where is your joy?

Four dollar a gallon gasoline…and it is probably going to rise some more. Ground beef at the price I paid for Ribeye steak only twelve months agon…what is there to be joyful about.

Or maybe, “What is there to be joyful about? The warming weather has the pollen popping, and with my allergies, I am simply miserable!”

Of course, I am sure there are a few people who approach things a bit differently. Where is their joy?

“I caught a couple Steelhead this year over ten pounds.”

“My joy is complete, I have the yard raked, and the grass is starting to green up!”

“Oh joyful day, the sun is shining, spring has finally sprung here in the north woods!’

Today some mom’s are thinking it is joyful because it is mother’s day and they won’t have to cook or do the dishes, either their kids are going to take them out for a nice meal or their father is going to cook!

All these are indeed wonderful gifts of God in support of this body and life, for which we should indeed be thankful. They bring us happiness.

Dearly beloved of God, I wonder if we truly understand the joy of being in Christ? Do we know the joy that is ours when the things of this world are ***NOT*** going well?

I know some are thinking, “If today is ‘make a joyful shout to God Sunday’ then why this reading from Lamentations? *It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.* Waiting is not joyful! Especially when it continues:

*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; let him put his mouth in the dust —  there may yet be hope; let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults.* Bearing the yoke with face in the dust does not sound joyful. Why is this reading for “Jubilate”?

And letting people hit me in the face and insult me is certainly not at the top of the “this brings me joy” list.

But that is not the end.

*For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.* God **does** cast off??? He **does** cause grief? BUT not willingly?

These do not sound like joyful things, Pastor!

Maybe our Epistle is better.

*Gentiles will speak against believers as evil doers?* And we are to *be mindful of God and endure suffering - especially when we suffer unjustly?* If I get a speeding ticket for doing 70 in a 55 zone, that is one thing, but if I speak the truth of God’s Word and must suffer for it, I am to be mindful of God? If I *do good and endure suffering for it, that is a gracious thing in the sight of God?* Suffering does ***NOT*** sound ***GOOD.*** Certainly it is not something I want to be “jubilant - joyful” about.

Maybe our Gospel lesson in the middle of this Easter season is jubilant! It has to be joyful! Right?

But here is Jesus telling His disciples that they were not going to see Him for a little while and then they would see Him. This confuses them.

As if their confusion is not troubling enough, Jesus continues with this happy news, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy."

The disciples are confused! What is this little while stuff? The world will rejoice while we are sorrowful? What's this all about!

Good Friday the world rejoiced! Their cry that Jesus be crucified has come to pass. Now Jesus is dead.

His disciples are sorrowful. They locked themselves in that upper room, scared for their lives.

Three days later their sorrow is turned to joy. They had not seen Him because He was in the tomb. Now they behold Him again! There are holes in His hands, the hole in His side, but it is their Master, Teacher, Lord and God standing in their midst – living and breathing. They are joyful

But it would only be for 40 days. He would depart from them, ascending to the Father's right hand. It would again be a little while before they would see Him. When they fell asleep in Christ, they would be reunited with Him in Paradise.

It will be the last day when Christ returns again. On that day He will raise them in perfected flesh. On ***THAT DAY***, their joy will be complete – a joy which shall never be taken away from them. From thence forth, they will see Him for eternity with new eyes.

So I ask you, where is your joy?

Do you have a 21st Century American understanding of Christianity? Do you believe that if ***you*** keep your faith strong, if ***you*** don’t let your faith falter, God will give you your heart’s desire, always keeping you happy?

That is not true. Sadly though, that is how the world has corrupted many Christians to believe.

Read some obituaries and look at some tombstones, see where people find joy in life. Tombstones can be etched with the most joyful things: an aerial of the family farm…a John Deere tractor…a fisherman with a fly rod in one hand and a trout jumping downstream…the Packer “G”...Bucky Badger…or something like that?

Ever walk a cemetery and look at some of the older headstones. Again and again, you find old headstones – some crumbling, others moss-covered, all hard to read. But they often had something to say – something about Christian joy – words that speak very poignantly. “Thy will be done.” “All is well.” “To die is gain.” “Absent, not dead.” “I know that my Redeemer lives.” “Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

Where is their joy? Yes, I said, “IS.” Their joy is complete, and ongoing. Sometimes that joy is tinged with sadness, but it is joy nonetheless. And sometimes when you consider their birthdate and date of death, you note that many were young…sometimes VERY young…some not even teenagers. But there was always a sense of the joy and hope of Christ. It is because their hope is eternal. Those are the thoughts, the confessions of joy, for those who know their loved ones are with Christ in His paradise.

How often do we consider ourselves blessed by God because of the things of this world? You know what I mean. My team won! the fish were biting. I can afford the new car. Are these our joys?

Maybe we are a bit more selfless sounding. “I have great joy because my loved one’s cancer is gone.” But is that truly less selfish, less worldly? Have you ever truly thought about that in terms of our Christian faith and eternal hope – instead of thinking with a worldly view? When a loved one survives and continues in this life, it means that paradise – with no pain, sorrow, sadness, and perfect joy – is delayed.

Remember those gravestones?

Peter is pretty clear in letter to us. *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* (vs. 11)

You are at war! It is a bitter conflict raging for the possession of YOUR SOUL for all eternity.

Do you find your joy in Christ? In the 5th chapter of Acts the apostles are arrested by the Sadducees and imprisoned. The council met, and *finally, they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.* (Acts 5:40-42)

Their joy was found in suffering for the name of Christ. It was their joy to be speaking of Jesus as God’s Christ.

Do you find joy in speaking the truth of Christ? Or, are you embarrassed about what Christianity teaches – because the world says it is wrong?

The joy of Christians is that we endure in this life. Christ bears us up – lest we dash our foot against a stone – that is, fall from faith.

He feeds and nourishes our faith.

We are persecuted for we are being saved, purified like by a refiner’s fire.

We may weep in the world, but Christ has overcome the world.

You overcome this world in Christ. He has overcome it for you, and overcomes it in you.

The world tried to silence Him, but in silencing Him on the cross, He accomplished the opening of your lips to boldly proclaim…He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Hallelujah!!

His resurrection is yours, for you are united to His death and to His resurrection. And that, dear friends is your joy! The joy of knowing your eternity, that you cannot see Him face-to-face for only a little while.

You know that until you behold Him on that last day with your fleshly eyes, He opens your eyes to see Him each week. He comes to you, to bring you forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation – speaking it into your ear, placing it on your tongue, and pouring it through your lips.

We make a joyful shout to God, for by His great power, the enemies – sin and death – have submitted to Christ and been overcome by Him. They have no dominion over you. Your joy is complete! In the name of Jesus. Amen.