

Talking Points, Joy Enters In – Pastor Anita Delivered
12-13-20

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Luke 1:46-56; 1 Thessalonians
5:16-24; **John 1:1-14 (sermon)**

During Advent we return to familiar scriptures. And in this time of Pandemic and upheaval it is good to have something familiar to rest upon.

The scriptures return to our remembrance times when things were simpler.

We can hear the echo of our fellow church members thanking God for keeping us alive and giving us good health and the warmth of knowing a God who is ever faithful to us.

Each time that God wakes us up in the morning is another chance to praise Him, to go out in His name, to reach others with the Joy of Jesus.

After all, with the toll that is being taken upon the world, we know that every day is a gift from God, because tomorrow is not promised.

And that brings us to the contrast between the joy told of the season, and the sorrow of the moment the world finds itself in right now.

So the scriptures come to us today in a moment when the world most needs reminding of the Joy that broke forth at the birth of Christ.

Luke 2:10-11 records the angels saying “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.”

‘Good news of great joy’ they proclaim.

Can’t we use some good news and great joy now?

The ‘good news of great joy’ was not limited to just a chosen few right there in that moment these thousands of years ago.

It was for ‘all people’.

This news is for all people, it is a universal proclamation.

Good news for all time, so it is for us today!

John’s gospel this morning reminds us that Jesus, the Word, is indeed timeless.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

See the Christmas story doesn't begin in that stable in Bethlehem.

The story begins "in the beginning".

John says 'in the beginning'. The beginning of all time.

Before time began, Jesus was.

He is present at creation as a part of the Godhead, the Divine Trinity.

Jesus is not only present, but a creative force. John 1:3 "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

This is good news!

The good news is that Jesus came as a light into the darkness, John describes Jesus as the light the darkness would not overcome.

The apostle Luke records Jesus himself, when entering the temple, unrolls the scroll of Isaiah and reads

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Jesus, whose birth in advent we celebrate and whose second coming we anticipate, thought about the poor, the prisoner, the sick, the outcast, the lame, the oppressed.

The good news is that Jesus came as the light to shine in the darkness of our world and our lives.

The good news is that He cares for all those who mourn and comes to comfort them.

The good news is that Jesus is a savior, ready to save us from our sins and the possibility of an afterlife without Him.

The good news is that Jesus is so much more than we could ever think or imagine!

Our scriptures continually remind us that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:10

“All have sinned”. The author of Romans, “all” means everyone. We are all in need of salvation.

We all need a savior.

Isaiah 64:6 says that “All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags (Is 64:6)

Romans 6:23 reminds us that the penalty for our sin is death and separation from God.

The good news is that God provided a way for sinful folk like you and me to have restoration of our relationship with God.

The good news is that restoration is provided through Jesus.

The good news for all time is that our sins are forgiven if we repent and if we accept the good news that Jesus took our place on the cross as punishment for our sins.

The good news is as John says in vs. 12 "...to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

The babe in Bethlehem is God's gift to us that we may have joy in knowing that our relationship with God Himself is secured.

God loved you so much, that He made a way for you to have a way to Him.

That is good news!

The good news is that there is joy in the here and now, no matter what our circumstances.

See 'joy' is different than 'happiness'.

Psychologists say that "Happiness is a state, not a trait; in other words, it isn't a long-lasting, permanent feature or personality

trait, but a more fleeting, changeable state. (Courtney Ackerman, MSc. In positivepsychology.com)

Simply put, the old saying that “happiness is closely dependent on what ‘happens’ to us” is pretty accurate.

Happiness is different than Joy.

Take our reading in Luke this morning.

Luke 1 opens on the response of a young pregnant unwed teenager, Mary.

This young pregnant unwed young woman has received news that would be considered ‘jarring’ to most people considering her unmarried state and her youth.

Her circumstances are a little shaky.

But her relationship with God is not.

Her relationship with God is on such stable ground that God chose her to be the carrier of His divine message.

To bear the visible image of an invisible God.

God even sends an angelic being to announce to her what is going to happen.

Because of her rock solid relationship with God, Mary’s response is one of focusing on the ‘joy’ of the task ahead that Go has asked her to do.

It is the relationship with God that gives her new eyes with which to view this moment.

What some would say is a ‘predicament’ Mary is able to see as a reason to rejoice.

Hear Mary’s words from Luke 1:46-49

“My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—

holy is his name.

I believe it is her relationship with God and the knowledge of His Word and her experiences with God in prayer that help her to utter the next few sentences (Luke 1:50-55)

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

See, the key to “joy” that amazing, soul filling Jesus joy, is the relationship with The Creator.

Mary’s love of God allowed her to see with new eyes that which was happening to her.

Her love of God caused her to look beyond her circumstances and to rest in the joy that no matter what, God was with her.

The abiding, overriding message of this season of Advent is that God came down.

What has once been invisible to so many was now going to be made manifest in this miracle act.

The God of the universe would be ‘enfleshed’ to walk upon the earth, and to be among those he had created in a new way.

And in this way, this provides a Jesus who wishes to have a closer relationship with us.

He is not just the God of the hereafter, but He wants to be close to us in the Here and Now!

It is in our relationship with God that we are able to see with clearer eyes the joy that is within us that is Jesus the Christ.

Beloved of God that is indeed, Good News!

The pandemic has tried to overtake the world, but God allowed you to rise up this morning and to see a new day.

What is happening around us is not fearful when we lean into the Jesus within us.

Whatever it is that we are facing today, we can face it with perseverance and joy that only Jesus can bring.

At this time of the year, we worship God Incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us.

He longs to be with you.

He longs for your joy to be complete.

He longs for His joy in you to be manifest.

There are many things that the devil would say you should fret, weep, worry and mourn about.

But God says, "...weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning".

Things of this world may seem dark, but Jesus says He is the light that has overcome the darkness.

Let His joy in you be complete.

Make a commitment to grow your relationship with God.

Let Him grow you in prayer.

Let Him reveal Himself to you in Bible Study.

Let Him show you His deep and abiding love by taking the time to abide in Him.

If you turned on our broadcast today, and you have not accepted Jesus Christ as your savior please contact us YourMtParan@gmail.com.

Life has many challenges, but you do not have to go through them alone.

We are a congregation of disciples who want to walk with you in your journey with the Lord.

The children's sermon by Pastor Donna says a lot in a simple way.

I leave you with her words.

The key to real and lasting JOY

Is to give your heart to Jesus. Pray daily to him and studying His word.

Jesus should not be a figure we discover in the manger and never engage with Him all the rest of the year.

1st Thessalonians 5 says that we are to “rejoice and pray continually”.

In praying and spending time with God we grow closer to Him.

In studying His word we know more about Him.

Thesalonians goes on to tell us that we should “not quench the Spirit.”

In growing closer to God through prayer and study we allow the Spirit greater access to us.

In growing closer to God we are able to allow His Spirit to use us to bless others.

We should have such a relationship with Him that even in the darkest times, Christ lights our way and the way of those around us who see our relationship with Him.

We want to be able to proclaim as Isaiah did “I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God.”

And like Mary, who said “My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior”

Like our Praise Song leader declared in song we want to be able to say, Good morning Lord, thank you Father for giving us a bright new day!

Let Christ be born anew in your life and in your hearts today.

In the name of Jesus the Christ,

Amen.