

SERMON TOPIC: "WHY ALL THE JOY AND REJOICING?"

DATE: December 16, 2018

King David knew the strength and benefits of rejoicing in the LORD, so he said: "The king rejoices in Your strength, O Jehovah; and how greatly does he rejoice in Your Salvation! You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the prayers of his lips." (Psalm 21: 1)

Some might ask: "WHAT IS ALL THE FUSS ABOUT? WHAT'S WRONG WITH THESE CHRISTIANS AND THEIR JESUS? THEY ARE NOT EVEN SURE THAT DECEMBER 25TH IS THE BIRTHDAY OF CHRIST! Well everyone is entitled to his/her opinion, and everyone has a choice to be joyful or to be sad at Christmas if they want to. BUT EVERY BIBLE BELIEVING CHRISTIAN HAS A RIGHT AND A PRIVILEGE TO CHOOSE TO REJOICE AND BE GLAD ON THE DAY AND SEASON TRADITIONALLY SET ASIDE TO REMEMBER, TO CELEBRATE, TO REJOICE, AND TO BE GLAD; FOR SOMETHING ASTOUNDING HAS HAPPENED! SOMEONE AMAZING HAS ENTERED FROM THE SACRED AND HOLY HEAVENLY REALM OF GLORY INTO THIS SINFUL REALM CALLED EARTH. We choose to REJOICE with great JOY, for we know Jehovah God has done great things for us and we are glad. "We sing: "JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME. LET EARTH RECEIVE HER KING...LET EVERY HEART PREPARE HIM ROOM, AND HEAVEN AND NATURE SING..."

So many people like to say that happiness is not joy. That may be so, but happiness is certainly a component of joy. Happiness is seen as a temporary emotional condition that is turned on or off depending on certain circumstances happening at certain times. JOY on the other hand is a more permanent state of being. In the Hebrew it is called: "SHALOM-PEACE" OR "CHESED" which means goodness, or well-being. To abide in this state of mind includes peacefulness, contentment, faithfulness, truthfulness, righteousness, love, and justice. Psalm 85 gives us a good picture of what it means to have a JOYFUL SPIRIT. For it tells us that when the LORD withdraws His wrath, revokes His displeasure and anger, and restores HIS FAVOR TO HIS PEOPLE, then we and they shall REJOICE AND BE GLAD. The LORD will restore His bounty and cause the land to yield its increase. We also hear the Prophet Zephaniah encouraging Israel, and now us, to SHOUT FOR JOY! REJOICE! BE GLAD WITH ALL YOUR HEART! For the Sovereign LORD has annulled His judgement against us and from against Israel! WE/THEY shall fear misfortune no more. WHAT A PROMISE! **(Let's personalize this and speak it out to ourselves repeatedly until it manifests.)** Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Psalmist wrote: "Steadfast love and Faithfulness meet. Righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, righteousness will look down from the sky. The LORD will give what is good. It is under these conditions that the LORD will restore His bountiful blessings upon the land and the earth will yield

its increase. ARE WE THERE YET? MAYBE NOT QUITE! BUT LET'S NOT FORGET THAT HOPE NEVER FAILS, AND IT NEVER DISAPPOINTS. WE ARE A PEOPLE OF HOPE AND SO WE HAVE EXPECTATION AS WE CONTINUE TO HOLD FAST TO WHAT THE WORD OF GOD HAS PROMISED. Let us reflect on it often and believe that this is for us today. Let us trust what Zephaniah wrote for ourselves today, that the WOE AND MOCKERY some of us have experienced will be replaced with renown and fame. THIS IS A GOOD PLACE TO SHOUT WITH JOY: "HALLELUHAH! THANK YOU, JEHOVAH GOD IN CHRIST JESUS!

As we light the candle of JOY today, let us know that God sees and God hears. God knows how much we need a bounty of JOY right now. ONLY THE LORD CAN GIVE US SUSTAINED JOY UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES AND AT ALL TIMES. WE/I PRAY FOR A RESET OF HEART, MIND, SOUL, SPIRIT, AND EMOTIONS WITH JOY FROM ABOVE. I PRAY THAT IT WILL REMAIN, AND BE CONTINUALLY RENEWED EVERY DAY. **We also know that there is a thief on the prowl who wants to steal our joy.** WE KNOW THAT BY THE BLOOD, BY THE CROSS, AND BY THE NAME OF CHRIST JESUS THE EVIL ONE AND ALL HIS COHORTS ARE DEFEATED FOES. Yet we must stand guard and be watchful and alert to all his trickeries. Paul tells us that there is a spiritual war going on and we need to keep the whole armor of God on, be fully girded from head to foot as we resist the powers of darkness and principalities of this world. Then stand firm on faith in the might of the God we have and know. WE PUSH THE DARKNESS BACK BY BATHING IN THE LIGHT OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. WE EMBRACE THE CHESED AND THE SHALOM OF GOD AND SPEAK THEM INTO OURSELVES AND TO OUR LOVED ONES. WILL YOU RECEIVE THIS? DO YOU EMBRACE THIS? THEN REPEAT THIS: **"I receive and I accept the JOY of the LORD as my strength."**

In Philippians 4: 4-7, Paul is constantly praying WITH JOY for the church at Philippi. I DARE SAY: I DESIRE THE SAME FOR THIS CHURCH. For as Paul said: "He who began a good work in us is faithful to complete it. WE DON'T HAVE TO LOOK FAR AFIELD TO SEE AND TO KNOW THAT JEHOVAH GOD HAS BEGUN A GOOD WORK IN US AND WE TRUST THAT HE WILL BE FAITHFUL TO COMPLETE IT IN US. For, like the church at Philippi, you / we --have been doing our best to fulfill the Great Ends of the church, despite the resistance we face from time to time. Paul prayed for them with JOY because they stood with him in his trials and they helped him in the spreading of the Gospel in good times and in bad. THEY ENCOURAGED HIM AND SO HE WAS HAPPY TO PRAY FOR THEM. THIS THING CALLED "JOY" IS A VERY IMPORTANT THING FOR THE UPLIFTING OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT. IT IS A STATE THAT DRAWS OTHERS TO US AND TO CHRIST. For when they see and know that things on the outside are not so grandiose, yet they see us going through with grace, they will want some of whatever it is that we have. Then we can tell them, ***it is a gift from God, because of our faith in Christ Jesus.***

FINALLY, WE HEAR NEHEMIAH TELLING THE PEOPLE AS THEY WERE CONSECRATING THE REBUILDING OF THE WALL OF JERUSALEM, THAT THEY WERE NOT TO MOURN. THEY WERE MOURNING BECAUSE OF THE RENEWAL OF THE READING OF THE WORD OF GOD THAT WAS BEING PREACHED AND READ TO THEM. But Nehemiah told them:--"No, do not weep for this day is a holy day unto the LORD." He encouraged them to eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks. They were to send portions to those who had nothing. "DO NOT BE SAD, FOR YOUR REJOICING OF THE LORD IS THE SOURCE OF YOUR STRENGTH." (The Hebr. Tenach) The NRSV says it this way: "The joy of the LORD is our strength."

An old Sunday school song we sang as children says: "JOY, JOY, MY HEART IS FULL OF JOY. MY SAVIOR SHED HIS PRECIOUS BLOOD AND THAT'S THE REASON THAT MY HEART IS FULL OF JOY." Scripture tells us that life in the Spirit is LOVE, PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. WE/I- pray to Abba/Father in the matchless name of Christ Jesus, that the Holy Spirit will pour out upon us a bounty of JOY. LET IT REMAIN AND ABIDE, BE PROTECTED, AND KEPT IN US BY GOD IN HEAVEN AND BE MADE MANIFEST HERE IN THE NATURAL IN OUR LIVES ON EARTH -- NOW, ALWAYS, AND FOREVER. WE NEED THIS JOY. WE ASK FOR THIS JOY. WE DESIRE THIS JOY THAT WAS PROMISED TO US THROUGH OUR FAITH IN CHRIST.

Isaiah 12:3 ENCOURAGES US TO JOYFULLY DRAW JOY FROM THE WELLS OF SALVATION... FROM THE FOUNTAINS OF TRIUMPH. How do we do this? ---By praising the LORD, by proclaiming His name, and by exalting Him for His mighty deeds. WHY? For through the Gift of His Son, Abba/Father has brought to us, SALVATION. THE MANY PROPHECIES OF THE AGES PAST HAVE BEEN FULFILLED. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given. The Government shall be upon His shoulders. Light has dawned in the darkness of human existence. Through His sacrifice of His own Blood we have the Life-giving Gospel and Salvation by Grace through Faith and not by the dead works of the Law. SO WHY ALL THE HOOPLAH AND ALL THE REJOICING? WHY ALL THE SINGING AND MUSIC? WHY ALL THE LIGHTS? Let me pause and **share my annual experience each time I hang my Christmas light... It never fails.) This past Wednesday, I shared with the Bible Study group what happens each of the six years I have been living at my apartment. Every Christmas season I try to put up some decorations indoors. But as soon as I hang the lights outside on the patio and within a few minutes or so, a dusting of light snow would come down. This year I thought I might have spoken too soon, for over a half hour I didn't see the usual snow. So I said, "Well Lord, maybe I missed it this year. For on Thursday morning at about 5:00 a.m. I went out and hung the lights. But I didn't see the usual dusting of snow. So I sat down to watch some Christian worship service on T.V. After a while I looked up and noticed that the snow was**

coming down, beautifully and softly. After six years of this happening I no longer think it is a coincidence. I see it now as a witness of the Holy Spirit that God is watching and is pleased. (That is my idea anyway.) Whether the date is correct and exact or not, our Heavenly Father acknowledges what we do to honor His precious Son, Christ Jesus... Yeshua Ha- Messiach. Some suggest that we are imitating a pagan holiday. I see that differently. I see that God has replaced the pagan holiday by erasing it with our Christian celebrations at Christmas and at Easter. Unless one searches diligently, no one even remembers such pagan holidays. **AND THAT IS THE IDEA IN THE FIRST PLACE!**

THE FATHER HAS GIVEN TO US A SAVIOR, A REDEEMER, AND A DELIVERER TO SAVE US FROM ETERNAL DESTRUCTION AND TORMENT. HE WAS GIVEN TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD THAT ENLIGHTENS ALL HUMAN LIVES. HE CAME TO BRING US LIFE ABUNDANT AND LIFE ETERNAL AND TO RESTORE OUR PEACE WITH OUR CREATOR. IF WE ARE SHOUTING, IF WE SEEM TO BE OVERLY JOYFUL, GENEROUS, AND HAPPY, IT IS BECAUSE OF THIS UNIQUE AND INVALUABLE GIFT THAT THE FATHER HAS BESTOWED UPON US WHO NEEDED HIM BUT DID NOT DESERVE HIM. –WE HAVE SO MUCH FOR WHICH TO REJOICE AND TO BE THANKFUL! NOTHING CAN COMPARE TO OUR BLESSED SALVATION THAT WE POSSESS. NO ONE CAN COMPARE TO THE ONE WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US. THEREFORE, WE COULD NEVER OVER DO OUR CELEBRATION AS LONG AS WE KEEP CHRIST IN OUR CHRISTMAS. BECAUSE OF HIM WE ARE BEING MADE A NEW CREATION AS WE AWAIT OUR PERFECTED REDEMPTION WHEN HE RETURNS. HE IS COMING AGAIN WITH ANGELS AND SAINTS IN ATTENDANCE WITH THE BLAST OF TRUMPET SOUND TO GATHER HIS OWN UNTO HIMSELF IN GLORY WITH THE FATHER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT. SO, REJOICE! REJOICE! REJOICE WITH FULLNESS OF JOY, FOR GOD HAS KEPT THE PROMISE THAT WAS PROPHESED FOR AGES. IN THIS IS OUR JOY- SALVATION HAS COME TO US. WE HAVE RECEIVED THE MOST PRECIOUS AND MOST VALUABLE GIFT ANYONE ON EARTH COULD EVER HAVE. SO... REJOICE, REJOICE, REJOICE AND AGAIN I SAY REJOICE! CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS HAVE MUCH FOR WHICH TO BE JOYFUL. LET NO ONE OR ANYTHING STEAL YOUR JOY, FOR IT IS IN THE REJOICING OF OUR GOD THAT WE FIND STRENGTH. It is through faith in Christ Jesus that we have this GREAT SALVATION UNTO ABUNDANT AND ETERNAL LIFE.

AMEN.