

Sermon Advent 3 12/13/17 Share Joy Luke 1:39-45

Dear Joyful in the Lord:

Martin Luther once described God's original intent for his people whom he created: "Adam had been created in such a way that he was, so to speak, drunk with joy towards God..."

God created us to be filled with joy.

Why, then, so often do we have so little joy? The answer is, of course, sin that came into God's perfection creation took the perfect joy that Adam and Eve had away.

Still, God did not leave his creation to go on without his intervention. He sent us Jesus to save us and restore our joy.

- Where there is Jesus, there is joy
- Where there is God's Word, there is joy

When the angel appeared to Mary to tell her that she would give birth to Jesus our Savior the angel greeted her with the word: "Greetings". The word means "Rejoice" When Mary heard the angel Gabriel's greeting the Bible says "Mary...wondered what kind of greeting this might be." Lk 1:29

Greetings! The is the same word used in Philippians 3:1 where Paul says: "Rejoice in the Lord!"

- We are called to be people who rejoice
- We are called to be people who are filled with joy

How can we be?

- These are difficult times
- There is so much bad news

Where can joy be found? How can joy be part of our life?

When the angel Gabriel told Mary that she would become the mother of Jesus, she was also told that her relative Elizabeth was with child, too.

Mary had been told of Elizabeth's pregnancy even though she, Elizabeth, has moved far past her child bearing years. Mary journeys to see her relative and ultimately share in her joy.

When Mary enters the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, a son soon to be born, and soon to be named John leaps in the womb and Elizabeth is "filled with the Holy Spirit."

- The words Elizabeth speaks to Mary are prophetic
- Elizabeth describes the baby Mary now carries with these words: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"
- Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit filled the soul of Elizabeth.

If you take a look at the words Elizabeth speaks to Mary, the source of joy becomes evident.

- It is not found simply in her own pregnancy but even more so in Mary's.
- It is clear she views this as no ordinary child
- This goes beyond babies.

This is the mother of her Lord. This is God's Son.

- This is a cause for her joy
- This is a cause for the joy of a yet-to-be born child within her who joins the praise by leaping for joy.
- There is much here to share in the joy of the coming of the Messiah

Jesus once told his disciples: **"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven."** Luke 6:23

Elizabeth praises the faith of Mary.

- To honor Mary in the way that Elizabeth does is God-pleasing

- We honor Mary as an example of faith and service
- We do not however go beyond this for Mary, too, was sinful and in need of a Savior as she herself confessed
- The child to be born of Mary was her Savior, too.

Now it is Mary's turn to share the joy as she responds in song. This song of Mary is known as the Magnificat recorded in Luke 1:46-55. It all begins with a declaration of praise as she begins:

“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.”

- Mary responds with her own hymn of praise to the Lord
- It is a marvelous hymn magnifying the Lord

Mary recognizes her humble status as a servant Luke 1:46-49 In verse 50 Mary speaks of those who “fear” the Lord. The word “fear” refers to the awe and respect one has for the Lord.

Is there a reason for joy? Look at Mary's song and consider what the Lord has done for us. Vv50-55

Once again this is no joy manufactured by a holiday purchase. It is sharing the joy as a response to what God is doing in the world through the coming Christ.

The joy of the coming of Christ is infectious.

- It is a joy meant to be shared.
- How else can you react when we know the Savior is coming?

God is answering our greatest need and sending us his own Son.

Certainly one of the “joys” associated with Christmas is the cookies which appear at this time of year. There are few who avoid these delicious treats of various shapes and tastes which often reflect the joyous season upon us.

In terms of the history of Christmas cookies the modern Christmas cookies can trace their history to recipes from medieval European biscuits which when many modern ingredients were introduced such as...

- Cinnamon
- Ginger
- Black pepper
- Almonds
- Dried fruit

By the 1500's during Luther's time Christmas biscuits had become popular across Europe...

- Lebkuchen popular in German
- Pepparkakor popular in Sweden
- Krumkake popular in Norway

The earliest examples of Christmas cookies in the United States were brought by the Dutch in the early 1600's. Due to a wide range of cheap imported products from Germany between 1871 and 1906 cookie cutters became available in America.

These imported cookie cutters often depicted highly stylized images with subjects designed to place on a Christmas tree. With the popularity of these utensils, recipes began to appear in cookbooks designed to use them.

No matter what your favorite Christmas cookie might be, consider sharing joy by sharing cookies with others. This is a way to draw people in as we move from sharing cookies to sharing the true and ultimate source of Christmas joy...Christ himself.

So how can you "Share Joy" in your life?

- With whom?
 - visiting someone who lives alone
 - going caroling to sing "Joy to the World"
- Our role is one of "joy-bringers" for Christ
- Cookie sharing and Gospel sharing this joyful season

Luke says that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about 3 months and then returned home. What a time of joy these two women had looking forward to God's plan of salvation in Christ.

The Apostle Paul says that the kingdom of God is a matter "...of...joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

In Christ we have joy...a joy that survives and thrives even in this world of sin for we know the good news of the Gospel as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 5:11 "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."