

A Season of Joy - A Life of Joy (A Defiant Nevertheless)

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

Philippians 4:4

Christmas is a season of joy. The story of the birth of Christ is a story of joy.

This is what the angel told Zechariah when he told him that a son (John the Baptist) would be born to him - a son who would make ready a people prepared for the birth of the Lord. "He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth.", (Luke 1:14)

The angels, announced Christ's birth to the shepherds, saying "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy, that will be for all the people.

This is a season of joy. "Joy To The World, The Lord Is Come."

Even those who show little joy at other times of the year experience the joy. For joy is contagious. It passes from one to another in a wonderful way. People donate money for the needy. We buy gifts for each other. We decorate our homes with Christmas lights. We sing carols of joy and celebrate with special church services

The focus of our joy is on the Christ child. On the baby Jesus who lay in a manger. At Christmas time we take out the manger scene. We worship Jesus even if we fail to do so the rest of the year, and we celebrate His birth together.

Joy is something we experience when something good is happening to us. When we experience seasons of joy in our lives. When our children are born, when we meet our future husband or wife, when we experience the happy moments of life.

And so too, seasonal joys do not last. That is why so many worship with joy in December, and yet find it hard to go to church in January. Is the joy you feel a joy just for the season? Do we pack up the manger displays and store them away till next year?

We may be like the seed in the parable that was sown on rocky places. We may hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since the seed or word has no root, it lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Some seasons seem to have little joy. We experience the loss of loved ones and illness may inflict us. We have concerns or fear about all the bad things that are happening in the world

The joy of the season can take root. When we allow it to grow in us and when we nurture it. When the joy is not based on seeing Jesus in a manger but at knowing that He lives in our hearts. By seeing Him when He is no longer a baby but the God who stands at the door and knocks. And by opening the door to Him and having fellowship with Him. By knowing He is in control, that He never leaves us and promises us eternal life.

True joy, joy that lasts, is not based on what is happening out there. It is based on what is inside of us. It is based on a life that is filled with the presence of Christ. One that has placed its trust in Him. That does not place the baby Jesus in the closet until the following year.

It is a life centred upon Christ. It is, as Karl Barth says, a “defiant nevertheless” to whatever happens to us. Nevertheless the pain or struggles we may face and nevertheless the situations facing the world, we have joy. We stand defiantly against all that would take our joy away. We are able to do so because Jesus came to bring us true joy and our hope is in Him.

Friends, my prayer for you is that this will be a season of joy for you. But more than that, I pray that you will live a life of joy. Remembering that God did send His only Son that you may have eternal life. And nothing else in our life can take that away.

For God is working things out for our good. The proof of that is in the manger and on the cross.