Sermon Xmas Day 2023

Text: Psalm 98

Title: “Rejoice!”

Prayer

Salutation

**Bridge**

 **Merry Christmas! But, for some of us, it is hard to be happy at Christmas. There, I said it! There are many reasons for that. Some of us are sad because the people we love aren’t around us and we can’t share the joy we feel in the season. Some of us have lost loved ones and just don’t have the desire to be happy. Some of us are just flat out like Scrooge and have no desire whatsoever to make merry at Christmas. We can relate more to him and the Grinch than we can to Tiny Tim. Sometimes, we can catch a “Bah, Humbug” from even the supposed most joyful men on earth- pastors.**

 **But… we all know that in this season we ought to say the obvious that:**

**Jesus is our Christmas Joy.**

**I.**

 **However, Christmas is work! I don’t care who you are, it takes planning and shopping and decorating. And for introverts! Ha! It can be a tiring, draining, demanding time of year. Oh, and there are times that having to put on a happy face and pretend to be glad when you know that you have been regifted, the very same white elephant *you* tried to dump last year, well, that just brings groans, not happiness. And I have to admit that there have been times when my wife has punched me in the arm and whispered, “Smile and look more grateful for that tie. I know you got one last year just like it, but…”**

 **But let’s not take all that Christmas crankiness too seriously. And I have to admit there have been and still are Christmases that I just can’t get into, and I know that there are many, many people out there that are just like me. I would love it if my family could all be here. But we live all over the country and that is just not going to happen. So, I get sad, and rejoicing is sometimes difficult. It is hard simply to be happy when you are not, and it gets worse when someone says, “Come on, smile. It’s Christmas!” If you’ve ever dealt with depression or anxiety or the loss of a loved one at Christmas time it is genuinely hard to rejoice, and when everyone around you seems so perfectly happy, it just makes it worse. Your family and friends, they’re just trying to help. Because they want you to be happy, and they love and care for you. You can’t blame them For want to see, you, too, full of the Christmas Spirit.**

**II.**

 **Therefore, I ask you, is there any legitimate reason for us to be happy today? Of course, yes, we know that Jesus is our Christmas joy. But is there anything that makes that more than cliché’, maybe something in Christ’s coming we could grab onto and find a reason to rejoice? We have experienced a new kind of year this year, with new hardships and difficulties, and now a new year and the anticipation or dread of what may lie ahead in it, we are especially hungry for human contact, connection, and a real reason to rejoice.**

**So, yes! There is a real reason! And Jesus is no cliché’. So, turn off the grinchy hearts and show Scrooge the door! There’s nothing fake, false, or plastic about rejoicing in the birth of Jesus! Fake happiness and plastic smiles will not do! Instead, the words of Psalm 98 truly resound! “Oh, sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him. The Lord has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered His steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.” (vs.1-3)**

**The Lord, the Lord *has* done something marvelous! Something marvelous beyond words. His righteousness has been made known to every nation, tribe, people, and language. The Creator God of the universe has become a human being. To work salvation for the whole world. And that means salvation is for me and it means it is for you.**

**The ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God; there is not one corner of this creation that is somehow beyond the reach of what God has, does, can and will redeem. If you are feeling like Scrooge or the Grinch or if you are hurting---if you are lost or sick, addicted, or ashamed---come once more and look into the manger of Bethlehem. See there in the hay the tiny hands of God the will bear the scars for you. Gaze upon the infant feet that will be pierced for you. So I ask, how, how could God do such a thing for me?**

**When you look at the baby lying in Mary’s arms, you are looking into a mystery that is beyond human words to tell. The words of men and the songs of angel choirs cannot do it justice. Love is born. Hope is restored. God lies in the manger bed giving you His very self. No love is greater. No mystery deeper than Jesus Christ born for you.**

**III.**

**So then, with this mystery of love and grace presented to us grinchy old
Scrooges, the proper response is to REJOICE! With nothing fake, phony, or false about it. But honest, deep, and *real* rejoicing! Real joy down in your bones because you are loved so much that God would leave His throne in heaven and come down and take on human flesh to dwell with you, to live and die for you, to ascend back into heaven and return one day to make all things new. All, for you!**

**The joy found so deep, so real, that even the very elements of the earth respond with praise and worship. “Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who dwell in it! Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together.”**

**Hear the Good News! “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” You don’t have to pretend to be happy today. No fake tinsel or artificial good cheer. But there is joy, joy that surpasses all our understanding. For the Prophet, the Priest, the King is born! The Messiah has come, and His love is now and shall be forever for you. Jesus, is our Christmas Joy!**

**“Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous songs and sing praises! Sing praises unto the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!”**

**Joy to the world! The Lord has come! And let the joy resound!**

**In Jesus name. Amen.**