**“The Glad Sound”**

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Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

3rd Sunday in Advent

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bridge

It’s distinctly possible that “**happiness**” is, a bit, illuding you this Advent Season. Circumstances for some of you, I know, are difficult and challenging … painful even, and so out of your control that you wonder why God allows this relationship issue or illness, or financial constraint. If Jesus were here, Himself, it’s doubtful **He’d** find “**happiness**” within the circumstances of much of our lives. That the flu’s passed around during such a holiday time and schedules have not slowed but speeded, with more needing done in less time, things maybe to look forward to, but those all have pressures attached to them. The weather’s been dreary and news around the world and even in our country is depressing and angry and violent and not settled, but quite the opposite in ever-potential escalation and unrest. Spring Hill is booming with construction and traffic, and yet home sales have slowed so the market is unclear. And winter will be following after Christmas, and ice storms and now tornado destruction and personal conflicts and offenses given or at least received as such, and family splits or separations and loneliness can plague even within a crowd.

**Text**

But a few “somebodies” said that “things could **be made different in spite of all obstacles**”. “**Happiness**” is a feeling helped (best) by what’s the much bigger than itself, yet discovering that “happiness” isn’t the Gift, but “**JOY**” is the **greatest discovery of them all**. **Bigger than an emotion** are words all applied to its existence: “Good” and really “freeing”, “comfort”, receiving of a “granting”, a “giving”, a “reality change” (a “calling”), a “planting”, a “building”, a “raising up”, a “repairing”, a “knowing”, and then an “acknowledging” of all that, with these promised to (in a “**Someone**” to come) over-ride circumstance and health struggles and earthly issues of any kind. “**Happiness**” (a term **just for this earth in its limited scope and fickleness**) would be replaced (and affected) **through the promised “Someone**” by “**gladness**” … a “**great rejoicing**” in “**YOU**”.

We hear “**Good News of great joy**” by 4 (plus more) someone’s in today’s readings. **“A GLAD SOUND”** is almost entirely what’s given for us to **ENJOY** by everyone speaking it this weekend one week before Christmas. The **only downside** to all our readings is not to “hear” them, “despising prophecies” (as the Thessalonians text says) or not accepting “peace”, rather settling for a “broken heart” or a “mourning of” or a “faintness of spirit”. For others … wishful … longing for a Promise from Someone who is faithful, it’s “**refreshment**” from God / “**peace no matter in what circumstance**”. It is being in the midst of the place where such things are reminded us by the “**Glad Sounds**” of “**great joy that will be for all people**” … a “**JOY**” for the ears to let seep down and into the heart, then limbs to their very extremities knowing the difference between just a **mood** and **what’s divinely and** **eternally secured and promised because of**.

**Isaiah** just spoke of it … and wrote it. He spoke to his time and wrote to ours of what was given Him by God to say and record: that the “Spirit of the Lord God was upon him” for that task, but not just upon him for it, but more for the **Him he wrote of** … and then **us**. Inspired to “**point to that One**”, that’s **what that prophet did**. Then **John** would follow suit (just before that One). Then **Paul** would reflect upon it. And that massively waited for “**Anointed One**” (the **Christ** / the **Holy Sacrifice**) would be **everybody’s** prophetic topic.

**We still talk of it. We still announce it**.

At the time He was called the **One “after John**, the strap of whose sandal he wasn’t worthy to even untie”. “Make straight the way of the Lord”, John announced. **He (Jesus)** was “**Light**” where, without **Him**, there’d only be the **absence of “light” in darkness**.

Early Advent readings remind us of “**Salvation**” being what’s **arriving** **with the Lord’s Anointed One**. “Salvation” is the dramatic **contrast from light’s absence to its arrival**. We live in a world of artificial light other than God’s created gift of the Sun to hint at the Son of God, but without some ‘semblance of brightness contrasting the dark, we’d only have the imagination of horror, so descriptors of badness that Isaiah uses like “the **poor**” and the “**captive**”, the “**ashes**” and “**devastations**” that **suggest** the **change Jesus’ brings to that as God’s Christ**. For those not **aware** of their “devastations”, “Salvation” might be too trivialized to actually appreciate in the Christmas child. But to those conscious of “devastation” without God’s Light, there’s **reason** for every **sustained pleasure of “JOY”**.

**Application**

This is a season not of **a** Glad Sound, but of “**THE** **Glad Sound of THAT**”. It is a sound as sure as the heralding of huge for forever victory: the **telling of its account**. It’s not, though, a victory absent our part in it (and that the best News of all: the words of this seasonal announcement is that “**Unto Us is born**”, and that birth will **start to make all the difference in all the world for us** … and, also, **for everyone else** **of all time**. ….

Now, I don’t know what your last week before this year’s Christmas celebration will be like. Maybe busy (no doubt). But maybe also challenged with, first of all, all the challenges of this world in its many strife’s. I know some are in hotel rooms because their homes were recently flattened by a tornado, and Christmas will feel like none other before it for reasons and circumstances this fallen nature has provided. Some may be spending time with doctors, and some with families not very intact. To each, in every possible situation, “**JOY**” **is come in the Christ-child**. In a substantial sense, “what can this world do to us clothed in the garments of salvation, covered with God’s promised baptismal robe of righteousness”?

This world cannot take away “**JOY**”. It can mess with “**happiness**” lots, so please understand the difference. “Happiness” may not have been much of our Savior’s sentiments other than moods maintained in Him because of **His “JOY” in saving**.

Aso, a “**Glad**” and **JOYFILLED** last week **preparing for Christmas** to you all. May your challenges be overwhelmed by the Gift that a manger one night held. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.