

1 John 1:1-4

December

“Joy makes Christmas Merry”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

2nd Sunday in Advent

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, Mercy, and Peace be unto you from Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and God our Heavenly Father. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Introduction] *“Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.”*

“Oh, Rejoice, all Christian, loudly.”

“Now sing we, now rejoice.”

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!”

In their title alone, these Christmas hymns express what Christmas are all about...JOY.

And that joy cannot be taken away from you.

That joy cannot be taken away from me even if

— nativity scenes are deemed unconstitutional or the word “Christmas” becomes unspeakable in the public media OR

— secular choruses change the words to Silent Night so that thy don’t have to utter the name of Christ.

My Christmas joy cannot be taken away from me

— even if I lose my job on December 23 OR

— I learn some frightening news about my physical condition OR

— this year’s Christmas Eve family get-together means another painful reminder of my loved one is dead.

Whether or not your life is shaping up the way you want it to has nothing to do with your Christmas joy.

Your Christmas will be merry this year only because there’s a solid foundation... there’s an unchanging, unmovable bedrock upon which your joy rests.

John talks about that in these next verses:

1 John 1:1-4 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

Some folks will be filled with joy this year because they get to see relatives they haven't seen in a while. They'll be reunited with a daughter who lives in Arizona or a grandson who lives in South Florida. The next couple weeks may bring similar blessings to many of you.

But your real joy will come from the One whose birth you will be celebrating in a few weeks.

[**Word**] John calls Jesus the "Word."

You might recall John uses that same title in his gospel. ***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"*** (John 1:1,14).

By looking at Jesus and by considering what he has done and who he is we are able to see the attitudes and the feelings God has toward us.

Unwilling to allow his creation to drown forever in a sea of sin, God developed a rescue mission. He himself would be the rescuer.

The God of justice cannot let sin and disobedience go unpunished no more than a police officer can look the other way during a robbery or act of violence.

God's justice demands that imperfection be pointed out and properly punished. Unwilling to have his creation feel the full weight of his wrath, he himself stepped into our shoes.

Since he, the Son of God, bore sin's punishment he can now dispense forgiveness to the sinner.

"Believe in me," he says.

"Know that I have already paid for your sins," he declares.

"Believe that I am the Word of life. I have cleansed you. I have conquered death for you. I have opened up the gate of heaven for you." And you and I believe.

That's why our Christmas season is filled with such joy.

That's why our Christmas is merry

and no poverty or pain, or sickness or death can take that away.

Christ Jesus is the foundation for our Christmas joy.

John spends a good deal of time assuring us that this foundation is firm and solid.

[Firm]

There are many who claim Christianity is nothing more than a book full of fairy tales and one wishful thought after another.

“Sure, it sounds nice, but is it really true?” they ask.

The prophecies in Isaiah, the fulfillment in Luke 2 – these are not man-made stories spun from an active imagination. This is the history of Christ.

“We heard it with our own ears,” John declares.

“Yeah,” the skeptic may say, “But you can’t believe everything you hear.”

“We saw it with our own eyes,” John says.

And if someone argues, “Well, you can’t believe everything you see.”

John goes on to say, **“Yeah, but we looked at him very closely. We didn’t just view him from afar. In fact, our hands have touched him.”**

1. Do you suppose John was remembering the time on the Mount of Transfiguration, when he, along with Peter and James, heard God the Father say, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him” (Luke 9:35)?
2. Was he recalling the moment outside the tomb of their friend when Jesus said in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out”?
3. Maybe John was thinking about the time the storm nearly swamped the boat, but then he heard Jesus say to the wind and the waves, “Quiet. Be still!”
4. Or perhaps John was remembering the meal Jesus miraculously provided for him and over 5,000 other men plus women and children...
5. OR the time when the risen Jesus appeared to them and said, “Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have”

[Conclusion]

The foundation of your Christmas joy...the foundation of your faith...

the foundation upon which your eternity depends is not flimsy but firm,
not unstable but sturdy, not fables but facts.

What does Peter say? ***“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty”*** (2 Peter 1:16).

Nothing can take away your Christmas joy because it is founded on Jesus and that message of Jesus Christ and what he has done is recorded faithfully and truthfully for you in the Word of God.

Paul tells us that faith comes from hearing this message, the Word of Christ. John says the same thing: ***“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”***

And so we make certain that Word of Christ is a central part of our worship here in God’s house and that we have ample opportunities for all of our members to gather together for Bible Study and growth in that Word.

There are too many things that can distract us...
too many things that can occupy our thinking.

We need to hear the apostles tell us again and again

- that Jesus came to this world to be our Substitute.
- that he fulfilled all righteousness for us.
- that he paid for every last transgression and infraction.
- that he rose from the dead.
- that he lives and reigns over all things for the good of his church.
- that nothing in all creation can separate us from his love and nothing and no one can condemn us since we have been forgiven.
- that heaven is our home...and we’re waiting patiently to go home.

“Oh, come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant.”

“Oh, Rejoice, all Christian, loudly.”

“Now sing we, now rejoice.”

“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!”

Joy. It’s what Christmas is all about. It’s no wonder John says, ***“We write this to make our joy complete.”*** Have yourself a merry Christmas. Amen.

Now, let us make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Amen!