

The Joyful Heart.

Text: Zec 2:10-11

Suggested Hymns:

5, 2, 15, 733, 453

1) A Brief Overview

2) There Are Abundant Reasons For A Joyful Heart

3) The Joyful Heart Is To Express Itself

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Zechariah 2:10–11, ¹⁰ *“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the LORD.* ¹¹ *“Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The introit, the herald for this Sunday, announces: *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”*¹ Today’s Gospel assures us that the Saviour brought sight to the blind, and the Gospel to the poor.

This reminds us of the prophecy in Isaiah 61:1–3, ¹ *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, ³ To console those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.”*

And in Isaiah 35:4–6, ⁴ *Say to those who are fearful-hearted, “Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, With the recompense of God; He will come and save you.” ⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. ⁶ Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.*

Yes, Christmas is the gladdest festival of the year, and should find us with a joyful hearts. Therefore our theme is *The Joyful Heart*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. A Brief Overview Of The Text

The theme of our text could be aptly called “*I am coming to live with you.*” This is what gives us joy. This is Immanuel — God with us. And if God is with us, who can be against us? Worry and anxiety come because we forget the fact that God is with us.

Our way home may lead us past the bully’s house. Down through the ages, God’s people have feared the prospect, even to the point of not wanting to go home.

But then they look up and see their Champion, Jesus Christ, and He says, “*I am with you always.*” Whether to Zechariah’s people, a group of terrified disciples about to enter their ministry in this world, or to us in this modern day, the message is the same. Our need is the same.

We need the words of assurance written in Isaiah 41:10, ¹⁰ *Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

God who wants to live with His people also wants to live among the nations. We have a special reason to be thankful for this, since we are Gentiles. God wants to live among us too. We cannot claim a genealogy in one of the 12 tribes of Israel, but we can claim a part in the inheritance of the kingdom of Christ through faith in Him.

2. There Are Abundant Reasons For A Joyful Heart.

There were many reasons for the “*daughter of Zion*” to “*sing and rejoice.*” Zechariah wrote these words about 520 B.C.

It was as a punishment for having forsaken God and disobeyed His Word that God had sent Nebuchadnezzar to burn Jerusalem, to destroy the Temple, and to carry Israel into Babylon.

It was seventy years of distressing captivity. Psalm 137 has the title, “*Longing for Zion in a Foreign Land.*” The first four verses read, ¹ *By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion.* ² *We*

hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. ³ *For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”* ⁴ *How shall we sing the LORD’s song In a foreign land?*

They did return, but Jerusalem was in ruins. Pagan neighbours hindered and harassed them in rebuilding the city and the Temple. The daughter of Zion, the church, was utterly discouraged. There was gloom everywhere.

Is there gloom, disappointment, bitter grief, despair, in any heart this morning? The flowers of spring with colour and fragrance are killed by the hot winds. You drive along life’s highway, but suddenly the lights turn red. You come to a sudden stop.

Have there been contrary winds? Are conditions unpleasant in the home, in the shop, in the office? You may have been dreaming, planning, to build a Jerusalem. Have your plans been crossed? Are there forces at work to tear down what you build?

But instead of grief and despair, hope should fill our souls and joy our hearts. Our text says, ¹⁰ *“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,” says the LORD.* ¹¹ *“Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst.*

What is our life without joy? Without joy we can do nothing; we are like an instrument out of tune. An instrument out of tune — it yields only harsh music. Without joy we are a member out of joint. We can do nothing well without joy and a good conscience, which is fundamental to joy.

There are joys which long to be ours. God sends ten thousand truths, which come about us like birds seeking an inlet; but we are closed to them, and so they bring us nothing, but sit and sing awhile on the roof and then fly away.

“Sing and rejoice!” — It is apparent from the context that the daughter of Zion should look to the future with a hopeful and joyful heart because of the material prosperity that the Lord would send her.

We learn in the previous chapter, Zechariah 1:16–17, ¹⁶ *“Therefore thus says the LORD: “I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in*

it,” says the LORD of hosts, “And a surveyor’s line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.”¹⁷ “Again proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; The LORD will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem.”’”

And just after our text we read in Zechariah 2:12,¹² *And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem.* Yes, there is hope and joy.

The “last times” are characterised in the Bible as “*perilous times.*” Just look around and see for yourself what is happening in the world!

Scripture says in 2 Timothy 3:1–5,¹ *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!*

And in 1 Timothy 4:1–2,¹ *Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.*²

We read in Acts 14:22, that “*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.*” So, as we observe these things happening we must take comfort in the promise of our text: *And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent [Jesus Christ] to you.*

We also have the assurances of Jesus who is with us always, that our every material need will be provided.

We read in 1 Timothy 6:17,¹⁷ *Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.*

And in Matthew 6:33–34,³³ *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*³⁴ *Therefore do not*

worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Remember how God provided for Elijah at the brook, and also at Zarephath through the widow.³

Let us beware, however, lest we overvalue material prosperity. We ought no longer to be children and think in terms of dolls and hobby horses, or the dollars and the things they represent.

Jesus says in Matthew 4:4, *“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’”*

The real grounds for our joy, especially in this season of Advent, are the spiritual blessings which the Saviour brings with Him. Zechariah is not merely thinking of bricks and mortar, but of the *“living stones”*⁴ that are to be built into the spiritual temple which the Coming One would make His holy habitation.

Our text says, *Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people.* The tidings of great joy shall be to all people. The joy of the empty tomb. The joy of Pentecost. The victory of the Gospel. The joy of the shepherd that found the lost sheep, of the woman over the coin, of the father over the returned son, of St. Paul when converts turned to the Lord.

3. The Joyful Heart Is To Express Itself.

There are many reasons for every Christian to live the rest of his days with a joyful heart. But to actually have a joyful heart we must do something about it. We must get into action.

In the first place, the prophet, in giving us these wonderful assurances, insists that we should realise, appreciate, know, that the Lord of hosts has sent a Redeemer into our midst, to be ours, and to dwell among us. Our text reads, *And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.*

Certainly you heard this text. You also heard some of the blessings that are offered through the Word of God. *To preach good tidings to the poor; ... heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, ... to comfort all who mourn, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

There is nothing more joyful than the forgiven sinner. We read in Luke 15:10, ¹⁰ *Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.*

But this knowledge must sink from your head into your heart. You must actually realise the hopelessness of a soul without Christ, a world without Christmas.

Think of a farm without spring and summer, or an earth without the sun. What would be your lot in time and in eternity be without the Saviour? Take time for quiet contemplation of God's Word, His prophecies and their fulfilment.

Take note of especially Luke 1:2-4, ² *just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,* ³ *it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus,* ⁴ *that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.* It is this certainty that we have as Christians and that nobody can take away from us.

Furthermore, when you are commanded to sing and to rejoice, you are thereby ordered to guard against every force within you, against every power coming from without, that would rob you of a joyful heart.

Beware of the killjoys, such as worry, unnecessary cares, sinful pleasures, an evil conscience, failure in doing your full duty by your family, neighbour, and church. Women, like Martha, may be encumbered with much serving. Men may be too preoccupied with their occupation.

Again, bear in mind that God really means what He commands, and He expects you to comply when He says: ***“Sing, rejoice.”*** We should express the joys of our hearts. Since we know the blessings of Christmas, we should shout about it. Our face should tell of this joy. Our eyes should have a sparkle, and our mouths a song. Our lips should speak to others about it and our purses sing so that ***“Many nations shall be joined to the LORD.”*** Our heart should pray, praise, and give thanks.

There are abundant reasons why we should have a joyful heart. Let us express this joy. What a happy Christmas we will celebrate!

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁵

O rejoice, ye Christians, loudly;
For our joy has now begun,
Wondrous things our God has done.
Tell abroad His goodness proudly,
Who our race has honoured thus
That He deigns to dwell with us:

*Joy, O joy, beyond all gladness!
Christ has done away with sadness.
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the sun of grace is shining.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Philippians 4:4

² See also Matthew 24 and Luke 21

³ 1 Kings 17:2-16

⁴ 1 Peter 2:5

⁵ Hymn 32 v1, see also Hymn 15 v 3