

Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
September 17, 2020

"JOY TO THE WORLD!"

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Philippians 4:4

Yesterday in our Tuesday morning Bible study, in which we were looking at the beliefs of other protestant churches and comparing them to our Lutheran doctrine, the question was raised as to why we're not more joyful about the grace that God extends to us in His Son Jesus Christ. The Word of God clearly tells us that of ourselves we are totally sinful and enemies of God, dead in our sins and unable to respond to God's goodness, mercy, and grace. But in His amazing love God empowers us to faith and new life through His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, as we hear the sweet words of the Gospel, *that God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (John 3:16) In order to have fellowship with Him, God our Father demands that we be perfect; righteous. Because of our inherited sinfulness, and the sin that it produces in us, none of us can ever hope to be perfect. God knows that and sent His Son into the world to be born in the person of Jesus to live the righteous life that we can't. He did just that, and then willingly took on crucifixion and death in our place to atone, make payment, for all our sins. We used the word "propitiation" which is the satisfaction of God's righteous wrath against sin and sinners. Jesus took all of that upon Himself, in our place, and in exchange He gives us His righteousness. The Apostle Paul states that clearly in Romans 3:21-24, *"But now the righteousness of God has been made known apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."* We don't earn God's favor. We can't! God graciously gives us His favor for the sake of Jesus and His completed work of salvation in the cross and empty tomb. We don't make ourselves right with God, rather we are made right with Him through faith in Christ. Faith is the open and empty hand that takes hold of all of the gifts that God gives us in Jesus. What all this means is that our sins are forgiven, and our eternal destiny is secure in the Kingdom of heaven. Born slaves to sin, death, and the power of the devil we are forever set free. For us they have been disarmed by our Savior Jesus. All of this should cause us to be overjoyed...all the time! There is nothing more important in life than having a right standing with the almighty Creator of the universe, and that has been done for us by God himself. Sure, this world is still broken and sinful, and sin always brings with it suffering, but again, the Apostle Paul puts that into the proper perspective. *"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."* (Romans 8:18) There will come a day, soon, when all suffering will be behind us, and the glory of our eternal inheritance in Christ will be revealed to us. In this life we are completely incapable of comprehending what that is going to look, sound, feel, taste and smell like. Heaven will be a place of unimaginable comfort, peace, fulfillment, and joy...yes joy! As we are traveling in that direction some of that joy should be present in us as we already have the assurance of eternal salvation and life by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have His Spirit within us as a guarantee of that reality. Yes, rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS; again I will say, rejoice. God loves you and pours out His mercy and grace on you everyday in Jesus. Our joy should bubble over and be seen by all those around us and inspire them to ask us why we're so joyful. To which we can point to Jesus and all that God has done for us, and for them, through Him