

Pastor Brian's  
Midweek Message  
December 29, 2021

## **"THE CELEBRATION CONTINUES!"**

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

We're four days past Christmas. In my neighborhood, most of the Christmas light displays have been shut off already if not completely removed. Our lights continue to burn brightly and will continue to right through the New Year's holiday and then Epiphany, January 6th. Epiphany is often called "Christmas of the Gentiles" as the Magi from the east...likely Babylon or modern-day Iraq, arrived in Bethlehem to worship the newborn King...who at the time of their arrival was likely no longer a newborn but a toddler. The Three (or how ever many there really were) Kings would not have arrived until a year or more after the birth of our Savior. Back on Christmas Eve our choir (the award-winning Trinity Lutheran Church of SW Florida Choir) sang the anthem "Rejoice, Christ is Born". You might remember it from the lower voices singing "Pum, pum, tiki-tiki pum" through much of the number. It was a fun song for us to sing and I pray that you enjoyed it as well. But the real gift of this song comes in the message the lyrics conveyed. *"Christmas people gather near and put away all doubt and fear. Shout and sing. Be of good cheer. Rejoice, for Christ is born!"* notice the grammar at the end doesn't say "*was born*", but rather "*is born*". That means that it represents and ongoing reality...something that is significant still today and will be forever. The Apostle Paul tells us in the verse above, from his letter to the church in Philippi that our rejoicing is an ongoing reality too, something to be continually done. We rejoice in the goodness, love, mercy, and grace of God that He would send is one and only begotten Son into the world to be born one of us, to be with us, and be for us. That this same Son would grow into the perfect sinless human being that none of us could ever begin to be in order to become the sacrificial Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world by submitting to death, even death on a cross in our place and on our behalf. So going forward let the celebration continue. This Sunday we'll continue the Christmas celebration even as Satan, our one true enemy, uses horrifying tactics to destroy God's plan of salvation. God thwarts the devil's scheme. A week from Sunday we'll celebrate Epiphany as this gift of a Savior is for all people, not just those of Hebrew descent. At the end of February, we'll celebrate the Transfiguration of Jesus as His divine glory briefly shines through His humanity on a mountaintop in the sight of Peter, James, and John. The voice of God confirms that He is indeed the Christ, the One to whom we must listen. We'll then enter the penitential Season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday, as we prepare ourselves to remember and revisit the Passion of the Christ and His death. All of that leads up to the greatest celebration of them all, the celebration of Christ's resurrection, Easter! The reality of Easter tells us that we stand justified before God through the suffering and death of Jesus the Christ, and that our resurrection to eternal life is assured. In Christ we are made children of God and heirs to God's Kingdom. On the night of that 1st Easter Jesus appears to His disciples in a locked room in Jerusalem with a single message; "Peace be with you". In His death and resurrection Jesus has made peace for us with God. Because of the resurrection and the assurance of our eternal salvation we can now live in peace in a turbulent and tumultuous world because we know how our life's journey is going to end up...that our life will not end but become infinitely better due to the completed work of Christ. All of this is reason for rejoicing! We are Easter people and we should remember that every day of our lives. Jesus gave all so that we might forever have all in Him. We receive the benefit for all He has done by faith. We trust that He has done everything needed to make us forever right with God. Yes, Christmas 2021 is in the rearview mirror, but our celebration, our rejoicing continues. *What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height*