

“Rejoice Greatly” 6/7/2009 Music Sunday Kenmore UMC

Isaiah 61:10-11, I Peter 1:3-9

Peter was boldly confident and humbly self-effacing. Not a religious bully.

Isaiah calls to cross the threshold of hope, where impossibility yields to God’s ability to bring something green from the cold ground.

This morning in our worship through the wonderful music, our prayers and in God’s word spoken and sung we have claimed a future reality in the here and now.

That is God’s gift to us, always at all times.

Peter praises God because “*he has given us a new birth into a Living Hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*”

And Isaiah proclaims for us “*I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God;*”

He goes on to explain that God has clothed him, and all of us, with the garments of salvation, like a bride and bridegroom adorned with beauty for their wedding, like the beauty that springs up out of a garden in Spring.

In worship we celebrate receiving that joy and allow it to spring forth from our mouths and seep into our living.

Rejoicing Greatly means allowing the joy of God’s great love for us to permeate our being. We have been loved into existence and regardless of the particular moment in our lives, we know God is with us. Though we made be sad, we can claim the wonder and peace of God with us.

When Peter wrote his letter in Rome it was a time of great persecution and suffering for the Christians he was writing to. Isaiah is calling the people to greatly rejoice with the Classic good news/bad news that having been held in captivity they are now ready to return to their homeland, Unfortunately it is ruined.

Miroslav Volf reflecting on Jurgen Moltmann’s Theology of Hope reminds us of the difference between optimism and hope.

Volf writes, “Optimism is based on the possibilities of things as they have come to be; hope is based on the possibilities of God irrespective of how things are. . . Hope is grounded in the faithfulness of God and therefore on the effectiveness of God’s promise.” In the face of death, and our grief, we can claim not only the joy and loved that has been shared in the life lived, but also the comfort, peace and joy that only God can give and nothing in this world can take away; along with the good news our (sisters) loved one is welcomed into the place God has prepared for them.

Sixty five years ago thousands of men were living a hell beyond our imagination or description on the beaches of Normandy, because they were pursuing a hope, a joy beyond their imagining. We celebrated D day yesterday because it was the beginning of claiming hope, but that living hope was lived out through death and destruction over the next two years.

In 1945, in the wake of a world-rattling war, Ruth Krauss wrote a children’s book called The Carrot Seed. The book is as profound as it is brief. A young boy plants a carrot seed. He tends to the weeds and waters the ground, but his parents and older brother are not optimistic. Still, the boy tends the plot and waters the ground. His family remains dubious. Then one day,

“a carrot came up, just as the boy had known it would.” The carrot is larger than life, larger than the boy.

This image of that carrot underscores the promise of bounty and growth for Israel and for Christians in Isaiah and Peter. It calls us to cross the threshold of hope, where old wounds are healed, where impossibility yields to God’s ability to bring something green from the cold ground. And it calls us to consider the new life that God has brought forth in Bethlehem and that God brings forth in our lives as we rejoice greatly.

That is the Living Hope that Isaiah and Peter are calling us to rejoice greatly in. That is why we sing. It is a joy and peace that is far deeper than happiness, that is how we live. It is a gift that only God can give and nothing in this world can take away.

When we “Rejoice greatly” in God, we are claiming and proclaiming the Living Hope that has claimed us in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is expressed in music, in lives lived in service, in lives so bathed in love that it overflows like the living water flowing from the fountain of God’s love.

Allow your being to be embraced in God’s Living Hope in Christ Jesus our Lord that in all the moments and times of your life you may shine with it and let your soul Rejoice Greatly.

