

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fifth Sunday after Trinity, June 26, 2016

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 417, 12:5, 233, 53, 53:6.

Lessons: Isaiah 65:1-16, Hebrews 5:7-10, John 10:24-33.

Sermon Text: Luke 10:17-22.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In Christ our Lord, dear friends,

What makes us happy in this life? Is it our success in achieving goals we have set for ourselves? Is it that we have plenty of material goods and are not suffering want? Do we feel happy and secure when we have no afflictions or troubles of any kind, when everything seems to be going well? If this is all that makes us happy, then perhaps we should consider the life of Paul Gerhardt, a German Lutheran pastor who lived in Germany in the 17th century. As a young man he suffered much during the Thirty Years' War that was raging at that time. He suffered during his ministry because he was not willing to compromise his faith. He suffered much grief in his personal family life. Four of his five children died, and his wife was seriously ill. Did he perhaps grumble and complain and go around with a sad look on his face? No, this is what he wrote in one of his 123 hymns:

“My heart for joy is springing
And can no more be sad,
'Tis full of mirth and singing,
Sees naught but sunshine glad.
The Sun that cheers my spirit
Is Jesus Christ, my King;
The heaven I shall inherit,
Makes me rejoice and sing.” (The Lutheran Hymnal 528:15)

It isn't what we have in material goods; it isn't outward success in earthly matters; it isn't lack of tribulation or affliction that gives us joy. What makes us happy as believers in Christ is the inner spiritual joy we have in Christ our Savior. This is what we want to learn from our text today, as we consider:

OUR CAUSE FOR REJOICING AS BELIEVERS IN CHRIST

1. **Satan is conquered, and our names are written in heaven.**
2. **God's grace in Christ has been revealed to us so that we know God as our Father.**

Before our text we are told: *“The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.”* Luke 10:1 (NIV) These were followers of Christ also, besides the Twelve. They had been sent out to preach, and our text tells us what they reported to Jesus when they returned from their mission. *“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’”* They did not rejoice because they had been received with open arms when they preached the message that the kingdom of God was near, but because they had been able to cast out demons. Demons or evil spirits took bodily possession of some people who suffered much abuse because of this. That they were cast out of the afflicted people was indeed a blessing. But it seems that the followers of Christ were inclined to boast about what they had been able to accomplish in Jesus' name.

In replying to the disciples, Jesus set forth the true reason why the disciples should rejoice. *“He replied, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions*

and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.” That the followers of Jesus could cast out the evil spirits was a gift from the Lord. God has given such gifts to his Church at various times in church history, and the giving of such gifts is always under the Lord’s control. The main emphasis should not be on having or coveting charismatic gifts. We find that emphasis in many churches today when men claim to be able to heal the sick, or speak in tongues. The main emphasis should be on Christ’s victory over Satan. Satan is our old evil foe, the ancient enemy of God and man. He is a liar, the Father of lies, who deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. He deceives many today with lies so that they do not believe the Word of God. He is responsible for false teaching. Paul speaks of the devil when he writes: ***“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*** 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NIV) He afflicts people today also and is responsible for many evil things happening. But above all, we should beware of his schemes to get us to fall away from faith in Christ. Peter exhorts us: ***“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.”*** 1 Peter 5:8-9 (NIV)

Jesus wanted his disciples to rejoice because of his victory over Satan. Jesus fought the temptations of Satan throughout his earthly ministry, but particularly when he was tempted at the beginning of his ministry, and when suffering and death on the cross was about to take place. In every instance Jesus won the victory over Satan. In the wilderness he overcame Satan by quoting the Word of God. Just before his suffering and death, he told his disciples: ***“Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.”*** John 12:31 (NIV) We should rejoice in this that Christ by his redemptive work has broken the power of Satan. Now Satan can no longer have power over us, so long as we put our trust in Jesus.

There is, however, greater reason yet for joy for believers. Of this Jesus told the seventy-two followers: ***“However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*** Nothing should make us happier than the precious gift of God’s grace in Christ which results in our names written in heaven. The Bible in both the Old Testament and the New Testament speaks of the “book of life” in which the elect children of God have their names written. Our greatest joy under all circumstances should be that we as believers in Christ can voice this assurance: ***“He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.”*** Ephesians 1:4 (NIV) Our greatest joy should always be that we as believers in Christ are promised: ***“He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”*** Revelation 3:5 (NIV)

Another cause for rejoicing as believers in Christ is given by Jesus in our text, namely, that God’s grace in Christ has been revealed to us so that we know God as our Father.

2.

“At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.’” The first thought that strikes us when we hear Jesus’ words is that not everyone had God’s grace in Christ revealed to them and so has cause for rejoicing. It is a precious gift of God’s grace given to those whom God has chosen in Christ Jesus. Our Lutheran Confessions from the days of the Reformation put it this way: “In Christ he saves us out of pure mercy, without any merit or good works of ours, according to the purpose of his will.” (Formula of Concord, Concordia Triglotta, p. 1093) What the heavenly Father has done is right and good in every way, and so also Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and praised his heavenly Father.

God, the Bible says, ***“wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*** 1 Timothy 2:4 (NIV) But some, yes, the majority, proudly reject all that God has done for them in Christ the Savior. They are like the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus’ days on earth, trusting in their works, but rejecting the Savior in his work of redemption. From such the Lord has hidden the gospel truths of salvation. They are the mighty, the wise and learned ones of this world, who are filled with worldly wisdom. To such Paul says the ***“message of the cross is foolishness.”*** 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV) Of those who are filled with their own wisdom, the Lord says: ***“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”*** 1 Corinthians 1:19 (NIV)

But the nobodies of this world have had the precious truths of salvation revealed to them. Paul writes: ***“God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.... so that no one may boast before him.”*** 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NIV) By the grace of God the simple people of this world accept the salvation in Christ with a childlike faith. They are the ones who by the grace of God ***“take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”*** 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) They accept the authority of God’s Holy Word and show their respect for the wisdom God has revealed in Christ the Savior.

This precious gift of God’s grace, that we know God as our heavenly Father, is given us only in and through Christ Jesus. Jesus says ***“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”*** Jesus here speaks of the intimate relationship he has with his heavenly Father. They are one in essence, one and the same God. Jesus says: ***“I and the Father are one.”*** John 10:30 (NIV) So the Son who was born of the Virgin and became a true man, is also true God from eternity. Everything, Jesus says in our text, has been committed to him by his Father. What the Father knows, the Son knows; what the Father wills, the Son wills; what the Father does, the Son also does. Jesus says: ***“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”*** John 5:19 (NIV) Therefore what Jesus did on this earth as the Savior was the will of his heavenly Father. He lived a perfectly holy life in obedience to God’s commandments as our Substitute. He suffered, shed his blood, and died on the cross for our transgressions of God’s commandments as our Substitute. He suffered the very punishment of hell in our place. Because Christ did this, God’s declaration in the gospel is this: ***“He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** Romans 4:25 (NIV) God now counts us as righteous in his sight and we can stand before him on Judgment Day, because of what Jesus did for us.

The great truth taught in our text is that God the Father and his Son Jesus are one God. Together with the Holy Spirit they are to be honored and worshiped as the one true God. There is no other God, and there is no other way to salvation except through Jesus. Jesus says: ***“No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.”*** John 6:46-47 (NIV) Jesus says: ***“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*** John 14:6 (NIV)

The majority of people in this world do not know or believe this. If we, then, have this spiritual knowledge and accept Jesus as our Savior by faith, we have the greatest possible gift of grace that can be given. This is our cause for rejoicing! Therefore,

“In every season, every place,
May we regard Thy Word of grace
Until, when life’s brief day is past,
We reach eternal joy at last.” Amen.
(The Lutheran hymnal 7:3)

Reprinted from a Ministry By Mail sermon from February 26, 1989.