

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Trinity Sunday, May 27, 2018**

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

Hymns: 10, 417:3-4, 325, 398, 644.

Lessons: Psalm 95, 1 Peter 1:1-12, Luke 2:25-35.

Sermon Text: Psalm 51:10-12.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

What makes you happy? What gives you joy? We could think of many things, and the unbelievers in the world could probably think of even more things that they might think make them happy. Is it things that give us joy? Is it events?

And what kind of joy are Christians looking for? Is it only an emotion we are looking for? Is it just feelings? The Word of God today looks to God asking him to restore to you

**THE JOY OF YOUR SALVATION**

- 1. Where this comes from.**
- 2. What this means.**

We're not talking about the kind of temporary happiness or joy that we might experience here on earth. Things that might come to mind are the joy of something good happening to us, or of seeing a beautiful flower, or enjoying a beautiful day, or the happiness of a birthday party, of a good meal, of a vacation, of a wedding. But those things do give us happiness, and they are a way to compare the kind of happiness and joy that we are asking from God. We are talking about something that lasts much longer, something that is really much more important.

Psalm 51 is a song of repentance in which David speaks to God after the prophet Nathan came to him after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba. The first part of this psalm reads: ***"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity."*** Psalm 51:1-9 (NIV)

David – and we, too – then go on to plead with God: ***"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me."*** We sinners realize that this is not something which we can do. God must do it for us. David is praying for a miraculous act which can be performed by God alone. This prayer can be answered only through the work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can work repentance, faith, and willing service. The Holy Spirit not only created in us faith through which we receive forgiveness, but also a willingness to serve God, so that we strive to keep God's law. Because this renewal is never perfect in this life, David prays that the Holy Spirit will keep him steadfast and sustain him so that he will not fall into sin again.

Each Sunday we pray in song: ***"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."***

Let's review for a moment what salvation is. Salvation is deliverance from death and the devil. We confess with Luther's explanation of the Second Article of the Creed that Jesus Christ "has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil." That is what salvation means.

Sin, death, and the power of Satan are no longer in complete control of our lives. Oh, yes, we sin daily and much. But on Sundays we together, publicly, make a confession of our sins, with the pastor speaking for us that we are guilty of sinning in thoughts, words and deeds. On Communion Sundays we make what is perhaps a more personal confession of sin, speaking out loud the words of repentance.

Salvation is not something we have earned. Jesus Christ earned it for us "not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." It is the gift of God.

These words of Scripture today ask God to restore unto us the joy of that salvation. We often lose sight of that joy in our lives.

Salvation is ours. Christ earned it for us. We should know from our sins and from God's law that we can't earn it, that we can't buy it.

Earthly joy and happiness comes to us in that way. We often have to buy it. We often have to do something to earn it. But sometimes the greatest earthly joy is really the joy that comes from others, from gifts. Unexpected gifts. In this Psalm we're talking about the joy that comes from God. It is certainly undeserved.

That salvation manifests itself in the forgiveness of our sins. The result of such forgiveness will be joy and gladness in place of the fear and grief caused by unforgiven sin. It is totally a gift from God. ***"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."*** Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

Paul asks in Romans if God is unrighteous, if God is unjust. ***"Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."*** Romans 9:14-16 (NIV)

We must say the same thing about our joy or happiness. It does not ***"depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."*** It is because of that undeserved gift of mercy that we can experience joy – the joy of our salvation.

Earthly joy often relies on emotions and feelings. But we just can't rely on our emotions for permanent, lasting joy. For a really good, positive, lasting joy we need to rely on things like the gift of God. And that is what we are going to rely on for the joy of our salvation.

I have heard people lamenting that they don't find joy in their salvation. Maybe sometimes we don't have much emotional joy in our salvation. But emotional joy, external joy, is not a lasting thing. Because of our human emotions, we may be really up and excited and positive one day and really down or even depressed the next day. In fact, such ups and downs of emotions may happen frequently within even one day. As humans, we want to feel good, we want to feel up, we want to feel joy and happiness. But true happiness comes from God.

When we look at Scripture, we find some clues and pictures about what happiness and joy are. One of the most beautiful is found in Psalm 144. ***"Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."*** Psalm 144:15 (KJV) The NIV translates: ***"Blessed are the people whose God is the LORD."*** To be truly happy is to be blessed by God. To be blessed by God is to be truly happy. Psalm 144 is worth reading, because it gives some marvelous pictures of what God and the blessings of God do for us.

The believer lives in a state of grace, God's grace, his undeserved love and mercy. The state of grace is a state of joyfulness of heart and mind. When we speak of blessings we often think of all the earthly good things that God has provided for us and done for us. But the spiritual blessings are far more important. And the foremost, the most important of those spiritual blessings is the forgiveness of sins.

When we realize and remember what the forgiveness of our sins means for us, we can see the joy that God's salvation gives us.

There is no greater blessing than to have a God who is the Lord Jehovah, the true God. He alone can give such blessings as true happiness. Such a privilege surpasses all earthly blessings, if a people has the right to call the true God their God, their heavenly Father, chosen by him as his children and blessed with all spiritual blessings because of what Christ did.

We pray with David in this psalm ***“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.”*** We are asking God – and don’t we ask him daily? – to restore, to bring back and give to us the joy of our salvation.

We know we have been redeemed, and believe that the Holy Spirit has worked faith in us to receive that gift and make it our own.

There are probably not too many listening who can remember the first time we came to faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, in most of us the Holy Spirit worked faith in us at our baptism as infants. But someone who has come to know Jesus Christ later in life often has or seems to have a greater joy in his or her salvation than someone who has had and known it all their lives.

If you have known such people you realize that when they came to faith in Jesus Christ there was a great deal of joy and excitement in their life.

***“Renew a right spirit within me.”*** Our joy has to come from knowing and believing that God has created a clean heart in me. That’s the spirit of repentance. The spirit of God has to create that clean heart.

David prays, and we pray: ***“take not Thy Holy Spirit from me”*** He prays that he would not slip back into the impenitent condition of that terrible year in his life. He prays that he not persist in his opposition to God’s gracious influence, and thus be condemned eternally. Every believer prays to the Lord to be preserved against the hardening of his heart which leads to rejection of the Gospel-message and to final destruction.

May God give you joy and renewal, working sanctification in us each day. For we know and believe that all our sins are covered by God’s grace. This is the message we find repeatedly in God’s Word. And so with the poet we sing:

“Thy Word doth deeply move the heart,  
Thy Word doth perfect health impart,  
Thy Word my soul with joy doth bless,  
Thy Word brings peace and happiness.” (The Lutheran Hymnal, 5:2)  
May God’s Word daily bring joy and happiness into our lives! Amen.