

Paul had great joy because Jesus gave him a reason to get up each morning and face the day, knowing that he was making a difference. Not just living comfortable till the grave, but Jesus had enlisted Paul in his life changing work – as Jesus enlists all his disciples. Paul had great joy because he wasn't chasing a pipe-dream but was changing people's live, bringing the peace of God to them, that they too might not be victims of circumstance but God's change agents bringing his faith, hope, love and joy into being.

So Jesus comes again this Christmas with the great gift of joy.

Comes that we might discover, rediscover the joy that comes from sharing God's life, living from his love, knowing his forgiveness, being shaped by God's presence not left despairing, void of any real meaning or purpose, just being tossed here and there by the whims of circumstance.

What area of your life needs transforming by the joyful presence of Jesus?

This Christmas invite him in as your feast on his word, as you open yourself up and be vulnerable in relationship with him, as you take the time to pray for others, asking the Holy Spirit to show you how you can make a positive

difference in the lives of the people you live and associate with.

Let us pray.

Jesus free me from simply responding to what happens in my life. Fill me with faith in you, with the hope you offer, with the love you give that I might shape what I do to reflect the joy of life lived with you.

By the power of the Holy Spirit and to give you a great reputation shape my thoughts, words and actions to change the world around me so that the joy of your presence is known. Lord Jesus use me to bring you kingdom empowering me to joyfully do your will. Amen.

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am

Pastor: Tim 0427326553

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Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ



14 December 2008

Advent 3 JOY.

Isaiah 61:3



Isaiah proclaimed that the Messiah would; "bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair." Sounds good to me, I'll have some of that.

Who wants to replace mourning with joy? I reckon everyone.

At Christmas time we're all focused on world peace, doing away with all that causes people to mourn replacing it with joy. Christmas is a time of joy; the joy of family gatherings, the joy and excitement of presents being opened, and my

favourite, the joy of feasting. I reckon everyone wants world peace, to replace mourning with joy.

Well I've got good news for you today; I know the joy boy, and it's not the big man in the red suit, it's the man who was born that first

Christmas Day. Jesus is the joy giver.

Jesus stated aim way back about seven hundred years before his birth was to give us the oil of joy instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. The apostle Paul encourages his hearers with these words; "Rejoice in the Lord always. I

will say it again; Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4)

Paul could easily have moaned, groaned and complained. He wrote many of his letters from prison, and to people who were causing problems. Paul had plenty of reason not to rejoice.

In his letters he writes; "Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes". One of the reasons it was thirty-nine lashes not forty was because forty strikes of the whip were considered lethal. The whip used in such an instance became known as a 'cat of nine tails,' because it was made up of several whips

with lead weights attached at the end. Often pieces of sharp broken bone were laced in some of the tails to tear away at the flesh when the whip was withdrawn from the victim's body. Paul went through it not just once, twice, three times, or four, but five times. His back must have been one giant scar. More than enough to make me complain.

But there's more; "three times he was beaten with rods, three times shipwrecked, spending a night and a day in the sea." I don't know anyone who has been shipwrecked, let alone three times. If Paul gets on a cruise ship, get off at the next port.

Paul also says, "Once I was stoned." This statement is incredible. It is not a comment on his days in the drug culture of the sixties. There are not many people in history who can write on their resume that they have been executed. Paul was

Rejoice in the Lord
always

stoned in Lystra and left for dead under a pile of rocks. But he rose from the pile, brushed off the dust, and walked right back into town to preach to the people. What sort of motivation is this? Where does it come from? How can someone like this be stopped?

This is the guy who says; "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will

say it again; Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4)

This sort of joy is not natural; it is otherworldly and only possible by the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit and a heart willing to surrender to the love of Jesus.

This sort of joy doesn't come in a gift under a Christmas tree.

That joy is fun for a while but evaporates as quick as you realise there are no batteries.

The joy Jesus gives is always fully charged, ready to change the world we live in, ready to change me, so that I don't live from what I get but rather from what I've got. So now in Jesus I have the power to shape the world around me rather than have the world

around crush me into its depressing form.

The joy boy of Christmas didn't let the grave crush him into its depressing form; he burst out rejoicing in his Father's amazing grace. Jesus gives the oil of joy instead of mourning. Death doesn't shape his life, the grave doesn't shape Jesus, Jesus shapes the world offering joy.

If Jesus or Paul had let the circumstances they found themselves in determine their life they both would have become cynical and disillusioned, they would have lost any sense of joy and just felt that life had become a real drag.

But Jesus and his servant Paul don't live from what

happens to them. They're not slaves to their environment, to other people's whims. No Jesus comes to shape the world so that his joy of life might permeate our lives, filling us with a faith, a hope, a love that can never be extinguished. Jesus

Jesus shapes the world,
offering joy

comes into our lives that we might have joy instead of mourning.

Rejoicing in being alive, not because nothing ever goes wrong, but because of who has come to share their life with us. In Jesus, God has come to share his life with us.

This isn't just some future dream, but a present reality. Paul

didn't sit alone in those prisons, the living God in the person of the Holy Spirit sat there with him; giving Paul hope, faith, love and joy. Paul lived from what he had not from what he didn't have. Paul is a loved child of God. Paul is a citizen of Heaven with Jesus as his King. In Jesus God chose to share his life with Paul, living with him in each and every circumstance he found himself in.

Paul's joy came from deep within him, a precious gift from the joy-boy himself, Jesus. Paul's joy from Jesus, often overflowed changing the situation he was in. So we find Paul singing and praising God while he is in prison, changing the Jailers life forever.