

"The Joy of Living"

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Scripture Lesson:-

Text:-

Introduction:- Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but he was a man of joy and gladness too. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God."

Even down to the last night before the crucifixion when he knew that very night he would be denied, betrayed and forsaken and the next day nailed to the cross, even then he was so thrilled with joy that he shared it with his sorrowing disciples. He said unto them, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

I.

Great saints of the centuries were men and women of great joy in spite of their sufferings and persecutions. Martin Luther was a happy man and his home was a happy place. He formed an orchestra of his family. After the evening meal they would play and sing the hymns and rejoice together. The saints and martyrs shouted and rejoiced at the stake as they waited for the flames to end their lives.

Andrew, one of the twelve disciples of Christ, is said to have witnessed to his love for Christ two days as he hung upon the cross slowly agonizing and dying. They huddled together in the arena until pounced upon by the lions. We can be sure the rejoicing and glad witnessing of those dying martyrs made a profound impression upon the pagan people of that day. No doubt many of them were won to the Savior on the very spot.

Take the case of Madame Guyon, who lived 350 yrs ago in France. She was of noble birth, a mystic, a writer and a poet. Because of her religious

convictions she was thrown into prison and in her prison cell she sang for joy:

"Strong are the walls around me,
That hold me all the day;
But they who have thus bound me
Cannot keep God away;
My dungeon walls are dear,
Because the God I love is here.

They know, who thus oppress me,
'Tis hard to be alone;
But know not the One can bless me,
Who comes thru bars and stone;
He makes my dungeon's darkness bright
And fills my bosom with delight."

To do such a thing as that one must have a great faith in God and in his goodness and love and that he will work everything out for our good and his glory.

Did you know you can grow joy and happiness in your soul just as the florist grows flowers in his garden? Paul said, "Be filled with the Spirit speaking to yourselves in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." In other words, cultivate the joy and happiness by singing hymns and by making melody in your hearts to the Lord.

II.

I heard a great and good man say that if he got up in the morning feeling rather low he would go to praising God and making melody to the Lord. He said that the first thing he knew a whole brass band would come marching down the road and into his soul.

"What are you doing there Sam, strumming on that banjo and singing away to yourself", asked a passer by of a happy colored man. "Oh, I was just serenading mah own soul", was the quick reply. That's what Paul told us to do, serenade our own

souls by speaking to ourselves with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and making melody in our hearts to the Lord. Try it. It works.

We don't sing enough. We ought to sing more in our homes and at our work. "Her work is in the valley but her heart is with the stars", said a housewife of a woman, who had been hired to help with the domestic duties. As she did her humble tasks one could hear her singing:-

"On the rock of Ages founded,
what can shake thy sure repose?"

She said she sang because the preacher said that "we should do our everyday work for God".

Too many of us Christians are gloom dispensers when we out to radiate joy and sunshine. Ours is a singing religion. Let us sing in season and out of season.

III.

The story is told that a man with a clerical appearance was asked if he were a preacher. "No, he replied, it is indigestion that makes me look this way." If you profess to be a Christian don't go about with a solemn face and gloomy looks for the non-Christian will say, "If that is the way being a Christian makes one look and feel I beg to be excused".

Bishop Warne of India used to tell his native preachers when they went out into a village to preach Christ not to go with a sad countenance and gloomy looks. He said, "If you do the bright boys and girls will seize you up and say, "Why, he hasn't got anything we do not have", and you lose your case before you open your mouth. Go with happy hearts and shining faces and they will hear you.

I like some of the choruses that we sometimes sing.

"O say but I'm glad, I'M glad,

Another one is, "It is summer-time in my heart"

I thank God that I have something in my heart that makes me sing in spite of the political conditions, in spite of wars, in spite of the threats of Communism. The love of Christ is in my heart. It is the inner assurance that no permanent hurt or harm can come to me so long as I am his and he is mine.

To belong to Christ means sanity and safety, and serenity and security.

I understand that other religions like Mohammedism, Hinduism, and Confucianism do not sing. Well, what have they to sing about. Mohammed is dead, Buddha is dead. Confucius is dead. Our Lord and leader died, but rose again from the dead and lives forever more, and because he lives we too shall live. We, Christians have something to sing about, something to rejoice over. Let us rejoice.