

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 17th, 2017

REV. TERESA CHARLTON

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"I WILL TAKE JOY"

Based on Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Isaiah said, "Listen to what I say! The Holy Spirit is upon me. I have been sent as a messenger from Almighty God. I have been sent to lift you spirits, to heal your wounded souls, and to remind

you that your God, has not forgotten you. Do not lose hope, my friends, for a day is coming, when His people will weep tears of joy, and no longer mourn and grieve its

losses. There is a day coming where we will live like kings and queens once again!"

One wonders how many times, and in how many gatherings, the prophet Isaiah shared a common hope,

portrayed a vision of peaceful times, attempted to re-ignite the fires of faith deep in the hearts of his people. "How many times must I cajole the crowd to 'turn that frown upside down,'" he might have asked quietly of his God. At the same time, there must

have been whispers in the crowd of listeners, "How long must we wait for this joy?"

For the truth was, that while one day, victory would

arrive on their doorstep, and in joy they would return home, what would they find when they arrived? Parched earth and little food? Tainted wells and homes turned to rubble? Family scattered, and relationships tattered? Would

there be cause for joy once the victory lap had been completed?

"Yes," said Isaiah. When that day arrives,

[We] will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated;

[We] will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.

(v4)

"How?" came a cry from the crowd? "How can we do all this?"

"You can," said Isaiah, because all that parched earth needs is a little water and a little care.

For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations. (v11)

Your God loves justice and He rewards the faithful. (v8)
He will bless His people. (v9)

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~ISALAH 61:11

You have many reasons to rejoice!

But the challenge I would like to leave with you in the season of great joy is this.

Are you waiting for joy to wash over you, like a warm glow of contentment, or are you taking the joy of the season and embracing it fully? Are you like the people Isaiah was preaching to: waiting for Almighty God to bring the joy and drop it in their laps, or are you like Isaiah himself, "delighting greatly in the presence of God", reaching out and taking that portion of joy which was his to take?

Do you look at the parched earth and go searching for your hoe, or do you throw up your hands and say, "All is lost!"

I Will Take Joy. I will not wait for joy to fall in my lap. I will not expect anyone else to bring me joy in a box or on a platter. I will not get angry that the joy I receive is not what I had in mind. I will not be disappointed that I did not get enough joy this season. I will not be envious of someone else who seems to be more joyful than I. This year, I will take joy. Because it is mine to take. I will reach out and capture those joyful moments wherever they appear, and

nestle them deeply into my heart for a cold and dreary day when I am struggling. I will listen to others share their stories of joy, and celebrate quietly with them, that they too, have taken joy that is theirs to take.

In a time of polite society, where we are trained to share, and give back and to compromise, I assure you, joy is one thing you are encouraged to take. Take as much of it as you possibly balance. Be greedy. Let it fill all the empty spaces inside, right down to your toes. And just when you think you are filled to the brim, it will pop up

unexpectedly in giggles and kind gestures and smiles and laughter. When you are filled with the Joy of the Lord, it is infectious.

This season, do not wait for joy to arrive. Take it. Welcome it. Embrace it.

*Rejoice, rejoice,
Emmanuel, shall come to
thee, O Israel*

~German Psalter

~We welcome our friends from Prince Rupert as they join us in this Advent Series.

