

Day 20

Friday, December 19

Pastor Bethann Johnson

“Jesus, Presently Unseen, Fills Us with His Joy ”

“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”(1Peter 1:8-9)

We who follow Jesus weren't eyewitnesses to His birth. We didn't see Jesus grow up in the small town of Nazareth or perform His first miracle turning water into wine. We didn't hear His voice and what God the Father really desires and requires from each of us and how to live in right relationship to the Father. We didn't see Jesus' miracles, we didn't hear the rumblings against Him, the questions among the crowds, “Is *this* the Messiah?” We weren't at the foot of the cross when Jesus was crucified. We weren't part of His terrified followers locked behind doors when He appeared to them upon raising from the dead and conquering death and sin. And yet, over 2000 years later, those who follow Jesus believe that He is God's Son, He died for our sins, He rose again three days later and He is presently sitting at the right hand of God the Father. We believe. We believe, even though we haven't seen Jesus.

The Jesus witness Apostle Peter reminds us and *encourages* us, because even though we have not seen Jesus, we love Him and believe in Him. We are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy because Jesus has saved us! This joy is not a future joy, or a measured partial joy but an **inexpressible and glorious joy!** As followers of Jesus, we possess *that* type of joy right now...and always!

Sometimes we need reminding because we forget...maybe we think our joy means we have to wear a permanent smile plastered on our face while we grit our teeth while not “feeling” one bit joyful. What an ulcer inducing prospect, if that is what it means to be a joyful Christian. Thankfully, Peter is telling us that even during grief and suffering we can endure because our joy is grounded firmly in Jesus' salvation. Our joy in Jesus plumbs the depths of our soul...it is rock hard and stable.

So shouldn't the world see this joy more? After all, Peter characterizes this joy as inexpressible. Literally, a joy that cannot be expressed in words. How could we display an inexpressible and glorious joy to those who need it most? The good news is that we who are believers in Christ already possess this joy! This joy should be evident in each of our lives, right now.

So what does this inexpressible joy look like if it's not a plastic/fake/over the top adrenaline emotional wave of joy? I think it would look different for everyone, but speaking for myself, it's living a life fearlessly, knowing that as believers we are unstoppable because we have salvation through Jesus. Even in the midst of adversity or trouble, we can move forward and be fearlessly confident to follow Jesus and that He

is with us through the most difficult and challenging moments, struggles, seasons, years of our lives. In Luke's account of Jesus' birth, the angels make their announcement to the shepherds first with "Do not be afraid" and then followed with "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people". (Luke 2:10) God has a way of giving us everything we need when we are the most fearful. Jesus' gift of salvation is enough! We have it! Let's be joyful!

Advent is the waiting for the birth, but also the return of our Christ Jesus, Son of God, Conqueror of Death, Savior of the World! And Jesus, although presently unseen, will one day be seen by all. May you set your heart fully on the inexpressible and glorious joy you presently possess and may your joy be evident to all.