

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

December 13, 2020

The Father's Joy

John 17:13-19

Pastor Paul Jackson

[song: "God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen"]

Erik Buchterkirchen:

Thank you so much, Hailey. It's such a gift to be able to hear from you today.

Merry Christmas! Oh yes! That's what I like to hear. Well, it's great to see you this morning. My name is Erik; I'm the director of young adult ministries welcoming you here to Glenwood. It's great to see all of your faces. Hello to all of us who are joining online. It's good to see you on the camera, I guess.

Anyways, I've got a couple of really exciting things happening in our congregation that I would like to invite you to be a part of, just to welcome in the Christmas season. The first thing I'd like to tell you guys about this year is Colleen Adent is hosting a Christmas Eve, eve concert. So, December 23rd, at 7:00 PM, you can tune into YouTube to watch her perform your favorite Christmas songs. The comment section on Youtube will be open so you can go ahead and put your request in for the songs that you want to hear. So if you would like to see that and have your home be filled with Christmas music by the one and only Colleen Adent, you can go online to [Glenwoodcc.org/Colleen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...); it will give you a link directly to her Youtube account, and you can see her perform. It's going to be awesome.

Next on our list is the Christmas Eve candlelight service. It's going to be usual place - December 24th - but it's going to be online this year. Singing, Scripture, and a devotional from Pastor Paul is what you can expect, and you'll also be able to take home a candle that we have provided for you in the foyer. So you can grab one on your way out and be able to participate, with your family or by yourself, online together, even though in a season of while we are separate. It's going to be a lot of fun. Go to glenwoodcc.org/live at 1pm or at any time thereafter in order to view the service. And we would love for your participation and for you joining within that. I'm going to go ahead and pray for our service this morning as we get started, so if you would go ahead would you bow with me?

Lord, remind us in this advent season of Your incarnation. You are the God of all truth, the God of deep hiddenness, God of all hiddenness who shows Yourself in Your being hidden, who hides Yourself in Your disclosures. We would know more of You, of Your goodness and of Your mercy, of Your large purposes and long term dreams. In Your presence we become aware of how little we know ourselves. Of our interests and passions, of our fears and dreads, of our own wonderments and gifts. In Your truthfulness, let us know more of You, and in knowing you, ourselves as well. We pray in the name of Jesus, where we see You fully and ourselves clearly. Amen.

Ben Rico:

Amen. As we continue worshipping together this morning, I'd ask for you to join with me as we meditate on God's word together. As I read this compilation of Scripture, I would ask that you take note of three things. And as we call this compilation-- I really should have given a better name for this, maybe something catchy-- but these are Scriptures of joy because they describe a God who is joyful; a Scripture of joy because our God rejoices over His people, and that's what He tells us in His word. And I would ask that you would take note of the essential

relationship between God and His greatness and in His love, and His joy over His people. And so we read in Zephaniah 3:

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;

shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!

The Lord has taken away the judgements against you;

He has cleared away your enemies.

The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst;

you shall never again fear evil.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:

"Fear not, O Zion;

let not your hands grow weak.

The Lord your God is in your midst,

a mighty one who will save;

he will rejoice over you with gladness;

he will quiet you by His love;

he will exult over you with loud singing. [Zephaniah 3:14-17, esv]

In Luke 1,

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my savior,

for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

for he who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is his name.

And his mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

*He has shown strength with His arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as He spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” [Luke 1:46-55, esv]*

In John 15,

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” [John 15:7-11, esv]

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You are a God of joy, a God who saves, who rejoices over His people. Help us to recognize Your greatness. Help us to live in thanksgiving through Your love for us and help us share in Your joy.

[music, “He Has Given Love a Name”]

Pastor Paul:

Good morning. Good morning! Thank you, Colleen, and thank you, Ben. Thank you, Ben, for giving voice to a new song, and thank you, Ben Rico, for writing a new

song. I peeked in the window yesterday from the foyer, and I saw Ben up here at the piano, and he was hammering away on the song. And it's such a delight to give voice to the goodness of God and the joy that we have that He shares with us in Jesus Christ.

Last Sunday morning, at the close of the service, Brandon and Colleen played. They played a Carol, "O Holy Night." And this last week, everywhere I went, those words were ricocheting through my mind. I'm giving voice to them; I'm driving down the road; it's cloudy; it's rainy; and it's dark, and I'm singing "O Holy Night,"--thankfully you couldn't hear me sing "O Holy Night".

But there's a phrase in the song, in the carol, that I kept pushing on. I kept coming back to it, leaning into it. 'How's this work? What does this mean?'

It goes like this,

"O Holy Night. The stars are brightly shining,
it is the night of the dear Savior's birth.
Long lay the world, in sin and error pining,
till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,
for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.
Fall on your knees, oh hear the angel voices.
O night divine, O night when Christ was born."

Do you hear the phrase: "The weary world rejoices." We're starting to get a little better idea of what weary really feels like, aren't we? Our world is weary of disagreeing; our world is weary of conflict; it's weary of fear; it's weary of anger; it's weary of sadness; it's skeptical - and sometimes weary - of social media, weary of headline news, weary of sin and all that is wrong in other people, and sometimes weary with our own sin and what is wrong with us. So we do know something about weary, don't we?

What do we know about rejoicing? A weary world rejoicing? We're in an advent series we started off a few weeks ago. It's called "The Father's Gift," and the first sermon was from John 14, and that is the gift that God gives to us, the gift of peace that He gives in and through Jesus. In John 14, Jesus is getting the disciples ready for life on earth serving Him as He ascends to the Father. And the disciples, they don't really like the idea that Jesus is going to go someplace without them, and so they pursue Him, and they push back, and they say, 'Where are You going, and can we come with You, and how do we get there?' And Jesus tells them He's going to ascend to the Father; He's going to prep a place for them in the presence of the Father, and that He will bring them to Himself, but for now we have this mission that He calls us to. And Thomas asks, 'How do I get there?' and He says, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but through Me.'

So He opens their eyes, that how we access the Father, and what the Father has in store for us. And so Jesus says, 'But for now, I give you my peace.' He promises, the Spirit - God the Spirit - who would indwell the heart of every believer. And He promises a peace, and He said 'the world can't give this peace.' If you look for this peace anywhere, in anybody or anything else, this ultimate peace-- this comes from God, it's a peace the world can't give.

Then we looked at the Father's gift in John chapter 15 as we continued the Farewell Discourse, it's called, it's Jesus prepares His followers for life in ministry and service here. And what's all the Father's gift? The gift of love that He gives in and through His son Jesus Christ. And Jesus says, 'As I love, you love.' So we are loved so that we can love. That's the Father's gift.

This morning, we look at the Father's gift of joy. We're going to start in a familiar place. If you'd take your Bibles and open to the Gospel of Luke 2, Luke 2 details the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem.

But there's another event in Luke 2 that I want to talk about. And that is, we find somewhere outside of Bethlehem a group of shepherds, who were the essential

workers of their day. They are hard at work. And in the middle of the night, there is an appearance of the glory of God. Normally shepherds would have been on the outside looking in, but they have a front row seat. So, here you have these essential workers, you have the lower strata of society, and they have a front row seat to this kind of glory of God that shows up, that reveals - discloses - the presence of God. And their very first response was a response of terror, they were outright, downright afraid.

Caesar Augustus was on the throne. Caesar Augustus, which means 'to increase to the point of divinity.' He named himself that. And he's conquered the world, and he wants still more, and he needs money, and so he's going to increase taxes, so he's got to know how many people live in his kingdom and in his realm, and his empire, so that he can charge them, so that they'll pay taxes, so he can increase his military might and his army, so he can expand his reach, so he can control and crush those who are under his jackboot, under his heel. And so he decrees a census. He thinks he's in charge; he thinks he's on the throne; he thinks he is the one who's making the calls and the decisions. But he's just a petty tyrant. He's just a petty tyrant who has no idea how little he is.

And on the throne there is a God, who, before He created the world, envisioned how He would save the world. He is a God who created humanity, who loved humanity as they rebelled against Him, as they broke with Him, as they made the world a weary place. A world infected with sin, a world with systems that are not right, a world with people who care and love themselves more than they love others. He had this vision that He would save the world, and it's that vision that He announces to these lowly shepherds, someplace outside of Bethlehem, that the greatest event in the history of the world to that date had occurred. And it's that news that occasions joy.

What is it that occasions joy? Well first, what occasions joy is, Jesus is our Messiah, Savior, and Lord. In Luke 2, the shepherds are out in their fields. Verse 9, "*And an*

angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened."

Sometimes the Greek New Testament makes you focus on the words, because you're not as familiar with them, and you pick up in the Greek New Testament what you don't see in English. Well in verse 9, in English, my translation says "*terribly frightened.*" In Greek it is "*great fear.*" "*Great fear.*" Same word is used in verse 10, only it's "*great joy.*" So at first they have this great fear and the angel says, 'Don't fear, this is not a time and occasion for fear; this is a time for great, or greater, joy.' And what occasions this joy? Verse 10, "*The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all people.'*" Including you, the shepherd in the field.

This is great joy for the one on the margins, or in the margins of our society, the ones on the outside. This is great joy for all people. And verse 11 "*Today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord.*" Today is the greatest day in the history of the world. Born for you, a baby. There were a lot of babies in Israel. What the angel says is, a baby has been born who will give a weary world cause to rejoice.

This last week, one of our granddaughters, she came over to our house. And Nancy had decorated a Christmas tree, and under the tree is a nativity set, a ceramic nativity set. And as she came in she was drawn toward the tree, I thought, but no, she was drawn toward the nativity set under the tree. And even more specifically there's a little, tiny baby in a cradle, and she kneels down and she begins to hold this little baby, and she goes, 'A baby!' That's the wonder God created in us, that He would use a man and a woman to mirror a little bit of what He does. He created humanity, so humanity can procreate. And it's that birth of this baby that inspires such awe and wonder.

But this baby was unlike any other baby, in that every other baby inherits from their parents that brokenness and that sin and that flesh that rebels against God.

This baby would be born without sin. This baby is God the Son. He is Creator who became part of His creation. He became God in the flesh. He reveals and discloses God to us so that we can know who God is, in and through the Son. We know the Son? We know the Father.

It's this baby and that baby is described with three titles that are only found here in the New Testament. He is, as you pick up the account in verse 11, has been born for you: first, "*Savior*"; second, "*Christ*"; third, "*the Lord*."

God knows we need to be saved. When the angel appeared to Joseph, the angel instructed Joseph 'This is what you are to name the baby. You are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.' That's the purpose of the infant, that this sinless one would grow up and yield to the Father in any and every way, that He'd withstand the assault of the evil one out in the desert, that He would resist the temptation, that He would say yes to the Father, that He would say yes to a life of obedience and sacrifice to the Father. So that when He dies our death He is qualified to take our place, to die our sin, to bear our sin, to be raised to life, so that you and I can experience occasion for joy.

Occasion for joy: forgiveness of sin, salvation, saved from ourselves, saved out of a weary world, saved for Him, for His purposes, for a life like Him. Saved for more than forgiveness, but saved to serve. He is Christ, sent from God, on a mission, which He will send us to share in His mission. He is the Lord.

Caesar Augustus thinks he's king. Jesus Christ is the High King of heaven. He is the Lord and the ultimate authority of any and all who confess His name. He is Lord even with those who don't confess and die in their sins. He is still Lord whether He is acknowledged as such or not. If we're a believer-- for the one who confesses Jesus, He is Christ, Messiah. He is Lord above all.

Sin has disfigured the human heart; it's distorted the beauty God created, broken relationships, infected human institutions. And that's why the world is so weary. Jesus is Savior, sent from God. He is occasion for joy, and to punctuate this good

news, one angel suddenly becomes countless angels praising God, and they say, in 13 and 14, *"Suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.'"*

What occasions joy? The birth of Jesus occasions joy.

What occasions joy? Secondly: a life agreed and aligned with Jesus Christ.

Turn to John chapter 15. We were there last week; we spent our time in John chapter 15. But what occasions joy in John 15:10-11 is a life agreed and aligned with Jesus.

Last week we saw that Jesus said, *"Abide in me."* He is the vine. Abide in His love, and mysteriously, He abides in us, and His love abides in us. He is Word, and we are to abide in His word, and amazingly His word abides in us. He's already promised the Spirit in John 14, and He does again. He promises His Spirit that He's going to send, and He's going to give His Spirit and so now His Spirit indwells the life of any and all who confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and their Savior. And His word abides in us, and it's that intersection of His Spirit with His word in the heart of the willing that catalyzes an action of obedience to Him, with the result that we experience joy.

John 15:10-11, *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love. Just as I have kept my Father's commandment and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."*

Jesus obeyed the Father, and as Jesus obeyed the Father and delighted in the Father, He experienced joy in His obedience to the Father. When we obey Jesus Christ and say 'yes' to His word, delighting in Him, His joy splashes on us, into us, bathes us: He shares His joy with us. Simply put, John 15:10-11 is the joy of saying 'yes' to Jesus Christ and His word in that moment of loving obedience to

Him. It's the joy of forgiving someone. It's the joy of generosity, for His name, for His glory. It's the joy of overcoming evil with good. It's the joy of mercy as we have received mercy. It's the joy of saying 'yes' to Jesus Christ and 'yes' to the Spirit of God. And as we say 'yes' to Jesus Christ and His word and the Spirit of God, that is occasion for joy.

What occasions joy? Thirdly, the resurrection victory of Jesus Christ.

John 16 brings to a conclusion these words of Jesus as He's preparing His disciples for a life and a mission on earth without Him. The words that He says to them are really quite troubling. By the time we get to the end of John 16, the conversation, He turns it toward His death and His resurrection. He personalizes it with them and He tells them that, in a little while, you're going to experience gut-wrenching, gut-kicking grief. In a little while, you're going to experience a loss that you never anticipated, that you don't have a vocabulary, and it's going to paralyze you emotionally.

But in a little while, you're going to experience joy. You're going to experience joy which is the opposite of gut-wrenching, -kicking grief. So, in a little while, you're going to experience this devastating grief, and then you're going to watch the enemies of God do a victory dance in celebration, they think, of having put to death for good the Son of God. So the enemies of God are going to rejoice, and you're going to see this victory dance as they rejoice, and you're going to see how wrong it is, but, now you're going to think you were wrong. But then it's going to turn for everyone, so that you will rejoice and they will weep. So we pick up the account in John 16:20-22, *"Truly, truly I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy."*

It's hard for us sometimes as we look back on the disciples, and we think they seemed rather obtuse. Didn't they hear Jesus say He was going to die? Didn't He repeat that? Well, we have the luxury of looking back on the cross and the death and resurrection of Jesus with the Spirit of God and the word of God that explains

God's idea of redeeming us in and through His Son. They had no category for a crucified Messiah. They had no category, to the point where at the death of Jesus they experienced, this grief and this loss and this fear, and it's like their life is over and 'what do we do now?'

Verse 21, Jesus explains with a word picture that's familiar to them and to us.

"Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world." Remember those moments? If you're a parent, when your wife gave birth and you were there, and you saw how intricate and beautiful and amazing this little life is?

I remember the first child that Nancy gave birth to, and I remember sitting there beside this bed as she went through these agonies and thinking, 'What is going on?' I am amazed at a woman who delivers and who gives birth and the transformation that occurs after she gives birth. There is a delight in the child. And that's the word picture that Jesus uses to describe the crucifixion and then the resurrection. Verse 22, *"Therefore you too have grief now; but I--"* this is His promise-- *"I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one can take My joy away from you."*

What occasions joy? The resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's the resurrection promise that 'I will see you again; you will see Me again.' He is alive, He has overcome the grave, He has conquered death! What occasion joy? Jesus Christ is risen!

What occasions joy? Fourth, the word of God working through us for the mission of God occasions joy.

John 17, high priestly prayer of Jesus Christ. He prays, first for Himself that He'll fulfill and keep the mission of the Father, and then He turns His attention to His disciples, and He prays for those whose boots are on the ground. And they are in the room, so to speak. They're the ones who will remain; they're the ones who will live out His will and His intent. They would be the witnesses who tell the watching

world what they saw and what they experienced. So He prays for them. And then He turns His focus to the future. Next week you're going to hear a bit of that prayer as He looks to the future. And that future, if you're a believer, it includes you. Jesus prayed for you.

But in John 17, in verses 13-19, He prays for His disciples, and here is what He prays. *"But now I come to you, and these things I speak in the world, so that they may have My joy made full in themselves."* His joy, in full, in them. Inside of them. *"I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*

Remember John 14? 'Take us with you, Jesus! We want out of here! We don't like it here.' There's enmity here. There are threats. There's hostility. So, as the world and the demonic force that control the world, as they were opposed to Jesus, they would oppose followers of Jesus. So, Jesus prays for them because He's leaving them here. He's not taking them out of this place. He's got an idea; He's got a plan, in a weary world, so that a weary world can rejoice. And so He prays for them as He leaves them in the midst of this place, where He acknowledges the hostility, and He acknowledges the evil one. And so He prays for them. And He prays for them in verse 15-16, *"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."*

Remember what He said to Peter? Peter said, 'Hey, I'm going to die with You; I'm with You; I'll never desert You; I'm going to be loyal to You.' And Jesus pauses and He looks at Peter, and He says, 'Peter, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat.' And you see the authority of Jesus. You see the authority of Jesus over the evil one himself. And now, Jesus praying to the Father, He says that He asks the Father to keep them from the evil one. Verse 16: *"They are not of the world even as I am not of the world."* 17 *"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."*

He doesn't pray that God will take them out of the world, because the world needs to know Him. Because His followers are witnesses in a world that opposes Jesus. Because Jesus wants to save and transform. Jesus speaks words of truth for us; so that as we sanctify ourself in truth, His word-- Just as He obeyed the Father, now you and I in Christ, we can sanctify ourself in His word, so that we can be witnesses for His intent and His purposes. That occasions joy.

This isn't the last prayer of Jesus. He would pray in the garden. He would pray, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' And then He would pray, 'not my will, but Yours-- Thine.' That's that intersection of obedience, where we would rather not, and God says 'do it.' And Jesus says, 'I will.' So He won the day. He would pray on the cross. He would pray to God, the Father, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'

So He would sanctify Himself in truth, so that we can sanctify ourselves in His truth. That occasions joy.

What occasions joy? Fifth, finally, when we finally see Jesus.

Turn to John 20:19-20, this is fulfilled in the life of the disciples. This is the promise that Jesus made: you will see Me again. And they see Him again in John 20, only they're hiding behind a locked door out of fear of the Jews, thinking they're going to get arrested. It's Sunday evening. They've already heard word and message that Jesus Christ is not in the tomb. They themselves, some of them, have seen the empty tomb. The women have already witnessed the resurrected Jesus, and it's a woman who was the first to announce the Gospel of the resurrected Jesus. The disciples are parked in the upper room; they're behind a locked door. And suddenly the resurrected Jesus enters the room.

So we see the account in 19 and 20, "*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with*

you.” Do you see the transition? They go from fear to His offer of peace. But they go even further still. They go from fear to rejoicing in the presence of Jesus. Verse 20, *“When He has said this, He showed them both His hands and His side, and the disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”* He had promised, ‘You will see me again, and you will rejoice.’

So they see Him. They touch; they see his wounds. This is empirical evidence for the resurrected Jesus. This is eyes locked on. What we call Cartesian certainty: without a doubt, scientific proof that the Jesus Christ who was dead is truly and completely, incredibly, alive.

Well, Thomas wasn’t present, and Thomas needed that Cartesian certainty. And I am so thankful Thomas was not present. Because the other disciples, they told Thomas, ‘He was here; we have seen the Lord!’ Thomas says, ‘No, I’m not buying that again. I’m not buying what you’re selling until I see Him and I touch His hands and His side.’ So, in His kindness and His grace, Jesus shows up again and He shows up to Thomas.

The end of John 20, verse 26. *“After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here with your finger and see my hands. And reach here with your hands and put it into my side. And do not be unbelieving, but believing.”* Now Thomas has the same empirical evidence; he has this living proof; it’s touchable. You know Jesus is alive. And his response is the only rightful response to the resurrection of Jesus Christ: he says, ‘My lord and my God!’

And then Jesus speaks to us, to you, for those who don’t have empirical evidence in the resurrected Jesus, to those who don’t have this Cartesian, scientific certainty. He says to them in verse 29, *“Because you have seen me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see and yet believed.”* That is the blessing of Jesus Christ on any and all who confess their faith in Him.

If you've never confessed your faith in Jesus Christ, today is the best of days for you to confess to God who He is, and sending of His son Jesus Christ; that He lived our life; that He died the death that we deserve to die; that He is raised to life to share life with those who believe; that you would confess your sin to who Jesus is, to who were are not; that you would admit God's grace; that you would yield your heart to Him; that you would confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, as your Lord, as the Jesus who saves from sin.

And for those who believe, He announces this blessing upon those who believe. And this is occasion for joy: as He promised to the disciples, 'you will see Me again,' He promises that to us, that we will see Him. The one whom we have not seen, one day we will see, and He promises that when we see Him, mysteriously, we'll be like Him! He will finish His recreation in us in that we will be completely like Him, whatever that is. So is His blessing, so is His promise, and that occasions joy.

Will you bow with me please?

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son as a child, this infant: Creator of the world become part of His creation, a baby, vulnerable, in a world that would be hostile to Him and to You. Thank You for the victory You have won; thank You for the life He lived, the death He died, the life He lives. Thank You for the victory that You won for us, Jesus. May Your Spirit inhabit us. May we say 'yes.' Help us to say 'yes' to Your word, experiencing the power and the strength of Your Spirit and experience the joy that You offer to share with those who follow You. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Ben Rico:

Amen. In this advent season as we look forward so readily to being face-to-face with our Savior, we can experience joy now. And it's such a gift that we can

fellowship in the Holy Spirit through what Christ has done for us. It's such a gift that we can, even in this world now, experience true joy. And would you share with me in that joy? Even without singing, would you worship with me as we praise our God who saves, our God who rejoices over the people He loves.

[music: "Joy to the World"]

As the joyful people of a joyful God, go in peace.