

“Be Glad and Rejoice in the Lord”

Joel 2: 21-27

This week, my mind has kept coming back to our worship service last Sunday, in particular to one part of the service. I kept thinking about Jack’s communion meditation last Sunday. As we may remember Jack shared with us the secret of life. It is all about attitude and how we respond to life’s ups and downs. If we expect bad things to happen, we won’t have any problem finding bad things in our lives. If we expect good things to happen, we will be overwhelmed by the goodness that fills our lives. All because of our attitude.

And as I was doing sermon prep this week, I couldn’t help but think that is the same words of wisdom that the prophet Joel is also sharing with us today, this time calling us to have an attitude of celebration, an attitude of rejoicing always, an attitude of thanksgiving. Joel is calling us as people of faith to have an attitude of gratitude. All because God is filling our lives with so many blessings. Joel is giving us the promise that we will soon forget all the bad stuff that seems to be draining our energy. Joel is giving us the promise that there is and there will continue to be so much good stuff filling our lives as the people of God all because we are claimed and named as God’s own. Joel is telling us that with our attitudes of

gratitude, and with God having the last word, the good will always outweigh the bad.

All we have to do as the people of God is have an attitude of celebration, an attitude of rejoicing, an attitude of thanksgiving, an attitude of gratitude.

Now please hear me say that I am not saying that bad stuff will never happen to us as the people of God. I am not saying that life will always be ups and never downs. And also please know that I am not asking us to go around with our heads in the sand or deny reality. I am not asking that as Christians, we should go about with fake smiles plastered on our faces or pretend that everything is sunshine and rainbows. And I am certainly not asking us as people of faith to hold on to false hope with no real substance behind the blessing.

No what I am asking us to realize on this Thanksgiving Sunday is that it is all about our attitude. God has showered us with grace and love and out of this loving grace, our lives are filled with abundance, abundance that this world doesn't understand because it doesn't come with a price tag or a monetary value. This abundance comes from knowing that God is in control. This abundance comes from knowing that God has the last word. This abundance comes from knowing that renewal is possible and is promised to us by our Savior who brought new life to us.

This abundance comes from knowing that God has filled our lives with grace, not because we earned it, and not because we deserve it but because God wants to simply because we are God's very own, named and claimed, each precious in his sight.

So be glad and rejoice! Have an attitude of gratitude. Because we know that no matter what this world says or does God wants to shower all of God's children with the gift of grace, a gift that sustains, a gift that transforms, a gift that frees us to become the people that God created us to be. God's grace is a gift that words cannot describe or even capture the amazing experiences it offers for all of God's children. It is a gift that is freely given because God wants to shower all of God's children with this blessing!

So be glad and rejoice! Have an attitude of gratitude! A message that never gets old and very much the same message that Joel shared with his community all those years ago.

In our text today, we only get a small part of Joel's attitude of gratitude. And they don't quite seem to fit Israel's situation at the time because in reality, it was probably as bad as it could get for the people of Israel. The land had dried up. Their warehouses of food that once were filled now sat empty. Their fields that were covered in crops were now covered in locusts. And their grape vines that once held the biggest and juiciest grapes now were dried and shriveled. It was a

bleak time for Israel. It was a dark time for the people. It all seemed so hopeless. And for the most part, the people's attitude reflected their mood. They had given up. They were just waiting for the next shoe to drop. The people's attitude reflected the darkness they were all experience, well all but one guy. That's right, the prophet Joel.

Instead of moaning and groaning, Joel was celebrating and rejoicing. He had an attitude of thanksgiving in the middle of some of the darkest times for Israel. All he could say was be glad and rejoice and he wasn't just saying this to the people. Joel was talking to the soil. He was talking to the animals. He was telling them all to be glad and rejoice!

And all the people of Israel could think was "Man, this guy is crazy. Sure the prophets of God have always been just a little bit crazy but this guy, this Joel, he is really off his rocker. Where did God find this guy?"

All the people were thinking "Is this guy seeing what we are seeing? All we see are struggles and tribulations. All we see are empty grain houses and empty vats of wine. All we see is Trouble with a capital T. Why is this guy so happy?"

Joel could tell the people of God to be glad and rejoice because he remembered something that the people of God had forgotten. An attitude of gratitude is possible because it comes with the promise of reassurance from our God. An attitude of thanksgiving and celebration is possible because it comes with

the opportunity for renewal. An attitude of gladness and rejoice is possible because it comes with understanding that God is in control.

Because Joel knew from the beginning of time, God had never abandoned the people of God. In fact, since the beginning of time, God had thrown caution to the wind and had given to all of God's children with reckless abandon, that from the very beginning of time, God had been extravagant with all who are in God's care, who were wrapped in God's love, and who were filled with God's blessing. Joel knew that since the very beginning of time, God had been generous and supplied the needs of God's children, no ifs, ands, or buts, and that God didn't plan on stopping it any time in the future!

And the only way that we as people of faith could respond to such an amazing, to such an extravagant gift was with attitudes of thanksgiving and praise, was by living lives of thank filled living, lives that reflected and shared the very same amazing, extravagant grace with all of God's creation.

So be glad and rejoice! Have an attitude of gratitude for all that God has done and continues to do in our lives. And let us live lives of thank filled living by God's grace by waking up each morning, thankful that God has given us this day to experience the blessings of God, by saying thank you to God for the food in our pantry, by saying thank you to God for our families and friends, by saying thank you to God for all the unexpected blessings that fill our lives.

Be glad and rejoice! Let us have an attitude of gratitude. We are showered with God's grace each and every day of our lives. Be glad and rejoice! our lives have been so transformed by God's grace that we know that we will never be the same.

Be glad and rejoice! Let us have an attitude of gratitude. Let us sing songs of thanksgiving and share the good news! we know that we are blessed beyond our imagination! We are blessed because we are claimed and named as God's very own. We are blessed because God sent God's own Son so that we might have new life. We are blessed because we are surrounded by a community of faith who will walk with us, who will support us, who love us. We are blessed because we are loved by a God who throws caution to the wind and gives to us in reckless abandon!

So be glad and rejoice! Let us have an attitude of gratitude! Let us have an attitude of thanksgiving as we join our voices with the chorus of praise from all of God's creation, giving, thanking, and praising God for all that God has done.

So be glad and rejoice! Let us have an attitude of gratitude as we share the abundant blessings of God's promises of grace and love with those in need, with those that are hurting, with those that are lonely, with those that are suffering.

Because the good news for us this morning is that we know that at the core of our attitude of gratitude and our lives of thank filled living are God's promises to help

us overcome our sufferings, help us overcome our struggles, and to help us overcome the hardships we face. We know that our God has not left us alone. Our God is there supplying all our needs. Our God is there walking with us through the darkest valleys. Our God is there, holding us in the palm of God's hand.

So today and all days, let us be glad and rejoice because we know We are not alone. So today and all days, let us shout with thanksgiving. So today and all days, let us sing songs of God's great harvest, a harvest of justice, a harvest of peace, a harvest of righteousness, and most importantly a harvest of grace. So today and all days, let us have an attitude of gratitude knowing that our songs of thanksgiving, knowing that our lives of thank filled praise will multiply the blessings of our lives even more!

The good new is that our God has claimed us and named us as God's own. So today and all days, be glad and rejoice. Have an attitude of gratitude as we hold onto the promise that renewal is always possible through God's grace and God's love. So today and all days, let us be glad and rejoice, knowing that our lives are filled with the abundance of the Kingdom of God.

May we always have an attitude of gratitude as we continue our journey through life, always expecting the goodness of God in our lives. Amen.