Advent 3 Zephaniah 3:14-17
December 12, 2021 13-14-5/11-8

Rejoice in Your Advent King!
I. Rejoice in what He has done for you.
II. Rejoice in what He is doing for you.
III. Rejoice in what He will do for you.

Dear Christian friends,

It's getting closer. The candles are on our **Advent wreath** are **burning brighter**. Even though Advent is supposed to be a SUBDUED SEASON we still rejoice. We CAN'T HELP ourselves. Our Christmas joy spills over into Advent.

Zephaniah takes us to the DARK DAYS of the **OT Advent** season. Those days were going to become EVEN DARKER and MORE DREARY. **Rather than** excitement and anticipation building DESPAIR was **spreading**. Yet here's Zephaniah saying, ***"Sing out, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart."*** You can almost feel Zephaniah GROPING for the words to express his **Advent joy**. Zephaniah was like Paul in the epistle reading, ***"Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice!"***

That is still God's will for us today. REJOICE IN YOUR ADVENT KING! We have good reasons **to rejoice**. Rejoice in what **your Advent King** 1)has done, 2)is doing and 3)will do for you.

I. Rejoice in what He has done for you.

Is it REALLY PROPER for **us to rejoice** even as Advent calls on us to **repent**? Repenting and rejoicing seem to CONTRADICT each other. If you are scolding a child for **doing something wrong** and WITH A BIG SMILE on his face he says, **"I'm sorry!"** – do you really believe him? That smile is a DEAD GIVE AWAY that he **really isn't sorry**. That smile says, "I may HAVE BEEN WRONG but it sure was fun and I **wouldn't mind doing** it again!" That's not repenting!

Today's **OT** and **epistle** readings clearly call on us to ***"rejoice."*** JUST AS CLEARLY the gospel reading calls on us to ***"repent."*** John the Baptist made clear the KIND OF REPENTANCE God is looking for.

Repentance is an honest – NOTHING-HELD-BACK – confession of our sins. Repentance **means** we stop denying and stop making excuses for our sins. We may have all kinds of GOOD REASONS **why** we can't do what GOD CLEARLY SAYS. "Lord, I know I shouldn't TALK about other people like that – **I know** I should be more faithful in **reading** my Bible – **I know** I shouldn't pick on my sister – I should drive the speed limit, BUT…" **In sinful pride** we may actually expect God to CONDONE our sin. We may even get upset **as if** God is PICKING ON us – "Hey, Lord, just look at what **that person** is doing!"

If God says something is a sin IT IS a sin and we have no business doing it. GOD has put that off limits for us. **Repentance** is, "I was wrong doing that. I sinned when I **acted like** that. I defied God when I **didn't do** whatever. I'M SORRY Lord." Our actions HAVE CONSEQUENCES. Because we **haven't always** PUT GOD FIRST **in everything** our lives now SHOULD BE a **living hell**. Because of our sins God has EVERY RIGHT to **send us** to hell's eternal punishment.

"Produce fruits in keeping with repentance," John preached and then also explained. The FRUIT of repentance is that we stop doing **whatever** we're repenting of. That OUTWARD CHANGE of **actions** or **language** proves there was an INNER CHANGE of **heart**. Where those fruits are lacking SO TOO is **real** repentance. If you think that's GOING OVERBOARD listen again to what John said. ***"Every tree that does not produce good fruit is going to be cut down and thrown into the fire."***

HOW can we rejoice **even as we repent** of our sins? We're NOT REJOICING in our sins but in our ADVENT KING and what He's done for us. ***"Be glad and rejoice with all your heart! The LORD has removed the judgment against you. He has turned back your enemy."*** We rejoice **as we repent** BECAUSE IN JESUS we have forgiveness for **all** our sins.

Jesus came here to ***"remove the judgment against"*** us and He DID JUST THAT by taking our judgment on Himself! God doesn't forgive our sins BY OVERLOOKING them or shrugging them off. God's forgiveness is based on JESUS SATISFYING **God's justice**. Jesus took our place **under** God's law and lived for us that life of **perfect love, trust** and **obedience** that we owed God. Then the sinless Son of God took our place on **Calvary's cross** and was punished for the sins of the whole world. Jesus personally paid for all our sins with His own innocent suffering and death. REJOICE **as you repent** because God doesn't simply give us a SECOND CHANCE or LET US OFF **this time**. Rejoice because **for Jesus' sake** God HAS FORGIVEN ALL your sins!

REJOICE **because** our Advent King ***"has turned back your enemy."*** Jesus conquered death and the **devil** for us. REJOICE **because in Jesus** we have eternal life in heaven. With Jesus as our Savior we ALREADY KNOW **exactly** what will happen to us when we die. We are going straight to heaven – NO IFS, ands or buts about it.

Zephaniah is making an IMPORTANT POINT. We can rejoice **even when** we DON'T FEEL happy. Listen to that **again**. We can rejoice **even when** we DON'T FEEL happy. Our joy is not in **how things are going** for us but in our ADVENT KING. **With Jesus** we have plenty of reasons to ***"rejoice"*** – including…

II. In what He is doing for us.

We call Jesus our ADVENT – our COMING – King. But let's not live **as if** Jesus WASN'T AROUND right now. **Sure** we can't talk FACE TO FACE with Jesus the **way the disciples** did at His **first coming**. We don't see Jesus **in His glory** as we will at His **second coming**. But Jesus IS WITH US right now. ***"Israel's king, the LORD, is in your midst! The LORD your God is with you."***

It didn't look like that **for these Israelites**. It wasn't going to FEEL that way either. **Things** were going downhill fast in the kingdom of Judah. **Godly king** Josiah's reforms were TOO LITTLE too late. The ***"great day of the LORD"*** was coming to bring God's SWIFT – WELL-DESERVED JUDGMENT on His **stubborn, impenitent** people.

Things weren't going to go the way the **people wanted** or **hoped**. SOUNDS A LOT like our lives, doesn't it? Things happen to us that we HAVE NO CONTROL over – **accidents**, **illnesses**, etc. That can be scary UNTIL WE REMEMBER **who is in control** – our ADVENT KING!

Because our **Advent King** IS WITH us and IS IN CONTROL we can rejoice despite what may **all be happening** in our lives. With our Advent King ***"You no longer need to fear disaster. Do not be afraid, O Zion."*** That's not God's promise of an EASY life. But we do have **Jesus' promise** to ***"be with us always"*** and to ***"work all things"*** for our eternal good. We may not always understand what **God is doing** but we have God's promises and that's GOOD ENOUGH. God knows what He's doing even if **we don't**. God doesn't owe us any EXPLANATIONS.

Rejoice in your **Advent King** and ***"Do not give up"*** – ***"don't let your hands hang limp."*** The picture is EASY to understand. Fear can paralyze a person and rob us of our **joy** and **enthusiasm**. Hands ***"hanging limp"*** say, "WHY BOTHER, anymore? It won't do **any good**. It's a LOST CAUSE. I GIVE UP." **Limp hands** are the world's answer to problems today. Don't work out your problems. Don't follow **God's will**. Don't trust **God's promises**. If your LIFE STINKS give up. **Instead** of REJOICING in your **Advent King** pout – **whine** – wallow in self-pity. We feel **like that** at times, don't we? Then we need to REFOCUS on our **Advent King** and see Jesus with us right now working all things for our

good. Go back to what Paul said in the epistle reading. ***"Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, WITH THANKSGIVING, let your requests be made known to God."***

We can rejoice RIGHT NOW because Jesus is our **Advent King**. WITH JESUS we always have hope – a future to look forward to. So rejoice also…

III. In what He will do for you.

Jesus is coming again. We have His promise. We need to BE READY for that day. John the Baptist preached, ***"Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? His winnowing shovel is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor. He will gather the wheat into His barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."*** Judgment Day is NOTHING TO JOKE about!

With Jesus as our **Advent King** we actually look forward to that day. ***"The LORD your God is with you as a hero who will save you."*** Jesus' SECOND ADVENT will bring to completion God's plan to save us. Before He left Jesus promised us, ***"In My Father's house are many mansions. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with Me, so that you may also be where I am."*** WHEN you get down and discouraged with your **life now** FIND YOU JOY in what Jesus will do for you.

Think of what **that day** will BE LIKE. Jesus returning ***"in all His glory."*** All the dead raised back to life. STANDING before our Lord – SEEING with **our own eyes** the Son of God who died for our sins and rose triumphant from the dead – HEARING Jesus say, ***"Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you."*** Will it BE WORTH the wait? The pains and **problems** of this life – our sinful natures – the temptations of the **devil** and the **world** – death and the grave – ALL GONE forever. ***"I am making EVERYTHING new,"*** God promises us.

"He takes great delight in you. He will quiet you with His love. He will rejoice over you with singing." Picture God saying on that day, "Well, WHAT DO YOU THINK of it?" Jesus' **second advent** won't find just us ***"rejoicing."*** GOD FINDS great joy in doing all this for us. GOD REJOICES in saving us and making us **so happy**.

But for now it's STILL ADVENT. We're still waiting for Jesus. The DAYS can be dark at times. **Our lives** can be hard. Our joy can lag. GO BACK then to your **Advent King** and REJOICE and what He's done – **is doing** right now – and **will do** for you in eternity. Amen.

APOSTLES' CREED