

## **“Why Rejoice” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Advent 3 – December 11, 2022**

- I. **Matthew 11:6** – “blessed is the one who is not offended by Me”
- II. **Why?**
  - a. Any of you who have raised up little ones know about that period of time when children ask, “Why?”
    - i. Sometimes it’s an easy answer, but many times we have no idea.
    - ii. For example, “Why do dogs bark?”
      1. We might explain that it’s a way to communicate like people do... and yet, do we really know why dogs bark?
      2. It’s sort of like a funnel – as the question starts with a very broad answer... but if you keep saying “yeah, but why?” over and over again, the answer becomes less clear.
        - a. In the end you become frustrated because there is no answer... and you blurt out, “Just because!”
    - iii. My daughter Morgan asked why all the time... so I thought I would turn the tables on her and ask “why?” every time she said an answer to my question.
      1. She got to the point that she didn’t know, and she said, “because be-why...”
      2. That became my answer when the question had no reasonable answer... because be-why... and it always satisfied her.
  - b. Maybe you’ve asked a question before... you know, the question that has no definite answer, but you throw it out there anyway?
    - i. Why is the earth round?
    - ii. Why do people only have two arms?
    - iii. Why did God let Adam and Eve eat the fruit in the Garden of Eden?
    - iv. Why do some people believe in God and others do not?
    - v. Why do people suffer?
  - c. Sure, a basic answer might suffice, but if you keep funneling down, asking why repeatedly, the answer ends up with a shrug of the shoulders... “I don’t know, because be-why.”
- III. **John the Baptist was called to announce the coming of the Messiah.**
  - a. He was a great prophet – the greatest prophet as Jesus tells us – and the Gospel stories begin with his ministry of calling people to repent.
    - i. As we read last week in our Gospel reading, a man came calling out in the wilderness to prepare for the coming Messiah. (Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3)
    - ii. John’s parents were Zechariah and Elizabeth (and Elizabeth was a relative of Jesus’ mom, Mary, Luke 1:36) – and John was in his mom’s womb when he leaped for joy as Mary came to visit with Jesus in her womb! (Luke 1:41)

- iii. A short time later, Mary spoke the words we sang while lighting the Advent candles – “My soul rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:47)
      - iv. All this is to say that John the Baptist rejoiced that Jesus had come into the world even when they were still in their mothers’ wombs!
    - b. So, why is John the Baptist sending his followers to Jesus and asking if He’s really the Messiah, or should we look for someone else? (vs 3)
      - i. Why? Why would John the Baptist, who already baptized Jesus and had seen the Holy Spirit descend on Him like a dove – hearing the voice of the Father – “this is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16-17) – why would John ask whether Jesus was really the Messiah?
        - 1. Remember, John sits in jail at this point because he was criticizing Herod, the ruler of that area, for taking his brother’s wife in marriage...
        - 2. So, one possibility is that John wanted his followers to see for themselves that Jesus was the true Messiah, so he sent them off to see the miracles in person.
        - 3. Another answer is that John was asking this question because he didn’t understand how he was languishing in jail, suffering for doing the right thing... and he wanted confirmation that Jesus was the Savior.
          - a. Not only does Jesus answer the question that He is the one, but He praises John for being the greatest of all prophets... ever!
    - c. Jesus also says something that we can consider today, “blessed is the one who is not offended by Me.” (vs 6)
      - i. The word, “offended,” means causing to stumble, and in this case it points to stumbling into unbelief...
      - ii. Why would someone stumble on Jesus into unbelief?
        - 1. Just like John, some people might be asking... why is all this bad stuff happening if there is a God, a Savior in Jesus?
        - 2. And the answer doesn’t always make us feel satisfied in the moment of pain and suffering – we suffer because sin is in the world from Adam and Eve, and salvation has come in Jesus, but we will not fully experience healing until we’re in glory.
          - a. We are not yet fully healed, but we have been given the eyes to see and the ears to hear (vs 4) that Jesus is the Savior who defeats the power of sin and death – and even the devil’s plans.
- IV. **A paradox in our Christian faith is trusting fully in God through the trouble.**
- a. Deeply embedded in our salvation is the promise of God’s goodness and presence in the midst of all the garbage life in the world throws at us.

- i. Time and time again we read the stories of people in the Bible who questioned, “Why?”
    - 1. They were imprisoned unjustly, facing enemies, experiencing illness, loss, and suffering of all types.
  - b. We also struggle with the same things – even when we have a deep faith and trust in the promises of God.
    - i. Suffering and trials can be a stumbling block for some – a questioning of God’s goodness
    - ii. No matter who we are, we can question why another person has to suffer, or why God would allow us or others to go through something.
  - c. Not only that, but we are encouraged to rejoice in all this trouble!
    - i. Why rejoice? Why rejoice as we languish in the prison of life in a broken world... with broken promises... and broken people?
  - d. The answer is not, “because be-why” – the answer is, “because of Jesus”.

V. **Jesus won the battle against hopelessness and despair.**

- a. Even if our brokenness is not removed immediately, His coming into the world was and is the solution to our troubles.
- b. He even warns us that we will definitely experience all kinds of trials, but we can endure with patience as James (5:10) says in our reading today.
- c. Yes, Jesus, who went through all the unimaginable suffering and trial that could be thrown at someone – Jesus knows... Jesus cares... Jesus loves.
  - i. He would never ask us to endure with patience and faith unless His promises of healing and everlasting life were absolutely solid.
  - ii. His mission, His purpose was the answer to sin, death, and satan.
    - 1. As He hung on the cross in utter defeat – He lost the battle of justice... of leading the Jews into a new government... of truth... of God’s plan... so it seemed...
    - 2. But the paradox is that Jesus lost so that we could win.
      - a. His life was taken that day, yes, but He would not stay dead as sin, death and satan could not hold Him in the darkness and hopelessness and despair.
      - b. In glory and power, Jesus rose up to claim the victory
- d. Why rejoice? Because Jesus won and so do we.
  - i. In a world that seems lost because of the constant negatives, we see beyond the brokenness to take hold of the victory in Jesus.
  - ii. We may not see immediate relief, but we can be 100% confident that we have a God who can empathize with our suffering and the future is secure in glory... no more tears, no more hurt... just peace.
- e. Instead of “why rejoice?” maybe we should place a comma after the word why... Why, rejoice! Indeed, rejoice because your Savior has come to win the battle over life’s brokenness – but more than that, to hand it over to you
- f. Indeed, rejoice –

- i. ...we are redeemed and on the winning team!
- ii. ...the troubles we experience are temporary!
- iii. ...Jesus is at work even now opening the door to His kingdom!
- g. Rejoice, my friends because the Savior has come. Amen.