

INI Hymns:

Sermon 26-20

Easter Sunday

Zechariah 8:19-23

4/05/26

“19 “Thus says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace.

20 “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. 21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.’ 22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. 23 Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” ESV

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Sorrow turned into Joy. Mourning turned into laughter. That is a predominant theme throughout Scripture. If you read Psalm 30 in preparation for worship you read in verse 11, “You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.” There are many other passages like this throughout Scripture. Like Isaiah 51:11 “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” And Jeremiah 31:13 “Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.”

That is what this text from Zechariah is all about, God turning our sorrow into joy. During the 70 years of exile in Babylon the people of Israel fasted and mourned in the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months of the year. This was to remind them that their captivity was because of their sins and rebellion against the LORD. God brought them back to the Land of Israel and says, “The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.” God turned their fasting into feasting.

That is the nature of our God, He delights to turn our sorrow into joy. That was the whole reason Jesus came to this earth to turn our sorrow into the greatest Joy. Isaiah 61:1-3 tells us God anointed Jesus for this very purpose: “He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 ... to comfort all who mourn, 3 To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

On this day that goal was accomplished when Jesus rose from the dead.

Jesus’ Resurrection Turns our Fasting into Feasting!

-I- All Our Sorrow is Turned into Joy!

That was obviously true for the disciples on the first Easter. They were crushed and filled with the deepest sorrow and despair when Jesus was crucified. They not only lost their close friend and beloved teacher, they lost all hope. They had put their faith in Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah. Now He was dead. They couldn’t imagine that He could actually be the Son of God. Easter morning changed all that. Think of Mary Magdalene. Her eyes were so full of tears she couldn’t even recognize Jesus when He stood in front of her. Then He called her by name and she suddenly realized that this was Jesus, alive in the flesh. She was so overjoyed she just clung to Jesus feet until He said, “Do not cling to me, ... but go to my brothers and say to

them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" John 20:17 All of the disciples were overjoyed when they saw Jesus alive, their faith was not misplaced. Their hope and peace and joy were restored.

That's easy to understand, but isn't it an overstatement to say that Jesus' resurrection turns ALL our sorrows into joy? Not at all! What is the cause of all sorrow in this world? Isn't it sin? We just saw on Good Friday that wonderful picture of how Jesus took all of our sins away and gave us the rich robes of His righteousness on a single day. That was the day He died in payment for those sins. Now Jesus is risen from the dead, proving that He won the victory over sin and death. All our sins are forgiven and forgotten by God. Jesus summed it all up when He told Mary, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." His God and Father is now our God and Father. That is reason to rejoice!

That doesn't mean we won't have any more sorrow in our life. We still live in a sinful world. We still have our sinful flesh. This implies that we will have sorrows. He couldn't turn our sorrows into Joy if we don't have any sorrows to begin with. There are still the sorrows that come with illnesses, accidents and other disasters. In fact as our loving Father, God sends some of those things as chastisements for our disobedience, like a loving parent correcting His children. Then when the lesson is received, He blesses again. That's what He describes in Psalm 30:5 "His anger is but for a moment, his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning." Our joy is all the greater when we have experienced the sorrow.

Probably the deepest sorrow we ever experience is the death of a very close loved one, especially the death of a spouse or a child. For the child of God who knows that Jesus has conquered death, even that great sorrow is turned into joy by His resurrection. Not that we don't still feel a huge hole and emptiness in our life, but Jesus tempers that with the joy of knowing that our loved ones who died in the faith are with the Lord in heaven and we will see them again. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15:17 Can you imagine the joyful reunion when we are together with all true believers in paradise?

Because of Jesus' death and resurrection we can look forward to the time when "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4 Without Christ's resurrection there could be no joy whatsoever. Without Jesus' resurrection we would only face the wrath of God against our sins. Since Christ rose from the dead, we have the victory over all trouble and sorrow. As the Psalmist says, "This is the day the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." Psalm 118:24

After God says He will turn our sorrow into "seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts," He says,

-II- "Therefore Love Truth and Peace."

Where alone can we find the Joy of our Salvation and the Peace that it brings? It is only found in the truth of God's Word. Therefore, if you want the Joy, then love the Truth and Peace of God's word. Everyone wants joy, but they search for it in all the wrong places. Jesus told Pilate, "Everyone who is of the truth, hears my voice." Pilate just sneered and said, "What is truth?" The world suggests that everyone has their own truth. The implication is that nobody can say that they have THE truth. How can I say that what I believe is the truth and what another person believes is not? Isn't that the greatest arrogance? If our faith was based only on what we think and feel is the truth, then I would agree. We are all finite, imperfect creatures. One person's idea is as good as another's.

But our faith is not what we or any other human has thought up. It is God's truth, the One who knows everything and possesses all truth. When we believe and proclaim God's word, then we can say with confidence, this is absolute Truth. Everything contrary is false and a lie. "This is a trustworthy saying and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost." 1 Timothy 1:15. This is absolute truth, that "He himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed." 1 Peter 2:24

Love the truth that saves us and turns all sorrow into joy. May we never let it be compromised with the beliefs or feelings of mere humans, but rely solely on God's faithful word. As Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:11 "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32. Love the truth! Especially in times of sorrow, for with God's Truth and Peace in our hearts,

-III- We can Have an Infectious Joy!

People naturally gravitate to joyful people. If someone is grumpy and complaining all the time, that is exhausting and people tend to keep their distance, making those people even more unhappy. Real joy is infectious. That is what God wants for His Kingdom, as He describes in the rest of our text. "Thus says the Lord of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. 21 The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.' 22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. 23 Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

People from all nations grabbed ahold of the Apostles and other believers because they could see that God was with them. And God's kingdom spread and grew throughout every nation of the world. People believed Paul's preaching, for example, because they could see that he believed it. He had joy in the gospel in spite of all the severe persecutions he faced.

May we be so filled with the joy of our Salvation, our Joy in the Lord and His resurrection, that people will see it and be drawn to the Lord through us. May our lives reflect the true Joy and Beauty of living in the Resurrection of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.