

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

December 17, 2017 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

Old Testament Reading; Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11

Responsive Reading; Psalm 126

Epistle Reading; 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Gospel Reading; John 1: 6-8, 19-28

Sermon Title: JOY OF THE LORD

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary: My joy may remain in you ....that your joy may be full.

“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in my love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my Joy may remain in you, and that your Joy may be full.”

I heard a radio preacher say once that there is a difference between Joy and Happiness. Joy is what you get from your relationship with God and happiness is the result of a happening. I will be happy if I can buy that house or car. I will be happy if my girlfriend says yes when I pop the question. I will

be happy if I win the lottery. I will be happy when I find my lost dog.  
Etc.

I find Joy when I go to see Wanda and she is not doing very well. I have Joy knowing that God has got this. It is not up to me or even the doctors. God is in that hospital room and God has not failed me yet, even if sometimes I think he has.

Jesus said, "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in my love. These things I have spoken to you, that my Joy remain in you, AND that your Joy may be full."

By the way this is taken from John 15: 9 + 11. If you would like to get a better handle on this concept of Joy being the result of your relationship with Jesus sometime, read the entire 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of John. It is not that long and it shows the deep connection that we have with Jesus and with God. It brings out requirements of God but assures us that we are all in the circle and fully capable of doing all that is asked of us because he has established the bond.

OK I can't do the teaser thing. Here is the word. Now hear what is here. Oh yes, and hear it from my pretty New King James Version Bible.

John 15 :

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every

branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this my father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. 9 As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. 10 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. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your

fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another. 18 If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you, "A servant is not greater than his master" If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. 21 But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know him who sent Me. 22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23 He who hates Me hates My Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. 25 But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause. 26 But when the helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Some highlights are: We are clean because of the word we received from God. If we abide in Jesus his words will abide in us. We will succeed because God is glorified if we bear much

fruit so he will help us do it. And most important God chose us, we did not choose him, and God does not make mistakes.

This is where the real Joy comes into play; if God be for us who can be against us and if God chose us then God is for us.

If this whole Joy in God is a little hard to wrap your head around then try coming at from this direction. What gives more Joy than holding a baby and how did God bring us this Joy?

God brought us a baby and that baby was and is God.

Joy to the world the Lord has come.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor; 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; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all 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; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified!

I got the greatest job in the world. I am not the light but I am sent here to testify to the light. I am sent to proclaim the coming of the King. I am sent to shout it from the roof top [or at least from the pulpit] Jesus Christ is coming today, Jesus Christ

is here today and Jesus Christ has chosen us to be part of his Joy to the world, so;

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for all of us.

He has given us his joy so that our joy may be complete.

Hallelujah and amen.