

**THEME:** *“Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”*  
**DATE/TIME:** December 12, 2007 – 7:40-8:10 PM  
**SPEAKER:** Dr. Jim Russom – Professor of Pastoral Ministries/Associate Online Director  
**TITLE /TEXT:** “Rejoice in the Lord” – Luke 1:47-55

Prelude - CD

Welcome: **Third Advent Service - “Rejoice in the Lord”**

Candle Ceremony: Advent is a time of contemplation and anticipation. We remember the first coming of Jesus Christ, and we look forward to His coming again. And while we use candles and carols to celebrate the season, the definitive celebration of Jesus’ coming is how we live our lives. So, we lit the first candle to remind us to **“Live for the Lord,”** we lit the second candle to remind us to **“Hope in the Lord,”** and we’ll light this third candle to remind us to **“Rejoice in the Lord”** because He came to our world and He’s coming again.

Scripture Readings:	Old Testament:	Isaiah 35:1-10	Reader:
	Gospel:	Matthew 11:2-11	Reader:

**Rejoice, the Promised One is here – Let us rejoice the Lord is come!** – Dr. Jim Russom

Narration: Scripture abounds with references to joy and rejoicing. There is natural joy (gladness, contentment, satisfaction, mirth, cheerfulness, moral joy (peace, serenity); and spiritual joy (Joy of faith, rejoicing of hope that comes from being in right relationship to God and others). In the OT there are ten different Hebrew terms used to express the idea of delight of mind in the good. It has been said that no other language has as many words for joy as the Hebrew language. The biblical distinctive concerning joy is this... it is coupled with moral rectitude. Pure joy is joy in God as both its source and its object.

In the Isaiah passage we have a utopian description of how the land of God’s people will be when Messiah reigns. Desert shall become a flourishing agricultural paradise. People will be redeemed, restored, healed, and strengthened. People will no longer live in fear but in the peace and joy of holiness. Wow... what a place to live.

But has it happened yet? Is there such a place?

The Matthew passage which tells us of the conveyed correspondence between Jesus and John the Baptist answers this question. Suppose you found yourself in prison and awaiting sure death... would you have joy? Would you think that this Promised Land with all its blessings had been found? John rightfully wants to know, “Am I dying for nothing, or has God done what He said He would do? Has the promise truly been fulfilled?

Notice the answer that Jesus gives. <sup>4</sup> Jesus replied, **“Go back and report to John what you hear and see: <sup>5</sup> The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are**

cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." Matt 11:4-6 (NIV)

The answer is NOT geographical, it is relational. Yes, that joyous place where people are redeemed, restored, healed and strengthened is here... it is not a place it is a person... it is Jesus. He has come and started this glorious restoration and He will come again and finish what He started.

Yes you can live in a kingdom where there is joy... real lasting eternal joy... joy now and forever more for Joy has come to the world in Jesus. Joy to the World... the Lord is come! Let all the earth receive that joy and rejoice!

Joy to the World – *Maranatha! Praise IV - #47* – (C) - 3 stanzas

Scripture Reading:                  Psalm:                  Psalm 146:5-10          Reader:

**Rejoice, the Messiah will restore our joy – What good news!** – Dr. Jim Russom

Narration: The Psalmist understands that joy and hope are not based upon anything that man can do. Do not put your trust in man for the source of anything permanent or lasting. But you can trust the Creator, he is faithful. He will be the redeemer and restorer. He will be the source of true joy and hope.

As the Psalm states: <sup>7</sup> He upholds the cause of the oppressed  
and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,  
<sup>8</sup> the LORD gives sight to the blind,  
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,  
the LORD loves the righteous.

<sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over the alien  
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,  
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD reigns forever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.

Psalms 146:7-10 (NIV)

What an awesome God we serve. He does all of this in the midst of a broken world and a broken humanity. And in spite of all that sinful man does, God can thwart the power of sin and can bring joy into the world that the kingdoms and circumstances of man cannot conquer.

It is true. Our God reigns now and forever more... Praise the Lord!

Our God Reigns – *Master Chorus II - #4* – (Bb) - Two verses with chorus

Scripture Reading:

Gospel:

Luke 1:47-55

Reader:

**Rejoice for God has done and will do great things! – Dr. Jim Russom**

Narration: What a wonderful passage. It is called Mary's song of the Magnificat. It her response of praise that springs from the joy she has in her relationship to God and His will for her life.

But wait... she is a single woman, engaged but not yet married, she is pregnant, and God did it! Oh yeah, what a wonderful situation to be in! Sure when she tells everybody that the baby in her is a miracle from God that she is still chaste and the baby is the coming Messiah... piece of cake! No problem. Yes, problem! How in the world could she compose such a joyous song in her situation?

Well, it is because her joy is not based upon her circumstance, but on her relationship with God who has asked her to walk through this difficult and challenging circumstance and she knows she is not alone. The joy of the Lord will be her strength, just as Nehemiah taught his people.

The Bible regards joy as essentially a divine bestowal. It is the proper response to the good news. Good news messiah is coming. Good news... you are pregnant! But it is good news for it is a promise fulfilled. A promise that has been the source of hope for centuries... and joy of all joys... it is coming to pass!

Paul teaches us that joy is the result of the Holy Spirit's working and presence in our life and as such calls it the "fruit of the Spirit." Jesus gives joy both present and eschatological meaning in his parable of the talents when in Matthew 25:21 and 23 he refers to the joy to be experienced by all the servants upon the return of the master.

But we do not have to wait for his second coming to experience this joy and gladness. It is ours now through the very Spirit of Jesus. For the kingdom of heaven is at hand; and all of those who belong to Jesus live in the kingdom. The world does not know this joy for it does not abound in the kingdoms of the world.

Oh many outside the kingdom will join us this Christmas in mirth and song. They will have a sense of joy and cheer, but it will be seasonal... a fleeting thing. But for us, Christmas is the beginning of the joy that remains all year through. For no matter what circumstance befall us, it cannot take away our joy. We will sing and say, as did Mary,<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. Luke 1:49 (NIV)  
Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name!

Bless His Holy Name – *Maranatha! Praise IV* - #175 – (Eb) - Twice through

**Rejoice, the joy is worth the wait!** – Dr. Jim Russom

Narration: Listen again to the word of the Lord. <sup>7</sup> Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. <sup>8</sup> You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. James 5:7-8 (NIV)

Hey, it has not really been that long! If you consider a biblical generation to be 40 years, that means that Jesus was here just 50 people ago! When I was born my great-great grandfather was still alive. That alone is 5 of those 50 or 10%! Hey, don't get discouraged. His reappearing is getting closer every day.

This advent season affords us the opportunity to celebrate our anticipation, our hope, and our future. It is like the countdown to Christmas. It's only 14 days away. Should we not be full of joy? We should be rejoicing... not only is Santa coming to town, but Jesus is coming again soon! And the joy we know now, will pale in the light of the joy of our eternal home in His presence when the Kingdom is fulfilled completely.

Rejoice then, though now you may go through a few struggles along the way. What are our struggles compared to our joy and hope?

In a world of senseless war and strife. In a time when people are shot down in the parking lots of worship centers. In a time where godlessness abounds... it is not a time for grumbling. It is a time for rejoicing for there is peace, joy, and hope amidst all this tragedy for those who are in Christ Jesus. We are able to praise God and rejoice in a time of affliction and suffering with "joy unspeakable and full of glory"

Joy is not gaiety without gloom... it is joy that overcomes the gloom.

It is to be glad; to rejoice; to celebrate; to be merry. It means to be joyful and full of euphoria, full of God's presence and glory. Only those who know the joy of the Lord can truly experience a Merry Christmas.

I will join the Psalmist and say:

<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,

<sup>10</sup> because you will not abandon me to the grave,  
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

<sup>11</sup> You have made known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,

with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalms 16:9-11 (NIV)

Therefore I will rise and sing: Joy to the World the Lord is come and I will Shout to the Lord all the earth and sing of His glorious majesty. For He has filled my heart with joy!

Joy to the World – *Sing to the Lord* - #173 – (D) – Fourth stanza

Shout to the Lord – *All the Best Songs* - #5 – (Bb) – Chorus only – twice through

Benediction – 1 Peter 1:3-9 – Dr. Jim Russom

<sup>3</sup> What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, <sup>4</sup> including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! <sup>5</sup> God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole. <sup>6</sup> I know how great this makes you feel, even though you have to put up with every kind of aggravation in the meantime. <sup>7</sup> Pure gold put in the fire comes out of it *proved* pure; genuine faith put through this suffering comes out *proved* genuine. When Jesus wraps this all up, it's your faith, not your gold, that God will have on display as evidence of his victory. <sup>8</sup> You never saw him, yet you love him. You still don't see him, yet you trust him—with laughter and singing. <sup>9</sup> Because you kept on believing, you'll get what you're looking forward to: total salvation.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (MSG)