

12/18/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What kind of songs make you sing along? Maybe it's the latest hit that tops the charts. Maybe it's a blast from your past. This time of year, maybe it's one of the Christmas songs playing on the radio. Whether you are the giddy gal who belts it out behind the wheel or you're the tone-deaf guy whose range is somewhat monotone, chances are there is something that will make you sing along.

God loves that! He's the one who created the physics of sound, the sense of hearing, the mouths that shape our words, and the very breath that enables us to sing. The birds can make pretty sounds, but they cannot really sing. God gave that gift to mankind.

Zephaniah 3:14-15 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. Zephaniah 3:14-15

And yet of all the things that make us want to sing for joy, their reality is there are circumstances in life that make us silent. When Zephaniah shared the words of our text, the people of Judah did not feel like singing. They were facing catastrophe and death. They had brought this upon themselves. After decades of unrepentant sin, God had had enough. Punishment was coming. The nation of Judah would be conquered by pagan foreigners. The great city of Jerusalem would fall.

How then can Zephaniah encourage the people to sing for joy? It would be a ridiculous request, except for the fact that Zephaniah also told them, “The LORD has taken away your punishment.” It is not that Judah would stay safe and Jerusalem would be spared. No, they would be destroyed. But Zephaniah is referring to a worse punishment—the eternal punishment of hell. Everyone in Judah who put their faith in the LORD, the gracious God who had promised to send a Messiah, would escape that eternal punishment.

Friends, even for repentant believers, sin has earthly consequences. But our time on earth is very short—eighty years if we are fortunate. Then comes eternity. Because of our sins, some of which we committed this very day, we deserve to spend all eternity in agony and remorse in a place called hell.

But on that first Christmas Eve, that Messiah was born. Jesus came, and by his life, death, and resurrection turned back the enemies of sin and death. You have an extremely short amount of time on this earth. After that, you shall spend eternity in a place where you will know only comfort and joy and peace. Heaven will be so vibrant... so wonderful...so exciting, you will not even be able to remember any hardship or pain you experienced here on earth.

As you prepare to celebrate the coming of Jesus at Christmas, all the while mindful that he will come again, remember that God has given you something to sing about. He’s given you a song of forgiveness, fearlessness, and joy. How can we not sing along?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, give joy to the sad-hearted. You have pardoned our sin and covered us with your grace. We have a secure heritage in heaven. There, with you, we shall live forever in glory. Help us grasp the certainty of that perfect future, so that we might sing for joy even now. Amen.*

(From the WELS)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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