

**You did not choose Me, I choose you.** Do you realize the daily, eternal consequences of that. The comfort, security, joy that is yours. **I choose you.** That gives you meaning, purpose. Often people want to know if life matters, do I matter, what is the purpose of life. You can do anything you want yet the more technology, the more opportunities, the more phones, facebook, instagrams or the latest apps and modern conveniences, the more empty people usually feel at the end of the day. Troubled teens, adults, people depressed, suicidal, or just tired and frustrated with it all ask. Why do I matter? What's the meaning of life? I believe there's 4 components to that answer. The sense of wonder; knowledge of the truth; experience of love; and security. Especially as a child you begin a journey in awe of wonder; you grow up and want to know what is truth; you want the experience of love especially as you mature, and through it all, especially at the end, you want security. Wonder, truth, love, security. Those things give meaning in life. And outside of Jesus Christ there is no answer, that any philosophy, other religion can give. **I choose you.** Wonder, truth, love, security all coming together in the person of Jesus Christ, the implications He took on our flesh, lived here, died here, rose. For you! Draws you into communion with Him, to trust Him, promises to dwell and live in you, with you. Yes there will be difficult times, but **I choose you.** Tell me any other world view that a very God of very God marks you as His child, changes you from the inside, gives you His Word and Sacraments that shape your entire identity, walks with you in this life.

**Abide in My love, keep My commandments.** Be very careful! If you hear that the wrong way, you turn this into a Law instead of gift. The word "keep" here -not the word "obey" but "cling to, treasure." The commandments we're to "cling to, treasure" are the very gifts that unites us in Him; brings His love to us. Keep like a special gift from your mom, dad, grandparent that you won't ever let go -even more. **Abide in Me**, this lesson happens the night He commands His supper for you. To abide in Him -He in us by His Word, Sacraments. His commandments, tangible gifts that join us to His life. The fruit then you bear is His forgiveness. His love in you, through you.

Unlike every other religions on this planet, we don't keep His commandments to earn anything; to merit a god's favor, we do not keep the commandments to earn a place in His kingdom or so that a god would love us. That is the sum of false religions. Ours is of grace. It gives true joy of living in the freedom of a Christian. All things are yours. We cling to, treasure keep His commands in response to His love, works, gifts in your life. Act and live; serve, honor, do your duty, act moral- out of love for all He gives, all He has done.

Yet, look at you. You've lived as if you matter most. Love that's selfish and self-serving. We have not let His love had its way with us; so our love for others has failed. Failed miserably.

**That my joy may be in you and your joy be full.** How can you not be filled with joy? You live better than 99% of all people ever born. Live in the greatest country in the history of the world. Of the things you complain about -everyone since creation until the last 100 years would envy. They'd be in awe of how you live, kings never lived so well. How can you not be joyful? Pay \$2.50 for gas, fast internet, smart phones, anything at your fingertips; over 200 TV channels, can even pause live TV. Economy is good. You don't live in Oklahoma or Missouri. Here at church, amazing all that's happened less than 7 years in this place; and the 9th best available vicar serving this year with us, the organist plays all the right notes, usually; above average pastor, at least he thinks so. Joy, you can't begin to count your blessings; yet are these the joys Jesus speaks?

So many Christians, even pastors have days with so little joy. Don't let the world, satan, foolish people, even your own heart, rob you of knowing the joy given you by Christ. Lift up your heads. **That my joy be in you, your joy be full.**

**My joy in you** -not from having what we want or seeing good things come our way nor achievements or success - those only bring momentary joys. **My joy** flows from His life in you. **Abide in Me.** Even in the midst of messes of life, you're in full possession of this joy; just as He promised. Your joy comes in a His life-giving kingdom of gift, forgiveness, grace.

**Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice!** Oh, understand this joy is: not the same as being happy. His joy is not a choice, or feeling or attitude; not denial of life's messes. It doesn't mean you smile all the time; don't have troubles. It IS your reality, joy of living, knowing. ***But God had seen my wretched state, Before the world's foundation, And mindful of his mercies great, He planned for my salvation. He turned to me a father's heart; He did not choose the easy part. But gave his dearest treasure.*** Do you see this changes everything for you?

Scripture show over 300 references to joy, overflowing. Do you not see it? Or better, how can you not live this out in His life, **Abide in Me** and love to others. The historical gradual normally chanted this season, from Hebrews 12, **for the joy set before Him He endured the cross.** Joy of a cross! To save you. What is it that makes Christian joy and the joy of the Divine Service so profound, so expansive, so freeing, so...joyful? The continued delight, wonder, objective truth love, security of being received by Christ; drawn into His presence;

How could you then not be filled with joy? Great wonder of wonders the Lord rejoices over repentant sinners, to Abide in you, bring what you truly need, fill you with His joy and resurrected life. Filled with forgiveness, filled with His sacraments. **I choose you.** You are mine. **Abide in Me. My joy in you.**