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JOYFUL, JOYFUL WE ADORE THEE

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love:
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Opening to the sun above,
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!*

*All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Center of unbroken praise;
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in Thee.*

*Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living,
Ocean-depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother,
All who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the joy divine.*

*Mortals join the mighty chorus,
Which the morning stars began;
Father love is reigning o'er us,
Brother love binds man to man.
Ever singing, march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward
In the triumph song of life.*

WORDS: Henry van Dyke (w. 1907)

**MUSIC: Ludwig van Beethoven
(w. 1824, arr. Edward Hodges)**



JOY TO THE WORLD

One of the things I have missed most the last few years is my singing voice. I sang alto many years. Then I switched to tenor, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Part of the problem, of course, is aging, but much of the problem stems from late-stage fibromyalgia. It has hardened (frozen) my vocal cords. When I sing now, it's just a "joyful noise unto the Lord." I know He hears. Isn't that what He tells us?

In Ephesians 5:19, He says to "Speak to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord." Our music comes from the heart. We may not necessarily sound very good, but that doesn't matter. He listens to our hearts.

I love the song we sometimes sing called, "Listen to Our Hearts." Its words are about how there is no way we can express in words the love of God and our gratefulness for that love. Our prayer is that He will listen to our hearts.

I love good music. I listen to the kinds of music I like (hymns, classical, and easy listening) on my CDs. Music has been known to be very calming. It can "soothe the savage beast," as the saying goes. Lullabies soothe babies. It can stop their crying and lull them to sleep. Music is being used to calm minds and lessen the stress of those who are suffering. There has recently been an experiment by a psychologist in our university using music to test the effects on our brains. I go to sleep every night listening to music using different levels of H2 (sound).

I especially like the music that we hear around Christmas. My two favorite things at the holidays are music and lights. One of the songs we sing that's very popular is "Joy to the World."

The world celebrates December 25 as the birthday of Jesus, but no one knows exactly 'when' He was born. It's

enough for us to know He was born. The spiritual songs we sing and listen to at Christmas are about His birth – that Joy that came into the world to save us. Another favorite is “Silent Night,” (words below).

Silent Night

Silent night, Holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

These words were written by Joseph Mohr in 1816. The music was written by Franz Gruber in 1818.

I’m glad the world turns to thoughts of Jesus this time of year. For the Christian, our thoughts are on Jesus every day of the year. We enjoy fellowship and good food with our church family, physical families, and friends throughout the year, not just in November and December. We reflect daily on the wonderful blessings He has given to us.

Jesus is our JOY every moment of our lives! Have a blessed Christmas.

Mary Anna Melton, Rolla, Missouri



GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY!

For to us **a child is born, to us a son is given**, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**. Isaiah 9:6 NIV

Jesus is Wonderful Counselor

To the woman at the well, Jesus proved to be a wonderful counselor. He spoke to her truest need and provided everlasting water: counsel, that only Messiah - the Savior - could give, and that quenched the thirst of her soul.

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)⁹The Samaritan woman said to Him, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰*Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would*

have asked Him and He would have given you living water.”

¹¹“Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

¹³*Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

¹⁵The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

²⁵The woman said, “I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When He comes, *He will explain everything to us.*”

²⁶*Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am He.” John 4 (NIV)*

Jesus is the Mighty God

One day Jesus said to His disciples, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So, they got into a boat and set out. ²³As they sailed, He fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. ²⁴The disciples went and woke Him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!” He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵“Where is your faith?” He asked His disciples.

In fear and amazement, they asked one another, “*Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him.*” Luke 8:22-25 (NIV)

Jesus is Everlasting Father

“[Jesus] is everlastingly a father to those who trust in Him.” Charles Spurgeon

⁸Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever. Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)

“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for Me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. ³⁴A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this everyone will know that you are My disciples if you love one another.” John 13:33-35 (NIV)

Jesus is the Prince of Peace

“I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:33 (NIV)

Jesus, the Son, brings Great Joy to all People

⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, **a Son**. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. ⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. **I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.** ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is the Messiah, the Lord. Luke 2:6-11 (NIV)

The gospel of **Jesus the Son**, our Messiah, **brings great joy**. He is given for our salvation.

All scripture texts from Bible Gateway, NIV version;
<https://www.biblegateway.com>

Meta Awuah-Offei, Rolla, Missouri



What Makes You Joyful?

What makes you joyful is a great question, but sometimes it demands a good bit of thought. Temporal things like a newborn baby, a gloriously glowing sunset, a litter of playful puppies, a favorite meal, or a new dress may bring joy for a time, but what gives you lasting deep joy?

When I turned to scripture, I found when Paul and the apostle John spoke of joy most often it hinged on their brothers and sisters leading faithful lives of godly servitude. As I reflected, I find that is where my most lasting joy is found as well. I would like to share a recent rush of joy that has blessed me and my family.

In our congregation there are several families who are mentoring our young people. I am not talking about

youth directors who provide devotionals, summer camp encounters or social events. They do provide those events, but twice a month on average, the young men meet for an hour in our auditorium, and they are taught how to lead singing, how to lead a prayer, how to serve at the Lord's table, and how to prepare a short devotional. They are then given opportunities to perform those acts of service frequently for our meetings.

The young ladies meet in a classroom at the same time and various women teach classes on servitude where they are taught how to pray, how to prepare a short lesson for ladies, etc. But the mentorship does not stop there. Both groups are taught various life skills, some that were once taught in schools or at home, but often are neglected in more recent times. They have been taught how to check the oil in a car and how to change a tire. There have been basic sewing classes, cooking classes, and it was planned to teach how to balance a check book as well as many other basic skills.

Recently my family moved, and we needed to have some ceiling fans installed. When we inquired if anyone knew an electrician in the area, one of our men said he could do that, but “I want to bring some of our boys with me and teach them how to do it. They need to know a skill like that.” Talk about a rush of joy!

Our need will be met, and several of our young men will not only learn a new skill but will have the fellowship of that man and with us as they work. I will be sure to have refreshments and a time to visit when they finish.

I share Paul's and John's joy in seeing such faith and fellowship grow and develop in our young people. I have seen it in other congregations, but not to the degree I have seen it here. My joy overflows!

I challenge you to encourage such a program in your congregation so you, too, can experience such joy. Seek out resources to experience learning and developing skills. Subscribe and read the Christian Chronicle to learn some of what the brotherhood is doing all over the world. Google churches of Christ and watch some streaming lessons on YouTube. Check out the excellent books written by strong brothers and sisters at Publishing Designs, Inc. Find great resources for proofs of the Bible's authenticity at Apologetics Press. After all that, rejoice that the church has such strong leadership across the world.

Remember, without our young people the church will die, and many congregations are losing their youth as soon as they leave high school. Two of our young men

have just started a two-year program at one of our preacher's schools and at least one more is working toward that goal when he graduates. My joy truly overflows!

By Wilburta Arrowood, Napoleonville, Louisiana



I will give thanks to the Lord with all my heart; I will tell of all Your wonders. I will be glad and exult in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most high.
Psalms 9:1-2



"Rejoice in the Lord Always"

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On a scale of one to ten (one little and ten much), underline the number indicating how happy you are. On a scale of one to ten, circle the number indicating how joyful you are.

We live in a culture that elevates happiness. Our Declaration of Independence says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." What comes to mind when you think of happiness? A family gathering, a birthday party, a long-awaited vacation, a new outfit, a car, or making more money? While these might bring temporary happiness, it does not last. Eventually the party and vacation are over, the outfit is out of style, and the car rusts. Happiness depends on circumstances, and our circumstances are ever changing.

Rather than pursuing happiness, Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, writes about "joy." Joy or rejoicing is mentioned 16 times in these 4 chapters. Philippians is called the letter of joy. The secret of Paul's joy is not in his circumstances. Here's what his circumstances were in the last 4 years prior to the letter. Looking back to the book of Acts we learn,

-He's sitting in a Roman jail chained to a guard as he writes.

-He has been beaten severely.

-40 Jews take a vow to not eat or drink until Paul is killed.

-Undercover, he escapes to Caesarea.

-He suffered shipwreck.

-He was bitten by a snake.

Rather than frustration, discouragement, or complaining, Paul is filled with confidence, joy, and purpose as he writes Philippians.

Paul's joy comes from knowing Christ personally and depending on His strength, not his own strength or circumstances. The secret of Paul's joy is grounded in his relationship with Christ. Knowing Christ was the priority of Paul's life. When he says, "Rejoice in the Lord, always, I will say it again rejoice," he is saying let the Lord be your source of joy. Not the Lord plus something else, but the Lord alone.

As I write this, a friend of mine, Beverly, is in hospice. She has been given only a few months to live. Beverly, her family, and her church family all know her days on earth are numbered. The minister of the congregation she is a part of asked if he could interview her about faith, family, and death.

As I watched and listened to the interview, it was evident that Beverly is a woman of joy. When she learned she had 3 months to live, she spoke of:

Her family: "I am fortunate to have all my immediate family, children, and grandchildren close. We not only love each other; we really like each other and enjoy being together! The hardest part of what I am facing is leaving my husband, Jerry, and my family behind."

Her Church: "Coming to church is very important to me. When I drive into the parking lot it makes me happy. I don't know how long I will be able to do that. Singing with the church gives me such joy. Watching the children, teens and even some of the big burly men sing touches me as we express appreciation and praise to God. I so appreciate the women who I know I can call on at any moment. So many have been involved in teaching and being examples to our children through the years."

Her life as a Christian: "I have been fortunate to have the life I have because of God. I can't imagine, as good as my life has been, that it will be even better. I think about and try to imagine meeting Jesus. I have great hope in the face of death. I'm very content. It is well with my soul."

Beverly is sincere, and her smile shows the joy she is experiencing, even in the face of death. Is your joy in the Lord?

Sally Shank, Edmond, Oklahoma



Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice. Philippians 4:4.

THE VERY FIRST KING-SIZED BED



THANK GOD FOR THAT BED AND THE BABY WHO SLEPT THERE!

***"To the one who has faith, no explanation is necessary.
To the one without faith, no explanation is possible."***

Thomas Aquinas

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherds talked it over. "Let's go to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left and found Mary and Joseph and the Baby lying in the manger-crib as the angel had said. Seeing was believing. (Luke 2:15-18).

"...and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His Kingdom will have no end." (Luke 1:33)

"Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." (John 12:15)

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But My kingdom is not from the world." (John 18:36)

"You are a King, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered Pilate, "Yes, I am a King. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me." (John 18:37)

"He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which He is called is The Word of God. On His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords." (Revelation 19:13, 16)

"...which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords..." (1 Timothy 6:15)

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:34)

Yes! Celebrate Christ is King!! Let Hallelujahs Ring!

Submitted by Marilyn Pecinovsky, Cresco, Iowa



SING AND BE HAPPY!

Have the skies of your life ever been gray and gloomy? Have you carried burdens that seemed too great? On the other hand, has singing ever lifted your spirits and made you feel better? Most of us have experienced all these things at one time or another.

Singing often comes from joyful hearts. Singing is mentioned frequently in scripture as in Psalm 84:4, *"How blessed are those who dwell in Your house. They are ever praising You."* Psalm 100:2 speaks of singing with joy in our hearts, *"Serve the Lord with gladness. Come before Him with joyful singing."*

The Old Testament has numerous references to singing praises and thanksgiving to God. David wrote prolifically about singing to God. Psalm 47:6, *"Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praise to our King, sing praises!"* He wrote in Psalm 96:2, *"Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day."*

My favorite is hearing our blended voices as we sing in worship to God when we gather on Sundays. It is a little taste of heaven while we are still on earth.

When I was growing up, my daddy wanted us to sing every night, even though he was dead tired and bone weary after the day's work. He would say, "Get your books, girls. Let's sing for a while." Those nights of singing are among my favorite childhood memories. Sadly, Daddy lost his ability to sing. His life's work consisted of working in dusty gravel pits and farming (a very dusty business in New Mexico). In his later years, emphysema developed in his lungs, and he just did not have enough breath to sing.

Children love singing. Our little ones loved to sing and be sung to. Both of our sons learned to lead singing, and many of you have witnessed our younger son's love of singing. When he and his little buddy were about five years old, they were seated together in church and were singing enthusiastically. It always makes my heart glad to hear children singing in worship.

Singing soothes a weary, suffering soul. Zephaniah 3:17 reads, *"The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy."* Wow! When I think of God singing over me, I am overcome with joy and awe.

Singing sometimes comes from heavy hearts seeking comfort, even when tears are flowing. Singing lifts our spirits beyond the moment and helps us feel better.

Singing comes from children's enthusiasm. It comes from our joy at the birth of a child or other happy celebrations. Singing can console a heart in mourning. So often when one's favorite song is sung at a funeral, the family weeps with sorrow for the loss but with consolation that their loved one has "gone home." At funerals over the years, we have sung such songs as, "No Tears in Heaven," "Shall we Gather at the River," "What a Friend We have in Jesus." Who can forget that old favorite, "In the Sweet By and By"?

After being beaten and fastened in stocks, Paul and Silas were undeterred. Nothing could daunt their love for Christ. At midnight, they "were praying and singing hymns." When the prison doors were opened by an earthquake, Paul prevented the jailer from taking his own life. As a result, the jailer and his household were taught and baptized. Despite their sufferings and hardships, Paul and Silas preached the gospel in many places throughout the then known world.

Singing comes from our thankfulness to God, as David repeatedly wrote (see 1 Chronicles 16:8-10). *"Oh, give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice!"* in Psalm 104:33, he exulted, *"I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being."*

The New Testament also stresses thankfulness, as in Colossians 3:16, *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* Many of the songs we sing in worship are based on scripture, and all of them focus on our love for God and our thankfulness for His love and mercy.

Singing soothes a worried mind and a troubled heart. Many of the songs in our hymnals are prayer songs, and many are praise songs. Both types are beautiful and effective.

God works all things for our good—which helps us have joy in the midst of sorrow (1 Corinthians 12:26; 2 Corinthians 7:4). The joy of righteous people comes from the Spirit of God. Singing helps us look beyond our present trials.

The words of the song below focus on the resurrection, then burst into joy in the refrain:

"The First Lord's Day"

They rolled a stone before the door;
As in the grave He lay;
God raised Him up, our living Lord,
And made the first Lord's Day.
The bird that sang, the flow'rs that bloomed,
They brought no joy that spring;
Till Christ was raised from death to be
Our living Lord and king.

All earth is dressed in green this day,
To greet our risen Lord;
We praise Him, for He lives again,
He keeps His promised word.

Refrain:

We sing for joy, we sing for joy,
With loving thanks, we say:
"God raised Him up, our living Lord,
And made the first Lord's Day."

WORDS: William N. McElrath (w.1932)

MUSIC: William N. McElrath (w. 1932)

Evelyn Waite, Rolla, Missouri

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For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6-7

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Fred Willon

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Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20

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