

Advent Devotional Tuesday, December 18, 2018

REJOICE part 2 (from Pastor Jeff)

The other day at the grocery store, I did as I normally do and asked the checker how she was doing and wished her a Merry Christmas. She responded with, "I'm looking forward to it being over, people are so grouchy." It is Christmas, the celebration of God coming into our world to save us, to liberate us, to be "God-with-us," and our response is to be grouchy? In response to the Angel's announcement that she would be God's instrument in this mighty work of God,

Mary said,

"With all my heart I glorify the Lord!

In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior."

(From the Gospel of Luke 1:46-47. This is Mary's response after she visits her relative Elizabeth)

Mary rejoices in what God is doing in her and through her. The most common Greek word in the New Testament for joy or rejoice is "chara." It is from the same family as the word translated grace (charis), which is used 170 times in the New Testament. There is good devotional material here. Unfortunately for me, in this passage, Luke uses a different word in expressing Mary's joy. Luke uses "agalliasai." It is only used four times in the entire New Testament, Luke, Acts and Revelation.

The word has the nuance of a demonstrative joy rather than the imparted joy of "chara." Luke is narrating Mary's expressive response to God's mighty work as an exuberant joy more than an inward joy like contentment. It is a demonstrative joy, similar to an exuberant response when you are finally asked to the prom, or when the love of your life asks for your hand in marriage, or the joy experienced when your child is born, or when you open up the Christmas gift you were really hoping for. It is exuberant joy, a joy that overflows. Through her response, Mary expresses exuberant joy in what God is doing in her.

In the midst of the chaos and busyness of the season, and all the things to get done, exuberant joy may not be our inclination. When I think of all that Mary was dealing with and would be dealing with, I am struck that exuberant joy is her response. It is Christmas, the celebration of God coming into our world to save us, to liberate us, to be "God-with-us,"

And our response is...

Being more joyful!

Pastor Jeff