

Joy in my heart
Psalm 4
April 18, 2021

David wrote the Psalm, this song for the Choirmaster to be used with stringed instruments. This is a song praising God. David could sing of praising God because God was His righteousness. David knew that the Lord was the righteous God who forgave sins, his sins.

David wrote this Psalm to tell of where his confidence lay. It wasn't in himself, in his own goodness for he knew what he was capable of. No, it was the Lord who loved him and cared for him even when he was in distress. Yes, David had tough times once in awhile. There were times when **he** wondered if someone would ever show him some good but the Lord always came through, no matter what.

So what did David confess to the God, his God about what he thought of Him? He sings, "You have put more joy in my heart than when their grain and new wine abound." David pits them against God and what He has to give. David knows the peace that passes understanding that allows him to have a good nights rest. He knows who it is that watches over him and keeps him safe.

It is interesting that he used the word "Joy". Joy. What does that word mean? Is it the same thing as happiness? Everyone seems to think that if a person is happy then they have got it all. How many times have we heard, "All I want for you is to be happy"? We don't like anyone to be sad. We want to comfort them to get them through the sadness. We want them to get through it and get to the other side where they will once again be happy, that state of being where a person wears a smile, where there is a confidence, a hope.

Joy, a word used by David, I guess you could equate with happiness but it is more like happiness with a deeper effect. David talks of it as more than having plenty to eat. This is greater than happiness that might cause a person to not be able to sleep but happiness with contentment of knowing things are the way they are supposed to be, even when not everything is, when all the world around you seems to be falling apart.

Jesus Himself had the writer to the Hebrews, pen this verse: *Hebrew 12:2*
*looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the **joy** that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

You have heard this verse before, and I imagine you have asked yourself how He could have had JOY knowing what it was going to take from Him to endure the cross, despising all that, that cross symbolized and what His Father would dump on Him and Him alone as He was nailed to the cross, suffering the physical torture and the spiritual torture from the weight of our sin. Joy? How could He have such a heartfelt gladness, happiness, joy, to go to that cross to make payment for us?

He gave His life so we could have life. Was that the joy? His selfless act brought Him joy, knowing He, our creator could see His creation live, the way He wanted His creation to live as He designed the first humans to live? Oh, they got side tracked with death, the death that came about because of their sin but what joy they must have had when God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day did not kill them on the spot but let them live for many years, all the while knowing their Savior from their sin, was coming, not as they would have liked, in their lifetime but sometime as God promised.

They died with that joy in their hearts. They died trusting in the God who made the promise. They didn't get to see the one they had joy in, like so many others who after them who looked forward to the day of **their** salvation.

Jesus had joy in His heart as He hung on that cross. What do you think kept Him there? He loved us so much that He knew, that to save us, He would have to endure all that He would have to endure to get to the other side, to get back to heaven and the time when He could come again and create a new heaven and earth where all who believe in Him would live, with new bodies.

David, even though he went through so much could lay down at night, not with fitful sleep but in peace, knowing he was not always good, but forgiven and in the safety of the all powerful God. Yes, he had joy in his heart, a joy that was more than could be had with all the good that this world has to offer.

David had taken on wild animals, he even had taken on a giant. Yes, to so many that would not have been possible but he knew the Lord was always there to watch over him and give him what he needed to deal with a world full of sin, even the sin of other humans who wanted the focus of their sin to be against David himself.

If David could have joy with all he had trying to go against him, what about us? Do we have joy in our heart, knowing what Jesus has done for us? It should be easier for us, when we have seen the promise fulfilled in Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

David knew all that the Lord did for him and so do we. We know we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and we too trust in the Lord. We may have not had to deal with those who would deal with us as some dealt with David but we too know that Jesus has seen us through tough times as well and we trust that He will be true to who He is and be with us in the future.

Today we are celebrating a day in Luther's life when He had those who wanted him to feel the fires of hell with a literal fire of his own flesh for writing various things that confronted the church at the time with what he considered errors, errors that went against the Word of God, yes, against Jesus, the Word made flesh.

It wasn't that he thought Jesus couldn't take care of Himself but he, as a pastor, didn't want people to be lead astray, led away from Jesus and from the only one who could save them from their sin.

Anything that would come between them and their Savior was a threat to them and it didn't matter if he was in the middle of it all, he was going to stand up to anyone who tried to proclaim a different Gospel.

Luther put his life on the line that day. He stood on what he believed, what he knew by the power of the Holy Spirit to be true. He could do nothing else. He knew who was safely keeping him as did those three who were tossed into the fiery furnace or Daniel who found himself in the midst of hungry lions that came down with a case of lock-jaw.

Luther stood on the Word of God. Stood up to those who could have taken his life because he knew the one who gave him life, gave him a life that was out of this world. Did Luther think about others as well? As a pastor, I'm sure he did and yet it was his life that was at stake that day. It was his breath that was on the line but he did it anyway.

Maybe these verses from James came to mind: James 1:2-4 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James wrote to let that steadfastness, that standing on the Word of God, have its full effect. The writer to the Hebrews understood the need for steadfastness and as he wrote the verse above about Jesus and His perfecting faith in us, he began that sentence with: *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with*

endurance the race that is set before us, looking not to ourselves but to Jesus. It wasn't to stand but to run and not just run alone but with that faithful cloud of witnesses.

We have all heard of first responders who give an oath to serve and protect. When trouble comes we hear of them running but not away. No, they run toward the danger, toward those whom they have pledged to protect, yes, some with their own lives. We call them first responders, necessary workers.

We have been given the Words of eternal life as Peter proclaimed to Jesus when Jesus asked him if he too wanted to leave Jesus. Peter knew where his hope lay, in Jesus. We know the same thing.

You may not have thought of yourselves as first responders but that is who you are. You may be the first to come into the life that is headed toward death, to a fiery hell if you do nothing. Oh, we all know it is the Holy Spirit who creates that faith, authored and perfected by Christ and it is He that creates faith even in those we witness to.

The Holy Spirit does His work but He gives us a job to do to and that is to shine the light of the Gospel on them so they will see with eyes, not focused on what they think is right but on the truth of God's Word, the Word we stand on with our very lives.

Luther said: "here I stand, I can do no other" are we not to stand as well? As we stand, can we stand with the joy of David, knowing that the Lord is going to be with us through thick and thin?

Joshua faced a group that were wondering about their faith. Joshua had this to say: 24:14-15 "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

We can serve the other gods of our land, pride, things, power or anything else that would keep us from standing on God and His Word, the Word of eternal life. We have this Word and we have the Joy of knowing that our lives are secure in Him.

David had Joy in his heart knowing what God had promised and what He continued to do in his life. Jesus had joy knowing that what He was about to do would save the world. We have joy knowing what He has done for us and all that He brings into our lives. May we run to the world, with joy in our hearts standing strong on the Word of God