

Rejoice In The Lord.

Text: Psa 33:5, 6, 1

Suggested Hymns:

387, 602, 184, 391, 453

1) We Rejoice As We Look Downward, Earthward

2) We Rejoice as We Look Upward, Heavenward

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Psalm 33:5b - 6a, 1, *The earth is full of the goodness of the LORD. ⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, ¹ Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous! For praise from the upright is beautiful.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Many wonderful events are taking place in the world today. They fill us with awe, admiration, and rejoicing.

Consider, for example, the medical field. The work and skill of certain doctors fill us with admiration and praise.

For example, a man was driving his truck down a highway a short distance from a city. As he came to the turn of the road, he came upon some loose gravel. The truck went out of control and was wrecked. The injured driver was rushed to the doctor. His head, and especially the one side of his face, was bleeding profusely.

Upon closer examination the doctor saw that his ear was missing. It had been cut off. The police officer rushed back with a saline solution to the scene of the accident, found the ear, brought it back, and the doctor sewed it on again, and the operation was successful. This required skill. It fills us with wonder and praise.

These and many other cases of medical skill are on record today. We can call them medical miracles.

But there is one thing no medical science and skill, be they ever so greatly developed, can do, and that is give life, and give healing. This must come from

above. The doctors and nurses can bind, but God must heal. We look downward, but we must also look upward. Without God's blessing and healing all medical skill and ingenuity and science, even though combined, are in vain.

We have heard of an unusual event, the replacing of the ear of a truck driver. It was an outstanding event. However, two weeks ago, we and the entire Christian world, paused to ponder an even greater event. That event surpasses all human understanding and skill.

It was the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He lives. That miracle is so great that we must ponder it repeatedly in the post-Easter season. It fills God's people year after year with joy and jubilation. God is great! God is wonderful!

Let us today on the basis of our text turn to God as we ponder the topic, Rejoice in the Lord! What a Divine Gift — We are partakers of eternal joys. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. We Are Partakers Of Eternal Joys We Rejoice As We Look Downward, Earthward

Our text says, *“The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”* That is the opening sentence of our text. What an embracing statement! *“The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”* Pause at the word *“earth.”* As we consider that word, our thoughts go back to the creation of the world. The word *“earth”* used in our text is the same word used in Gen. 1:1, in the very first verse of the Bible. It reads, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* There was nothing. God was alone. Then God spoke, and by His almighty word, that divine command, all came into existence.

Let us turn to our Bibles and read some of the words of that first chapter. Your hearts will be filled with joy as you view the wonders of God in Christ in creation, as you look downward, earthward.

We read, ² *The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.*¹ Everything was topsy-turvy, everything was completely upset, a mass. ³ *Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.* ⁴ *And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.* ⁵

*God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.*²

Now turn to the second day. We read, ⁶ *Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”* ⁷ *Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so.* ⁸ *And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.*³ In this space age we marvel at the greatness, and “fullness,” of the Lord. Man becomes smaller and God greater, and man is lost in space.

Thus we could continue to read and study the remaining creative acts of God. However, the masterpiece of His creation, is mankind. God said, *“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* ²⁷ *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* ²⁸ *Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*⁴

Truly the more we ponder the word “earth” and see God in His creative acts the more we are amazed at the “fullness” of His goodness and mercy. Our text says *The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.* We rejoice. We become partakers in these joys.

With this post-Easter season, however, we associate an even greater act of God on “earth.” Something most unusual took place on earth. A few weeks ago we sang this hymn:⁵

*There is a green hill far away
Beyond the city wall
Where the dear Lord was crucified
Who died to save us all.*

On that “green hill” nearly 2,000 years ago on “earth” stood a cross — we call that hill Calvary — “the old rugged CROSS.” Hammer blows were heard.

Shoutings of soldiers and jeers of scoffers filled the air. On that cross was suspended the seemingly helpless form of a man. Beneath that cross stood His mother Mary, John, a disciple, and a few others. A sword pierced the heart of that mother. A soldier came and pierced His side. All seemed lost.

Earth! Earth! Earth! Even in that dark hour of the world's history the earth was full of the goodness (and mercies) of the Lord. For we read: ***“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”***⁶ Yes, that is true.

Open your Bible again, and read 1 John 2:2. It states: ***2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*** Do you still hesitate? Read another Bible statement. With an uplifted finger John the Baptist, who saw Christ with his own eyes, says, ***“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”***⁷ And 2 Cor. 5:15 states, ***“He died for all.”***

Linger on that hill (earth) a few hours longer. Two men come to that hill. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, both secret followers of Jesus. They take the lifeless body from the cross, wrap it hurriedly in graveclothes, place it in a tomb, roll a stone in front of the sepulchre, and depart. Again all seems lost.

But on the third day, early on Easter morning, the stone is rolled away. The glorious Easter message fills the air. The angel tells the women, ***“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 “He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.”***⁸ A miracle, much greater than the miracle of creation, has occurred. For the angel adds, ***“And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”***⁹ He lives. They saw Him. They saw Him on “earth.” What joy!

“Yes,” I hear someone say, *“that is all very well. That happened in those days and to those disciples, but it is different today. Look at my suffering and situation in life. Look at me and my lot.”*

Then, think of the Gospel read this morning from the lectern. There your blessed Saviour tells you, ***“I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. ... I am the Good Shepherd and I know My sheep and am known by My own.”***¹⁰ In that same chapter the Good Shepherd comfortingly tells you,²⁷ ***“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. ”***²⁸ ***“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.”***¹¹

Truly we Christians can rejoice, for, as we look earthward, and downward, the ***“earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”***

2. We Are Partakers Of Eternal Joys We Rejoice as We Look Upward, Heavenward

Our text says, ***Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous!*** because there are even greater glories waiting for you in the Lord. After the holy writer has looked upon “earth,” he now turns heavenward. We read, ***By the word of the LORD the heavens were made.*** His spiritual eyes pierce all the clouds of gloom and darkness, and he gazes heavenward. That thought, that vision, is uplifting.

There is not only an “earth” but also a “heaven.” This is a realm of eternal glory and bliss, where ***God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.***¹²

As we paused at the word “earth,” let us pause at the word “heaven.” For century upon century the heavens have declared the glories of God and have filled the human mind and heart with awe and amazement.

For century after century the words of the 19th Psalm have been read and pondered, ***The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.*** ² ***Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.*** ³ ***There is no speech nor language Where their voice is not heard.*** ⁴ ***Their line has gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world.***¹³

For century after century man has viewed the mysterious movements above. In this satellite age these movements above of the hosts of heaven, namely, the sun, the moon, and the stars, fill us with even greater awe and wonder.

And still greater wonders await us as we ponder the open grave and the resurrection story. There is not only some mysterious physical movement in the upper realm, but there is a “heaven,” a realm of eternal joys.

Someone may say, “*How do you know?*” We Christians know because this Book, the Bible, God’s Book, tells us so.

Our Sunday School children sing: “*Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so.*” Similarly we speak of all Bible truths. They are in this Book. This Book has never lied. In this Book God talks to us. Every statement in this Book is truth. “*Your Word is truth.*”¹⁴ “*The Scripture cannot be broken.*”¹⁵ Everything in the Bible will someday be fulfilled. It stands forever.

In a few weeks we shall study another beautiful story, the ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Jesus stood on that Mount of Olives, surrounded by His faithful few. They could see Him. They could feel Him. They could talk to Him. He talked to them.

It was the 40th day after His resurrection. During that time Jesus had shown Himself alive by many infallible proofs. You know some of these. It is needless to repeat them. As Jesus stood on that mount, He told them, ⁸ “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” ⁹ *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.*¹⁶ Where was He? Where is He? In heaven.

This Bible story continues, ¹⁰ *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, [Where did they come from?] ¹¹ who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”*

The angels disappeared. The disciples were left alone on that mount. Where are those angels now? We can put that same question as we think of the Christmas story. Where are those angels now?

Do you still doubt? Then turn to one more Bible proof. It is recorded in the 25th chapter of the Gospel According to St. Matthew.

That chapter contains the parable of the Ten Virgins, the parable of the Talents, and ends with a description of the Last Judgment. The description of the Last Judgment begins with these words, *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.* ³² *“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.* ³³ *“And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”¹⁷*

The judgment is then pronounced. The story concludes with this statement: *“And these [those on the left hand] shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”* Rejoice therefore, O you righteous, in the Lord, for both “earth” and “heaven” are *“full of the goodness of the Lord.”*

However, this truth is easily forgotten and overlooked. A woman was taken to the hospital. Her pastor called on her. During his call the pastor spoke to her about the ways of the Lord with His followers.

The woman was discouraged and upset that the Lord had not been very good to her, and that she had much misery and sorrow. The pastor listened patiently. When she finished, the pastor handed her a piece of paper and said to her, *“Here is a piece of paper. I’m going to leave you, but I shall return, God willing, in a few days. While I’m absent, would you kindly ponder the ways of the Lord in your life. Should you find some goodness, please write it down on this paper?”*

The woman agreed. A few days later the pastor returned. Do you know what the first words of that woman were? *“Pastor, please give me more paper!”* Count your blessings, not only your Easter blessings but also the many other blessings of God, and you will be surprised what the Lord has done.

Have you ever bemoaned your natural plight? Today is Good Shepherd Sunday. It is touchingly portrayed in the words of the hymnist,¹⁸

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

And so through all the length of days

Thy goodness faileth never:
Good shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house for ever.

We have that joy and blessing. In the Epistle for this Sunday Peter writes (you know what happened to Peter; he is writing from experience, guided by the Spirit of God), ²⁵ *For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*¹⁹

There are still many people outside the Christian fold who do not have this joy and rejoicing. In the concluding verse of the Gospel for today Jesus tells His people, *“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.”*²⁰

Let us thank God for the wonderful Easter story, for having filled earth and heaven with His glories, and for having taken us into His partnership in eternal joys.

And then let us reach out to others that they, too, may see and enjoy the glories of the Lord, so that, as the Psalmist says, ² *Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore!* ³ *From the rising of the sun to its going down The LORD’s name is to be praised.*²¹ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Gen. 1:2

² Gen. 1:3-5

³ Gen. 1:6-8

⁴ Gen. 1:26-28

⁵ Hymn 84

⁶ Isa. 53: 5, 6

⁷ John 1:29

⁸ Matt. 28:5, 6

⁹ Matt. 28:7

¹⁰ John 10:11, 14

¹¹ John 10: 27, 28

¹² Revelation 21:4

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- 13 Psa. 19:1-4
 - 14 John 17:17
 - 15 John 10:35
 - 16 Acts 1:8, 9
 - 17 Matthew 25:31-33
 - 18 Hymn 391
 - 19 1 Peter 2:25
 - 20 John 10:16
 - 21 Psalm 113:2-3