

## **The Sounds of Joy Restored**

**Psalm 30**  
**Luke 10:1-11 and 16-20**  
**(Hymns - 422, 476, 530, 556)**

I have used this story in several sermons.  
It's about a series of ads for newspapers and posters  
that the Anglican Church of Canada  
developed some years ago.  
I actually have not seen them lately,  
but they were used widely in the 1990s.

A professional ad firm was hired  
to develop a campaign to invite lapsed Anglicans  
to come back to church.

This was in the wake of work by Canadian sociologist of religion Reg Bibby  
who argued that the best audience for churches wanting to grow in numbers  
was among those who still identified with the church in the census  
but did not attend any more.

His assumption was there was still some attachment or affinity  
among those people that churches could appeal to  
through inviting them to reconnect with their communities of faith.

The ad firm did focus groups with the various designs they developed.

The one that was most attractive  
to the participants  
was the one that I think was the simplest.  
It had a note stuck to a fridge.

The note said  
"Come home. All is forgiven. Jesus"  
Beneath the note were these words,  
"Sometimes the simplest messages are the hardest to understand."

That is, I think, the core message of Christianity.  
Experiencing companionship with God in Jesus Christ  
is coming home for every human being,  
for every woman and man created in the image of God  
for relationship with God.

In the deepest recesses of our souls,  
those integrative centres of our beings,  
we meet the God who created, redeemed, and sustains us.  
We come home to the loving arms of a delighted parent.

This companionship is experienced most fully  
in the fellowship of the rest of the family,  
others who recognize  
their source of vitality and energy  
in their relationship with Jesus Christ.  
Thus, we celebrate with great joy this morning  
the reception of four new members of Christ's church  
here at Brentwood Presbyterian this morning.

Psalm 30 helps us remember the source and nature of this joy.

The message of this Psalm  
to those of us who are members of the church,  
members of the Body of Christ in this world,  
is to remind us of the purpose  
of our salvation.

Through the work of God in Jesus Christ,  
continuing its full realization through the work of the Holy Spirit,  
we have been restored to the joy of being fully human as God intends it.  
With that awareness, we burst forth in songs of praise and gratitude.  
We relish in the delight of what it means to be friends of God.

The church is the community within which  
humans reach their full potential  
as beings who are a blessing to the whole of creation.

When Susan, Allan, Maurice, and Nadia joined the church this morning,  
they promised to make diligent use of the means of grace,  
to seek the peace and welfare of the church,  
and faithfully support its work and worship.

As beloved friends,  
redeemed in Jesus Christ to be blessings in this world,  
they add to our strength as a witness to Christ's love and mercy  
in this community.

Fed with us through God's Word and sacraments,  
they and we are now knit together at a deeper level  
as companions in mission and ministry.

May we bless them as they bless us  
in Christ's name and service.

The passage we read from Luke this morning  
is also interesting in terms of the mission of the church.  
Jesus sent 70 disciples out as his ambassadors.  
Wherever they went, they were to bring peace and blessing.  
That was the attitude they were to maintain,  
no matter what they encountered.  
They were to tell the people there

that the Kingdom of God had come near,  
indeed, was arriving in the presence and work of Jesus Christ.  
The 70 experienced great power in this message  
and received great blessing by being part of the family of God  
both on earth and in heaven.

We don't know exactly who they were,  
but if they were anything like the others who hung around Jesus  
they probably knew all too well the dynamics of faith  
described in Psalm 30.

They would have wandered from God's home often,  
willfully and wantonly,  
to the point of being threatened by physical and/or spiritual death.

When they came to themselves  
(that wonderful phrase from the parable of the Prodigal Son),  
they would have cried to God for help.

And instead of letting them stew in their self-inflicted sorrow,  
God answered them by drawing them up from the pit  
and restoring their joy.

God was angry for a moment that they strayed,  
but welcomed them back with joy to his everlasting favour and love.

This is the steadfast nature of the God we worship in Jesus Christ.

His approach may not "make sense" to us.

But that is not the point.

The point is that it makes sense to God  
and that is what restores us to the joy God intends for us.

And there are sounds associated with this journey of faith  
that is common to so many of us.

When we are disconnected from God,  
the sounds come in cries and weeping,  
even in silence in our souls.

When God finds and restores his connection with us,  
we burst forth in praise and thanksgiving,  
in joyful songs and dancing.

That is what we offer, in the name and power of Jesus Christ,  
when we invite others to come and enjoy  
what we are enjoying here at Brentwood Presbyterian Church,  
both in this congregation and in our emerging partnership  
with Burnaby Taiwanese Presbyterian Church.

This is a community of forgiven and faithful Christians  
who practice the gifts of the Spirit in order to extend the Kingdom of God  
so the world will be blessed by God's favour and mercy.

We are fed for that mission by the means of grace entrusted to the church – especially the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments.

We are guided in that mission by the Holy Spirit  
working through the fellowship of the church  
to shape in each and all of us together the mind of Christ.

We are strengthened in Christ's service  
as we become every more deeply aware  
of the multitude of ways God sustains and strengthens us  
breath by breath.

In that power, we are sent out into the world to be and do and tell about  
the lives of peace, well-being, and blessing  
that are possible in relationship with Jesus Christ.

If we want to partner with God in attracting more people  
to share in our joy here at Brentwood,  
then we have to extend the invitation.

We have to talk to people about what happens here.  
We have to find our voices and welcome our friends and family home.

Amen

Written and preached by the Rev. Dr. Brian Fraser  
Minister with Brentwood Presbyterian Church  
1600 Delta Ave, Burnaby, BC  
[www.brentwoodpresbyterian.ca](http://www.brentwoodpresbyterian.ca)  
604-924-9650  
[brianfraser@shaw.ca](mailto:brianfraser@shaw.ca)