

How Can We Resolve to Rejoice?

Sermon Notes for Dec 31, 2017 at Brentwood

Psalm 148 (561) & Isaiah 62:1-5 (678)



**For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your builder marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.
(Isaiah 62:5)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- It's not about us – at least not initially – it's about God and God's rejoicing – these texts this morning, as we get ready to enter a new year, direct our attention to what God is doing with us and for us – this triune God, in the mysteries of the Holy Trinity, is rejoicing over us like a bridegroom over his bride – the groom is the builder of all that is – the breadth of what God has built is expounded in Psalm 148, where everything made is responding to God's rejoicing with theirs – the creation is vibrating with the sounds of gratitude for God's reforming presence – so we can resolve to rejoice when our imaginations are grounded in the reality that God is Creator/Builder of all that is
- In that creating/building, there is a special place for human beings in the creation – we are offered the privilege of cultivating the garden – of creating a compassionate culture among the whole human species as they flourish in the bounty that God gave them – that is about us and it's the source of our rejoicing - our rejoicing arises from our appreciation for this calling and this bounty – our rejoicing arises from remembering the source of all we enjoy – our rejoicing arises from participating in what God wants us to do
- The image this morning is from He Qi, an artist that I have used often this year – I am particularly drawn to his joyful colours and to the way he draws on his Chinese heritage in picturing the stories of the Bible – he was born in China and studied art in Nanjing (China), then Hamburg (Germany) – he was the artist in residence for the World Council of Churches meetings in Busan, South Korea – lives in Minnesota and has taught at Nanking Union Theological Seminary, the primary theological college of the Protestant church in China and at Drew University in Madison, NJ, with it's roots in a Methodist seminary founded back in 1867 – we used his image of the Good Samaritan for our Christian Urban Camp last summer and will use his image of Joseph welcoming his brothers and father for this year's camp focused on how to deal with bullying – two things struck me this week about this image – first, it portrays the figures as somewhat fragmented and disoriented – second, it captures the collaboration and cooperation that

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always goes on in Biblical rejoicing, whether we recognize it or not – there's the Spirit in the form of the dove, that community of saints who have gone before in the angel playing the horn, and the human following the horn with her lute – all the elements that go into true rejoicing that sustains our resilience for the work of blessing the creation in gratitude for God's reconciling presence among us

So, what are we going to do with this ...

Our attitudes shape our behaviours and those behaviours have consequences – it's a simple but profound ABC formula – so, if we allow the Holy Spirit to focus our attention on how God wants to rejoice in the human creatures, in our presence and our potential, as doers of justice, lovers of kindness, and humble walkers in the ways of the Holy Trinity, then we can be confident that we are contributing to God's cause for rejoicing

Your Notes ...

Today's Framework for our Prayers

Thanks – for the many causes of rejoicing that you have poured into our lives and for the ways in which they have enriched us beyond measure ...

Help – in finding your resilience in adjusting to the diseases that have arisen and the deaths that have occurred recently ...

Awe – at the surprising presence and power of your gracious love as it enfolds us before we even notice it and beyond our wildest imaginings ...