

Rejoice? Rejoice!

Luke 10:19-20 Jesus said, *“Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*

Sometimes, us Lutherans are accused of being a sour-faced bunch and perhaps not very happy. I’ve sometimes heard it said that the closer you are to God the further the devil is from you, but I haven’t found that to be true. I’ve always known that the more in tune I am with what God is doing, the more in-tune I am with how hard the devil is trying to stop it. God does not promise happiness here. In fact Jesus promises pain, strife, persecution and trouble. I suppose that sometimes we take that to extremes and walk around down trodden, hoping that by acting as though we’re in pain, we might fool the devil into leaving us alone.

Maybe the problem is that we’ve forgotten what to rejoice in. We don’t rejoice in our earthly circumstances because they are temporary and fleeting. We don’t rejoice in wealth because it too quickly becomes a god. We don’t rejoice in a happy-clappy sort of way because then, we’re just fooling ourselves. So, what do we rejoice in?

The disciples found that through the power of the Holy Spirit, they could cast out demons. They realized that they had the power and authority granted to them by Christ. They were excited, kind of like a 5-year old who first learns to tie his shoes. That’s power! But Jesus doesn’t want the power to go to their heads. Calm down and realize for a moment where that power comes from. It’s not about you, it’s about me. Don’t get too excited about being able to cast out demons or you will become self-righteous and power hungry.

So, Jesus, what do we rejoice in? Your names are written in heaven. That’s what. Your name is recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life. You’re on the list. You’ve got reservations at the most exclusive joint in town. No one gets in unless Jesus puts your name on the list himself. You! Do you believe it? Heaven, eternal life, 24/7 rejoicing? It’s all yours. Don’t get hung up on earthly power and all of that jazz. Don’t get self-righteous about how great things are going for you. But rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say it. Rejoice! Rejoice in the amazing thing He has done for you through His son, Jesus. He has made it possible that as a sinner you can be a saint at the same time. He has written your name in Jesus’ blood in His book. That’s something to rejoice in.

Shake off that solemn look and smile a bit. You have something to rejoice in. Forgiveness, life and salvation, rejoice in these. And perhaps, if you’re smiling, someone may ask you about that smile. Then you can seize that opportunity to tell them about the hope you have in Christ. Rejoice.

Heavenly Father, we rejoice in the true and certain promise that our names are written in your book because of our faith in your Son, Jesus. Thank you for the Holy Spirit who gives us that faith and strengthens it so that we can rejoice! Help us to share with others the hope we have in you! In Jesus’ name, Amen.