

Leaves Of Hope #18

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

Rejoice, rejoice, believers,
And let your lights appear!
The evening is advancing,
And darker night is near.
The Bridegroom is arising,
And soon he draweth nigh;
Up, pray and watch and wrestle;
At midnight comes the cry.

L.H. 72, Verse, 1

Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see, but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment. So then, banish anxiety from your heart and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.

It is evident that young people want to be noticed and are impatient for new experiences. There is a strong possibility that a considerable part of their activity comes from only carnal desire. It is also possible that they are

reaching out for something that so far as has eluded their grasp. They are searching for something that they feel they may have missed. Can it be true that they feel neglected and ignored by those who should be giving guidance and direction to their lives as well as love? The search goes on for young people and this is something that parents must weigh most carefully before jumping on their capers with only criticism. It may be that there is a vain search for lasting joy and gladness and that cannot be found. The frantic search leads nowhere but to frustration and the frenzied power of drugs and alcohol.

The answer to this problem is found with our God who did not create us to gloom and doom but to a life of joy and gladness. We know that since the fall into sin there has been an abundance of sadness and grief as well as pain and a dark future. By the grace of God, joy was brought back to all people through the promise of atonement and eternal life. Jesus was born to wash away all sins through the shedding of his innocent blood. That price of sin was paid and a promise was fulfilled that made salvation not only free but also available to all people; therefore there is now no room for sorrow. Now the soul becomes important and not just the body's carnal quest that ends in despair.

It is only as we let sin into our life that sorrow filters in and threatens to take away all joy from our hearts and lives. If we look away from the blessed Gospel of salvation, we will find no cause for rejoicing but only cause for terror in the midst of hopelessness and despair as one sin most likely will lead to another.

God, who has redeemed us, wants nothing but joy and gladness for us. He says: “Rejoice, O young man in your youth and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth.” The years of youth are precious years and are intended by the Lord for joy and cheer. In youth vigor and strength are rising to their peak and the heart beats evenly and unflinchingly. Life stretches out with many promises of accomplishment and adventure.

With the invitation to rejoice goes also a fatherly warning: “Put away evil from your flesh.” The danger is ever present that one will look for joy in the wrong places. There are places in which entertainment is provided that caters only those things carnal and directs youthful vigor into the wrong channels. Satan is ever a hand to recommend his short-lived wares. Let us not listen to him and his followers. The joy which Satan promises brings

nothing but grief and remorse with a final end in perdition if there is no repentance.

God warns us that he will bring us into judgment, which involves us in an accounting for the objects of our joy and pleasure. May our gracious God lead us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. In the Gospel of forgiveness for our past misdeeds let us find new joy. There is now good cheer for all of our days. Let us remember St. Paul as he recovered from a life of shame and murder. Today many churches are named after him, as his life became reformed with faith, joy and purpose. There was a lot to do once St. Paul had put away his sins and began working for God.

My heart for joy is springing
And can no more be sad,
'Tis full of mirth and singing,
Sees naught but sunshine glad.

The Sun that cheers my spirit
Is Jesus Christ, my King;
The heaven I shall inherit
Makes me rejoice and sing.

L.H. 528, Verses 15, Paul Gerhardt, 1656