

## Sermon December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### *Jesus Our Deliverer Is Here*

Today we lit the candle of Joy (**Image**) to reflect on the Israelite's feelings of joy as they hear Isaiah's promise that God will deliver them from their suffering.

Today we lit the candle of Joy to reflect on those who feel joy in our gospel this morning, because they hear from John that Jesus the messiah is coming to deliver them from their suffering.

Today we lit the candle of Joy to reflect on those who feel joy in the church of Thessalonica, because of Paul's proclamation that Jesus' return is near. And that when Jesus does return, Jesus will deliver them from their suffering.

Today we lit the candle of Joy to reflect on the joy we felt when we have experienced deliverance from our suffering.

As we walk through this Advent season we are encouraged to reflect on these moments in our lives where we have experienced deliverance from our suffering. Where we have seen God's healing and redemptive love at work in our lives. Where our hope in God's promise turned into feelings of joy in God's fulfilled promise.

As we live through this pandemic together, this message of God delivering us from our suffering is so important for our ears to hear. We long to feel joy. We long to witness Christ delivering us from this grief and sorrow we are experiencing now. We try to find hope in our memories of God delivering us from past sufferings. We cling to our belief, that like before, God will deliver us again.

As I reflect on the times God delivered me from suffering. As I reflect on the times of joy I experienced in my life, I can say without a doubt that with every experience of joy came many scrapes and bruises beforehand.

From learning how to ride a bike, and having to pick myself up off the ground over and over again (**Image**). Before finally figuring out how to stay upright, and pedalling off into the sunset (**Image**). To learning to skate, and having to live with an ice pack on my knees and on my buttocks half the time before finally skating that victory lap around the rink. From going through many breakups and rejections before meeting the person I was meant to be with. To making mistake after mistake before becoming more confident in my parenting. The first-born children always carry the wounds of our imperfections, don't they? From going through many times of failure in my educational journey. To completing my Master's Degree at the Theological seminary in Saskatoon. From all the relationships I have grieved due to the brokenness of those I was in relationship with, and the brokenness I carry within myself. To all those relationships I

was able to grow in and nurture, because of all the growing pains I experienced from those relationships that didn't work out.

In all those moments of failure, those moments where we experience scrapes and bruises. Where we feel sadness, frustration, anger, fear. We also feel joy when God delivers us from our suffering.

As a sports fan, I think of many championships that were won by the teams I cheer for, or by teams that my friends cheer for. These victories more often than not came after years and years of heartache. I think about the Toronto Raptors who year after year took it on the cheek in the playoffs to finally climb over the hump in 2019 to win the championship.

Or when living in Saskatchewan I saw the pain on many Rider fans faces when the Riders lost back to back grey cups to Montreal in 2009 and 2010. But, I also, saw great joy in their faces when the Riders won the grey cup in 2013 in Regina.

For many of you who are Stampeder fans you can probably relate after watching two disappointing grey cup losses in 2016 and 2017 **(Image)**. And then being able to watch your football team lift that grey cup at Commonwealth Stadium in Edmonton. I saw the joy in many of your faces **(Image)**.

Most joy we experience comes after dealing with a lot of scrapes and bruises.

In our readings today, we see that God's people have suffered many scrapes and bruises as they await God's deliverance.

For the Israelites, they have lived in exile for a long time. They are ready for deliverance. God anoints Isaiah, and sends him to proclaim good news to all who have suffered at the hands of the Babylonians. God's deliverance is coming. God's people will soon be freed from exile. God's people will experience healing and redemption from their suffering. These were the words of promise they heard. These were the words that gave them hope, and joy.

In our gospel, God's people are living under Roman rule, which has led to many hardships. They are ready for deliverance. They are ready for the promised messiah to come. They are so ready for it that they are hoping John is the one. When John disappoints them. They are left confused. "Why are you doing all this stuff John if you are not the one?" In response John answers them with words of hope.

"The one who is to come is already among us. The messiah is here, and will reveal himself shortly. Then we will all be delivered from our suffering. We will experience God's healing and redemption."

For the early believers they continue to suffer from the Roman Empire as they wait for Jesus' return. Yet, people like Paul are sent to them to reassure them that the God of peace who sanctifies them is among them in the Holy Spirit. We are not alone. The deliverer of suffering is here with us. So, rejoice.

Like the Israelites. Like the early believers. Throughout our lives we experience scrapes and bruises. As we face this pandemic together our scrapes and bruises seem bigger than ever **(Image)**. Like, all those other experiences in our lives, we hope that one day we will experience joy from being delivered from this pandemic suffering. We will experience God's healing and redemption from these scrapes and bruises.

On that day we will feel enormous relief and joy **(Image)**. Like those who stood before Isaiah listening to his prophecy. Like those who gathered around John at the river. Like those who heard Paul's letter in the church of Thessalonica. Like the poor shepherds who gathered at the manger to bear witness to the birth of a saviour **(Image)**.

Let us pray, gracious God, sometimes the scrapes and bruises we face in our lives can feel so painful. Sometimes we need to cry out to you for relief. As we face this pandemic together grant us faith to cling to all those memories of where you have delivered us from our suffering. Give us hope that we will experience your healing and redemption from our suffering. And may we continue to rejoice in you in all times and in places in our lives. Knowing you are walking with us. **Amen.**

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