

**FIVE MINUTE SERMON**

BY REV. WILLIAM DEMODY, D. D.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**THE JOY OF THE LORD**

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice." (Phil. iv. 4.)

Mingled with other things of life is a certain amount of joy. This joy does not pervade the whole human race at the same time. When one individual may be experiencing great joy, another may be steeped in the deepest sorrow. But is this joy the same in every one? Experience shows us that it is not. There are, indeed, certain founts of joy that are common to all, but not in the same degree. What causes great joy in the heart of one may fall to do so in the heart of another. This is due, generally, to the different temperaments of people, to their education, and to the estimation they have of certain things.

All this is true of worldly joys. There is a joy, however, that flows from a loftier fount and which always may dwell in the heart of man. This is the joy of which St. Paul speaks. There is only one thing that will bring this joy to us, and that is a good and clear conscience. Whoever possesses it can always rejoice. Sorrows, misfortunes, and difficulties of all kinds can not drive it from him. They may smother it temporarily, but they can not stifle it forever. Nor will this temporal overshadowing of it be complete. It will even then burst forth, though not in its entirety or greatest intensity; but it will be enough to buoy us up amidst the sorrows and difficulties we continually encounter.

How sad it is to know that so few of the whole human race have this joy in their hearts. Why do they not possess it? It is either because they are leading a life they should not, or because they are totally ignorant of the possibility of any joy, save what the world can offer, coming into their souls.

Worldly people, that is, people who give little or no time to God, often appear happy. Who has not seen them on the streets, in the theaters, in other amusement places, in the club-rooms, wearing a perpetual smile? Were we to judge from that, we would be forced to admit that their joy is full. However, it is not the smile on the lip that tells the truth. It, like the tongue, easily can deceive men. Were the depths of many of these men's hearts searched, an alarming fact would be revealed. The seat of the pleasant look would not be found therein, but rather disorder, which can not bring true pleasure. And if the lips do not correspond with the heart, there is no sincerity in the man guilty of the inconsistency.

The lips of another may not wear this smile; in his words there may be but little if anything that would reveal a joy dwelling within him. Nevertheless, it is often there, and its manifestations break forth in something more serious than smiles and more weighty than words. It is shown in a good will, a kind disposition, an abounding charity, and a tender conscience. In the end, he finds great joy. They are more precious to him than all the wealth, honor, and glory that the world could bestow upon him.

To many people joy would seem to consist in an absolute freedom from all restraint. Of course, they realize they must observe the laws of God, and many, if not all, of the laws of the country, but beyond this they recognize no restraint. Every fancy, every whim, they would like to see encouraged and satisfied. Nor are such individuals wanting in this great land. You will find them almost everywhere. If they do not do more for themselves than they are actually doing, it is because they have not yet discovered where something is lacking. They consider themselves the only wise ones of earth, and they scoff at any one who voluntarily leads a life of sacrifice. They look upon religious, bound by vows, as unwise. The doctrine of mortification taught by the Church they consider as old-fashioned and quite unbecoming to one who abounds in wealth. But does true joy really come to such as these? No joys, except worldly ones, which generally drive them into passionate desires beyond their control, come into their heart. Of the quiet, sweet, and calm joy of the Lord, they have never tasted. And if they have not tasted of it here, how can they be filled with it hereafter?

It should be the desire of every Catholic, gifted as he is with faith and a knowledge of the high things of God, to acquire the true joy of the Lord. He is bidden to do so many times in Scripture. Experience teaches him also that it alone counts. The happiness all crave for, he realizes can never come to him if his heart be void of this true joy. Neither can the cheering words he speaks in life, or the smile he often wears, be sincere without it.

On the contrary, what a precious blessing it is to him who possesses this joy. The burdens of life will be lightened for him; the sorrows and pain that afflict him will be lessened, if the joy of the Lord be among his spiritual possessions. He will have a better understanding of the passing things of life and of the eternal things of God. This will urge him on and give him courage to reform the works that will bring him to the everlasting city of heaven, where happiness will attend him eternally.

**IS ONE RELIGION AS GOOD AS ANOTHER**

A. M. Riordan in America

Any one will admit that two and two are four. Anyone will admit that there is only one way to write the multiplication tables and write them correctly. All men know that there is only one correct answer to any given problem in mathematics, or for that matter, in any science. We admit these things because it is indisputable to the thinking man that nothing can be true and false at the same time, in the same sense. The rules of mathematics, of physics, of chemistry, and all the other sciences are one and indisputable, because truth is one. Two and two are not four, due to agreement among men that this shall be so. H<sub>2</sub>O is not water because man has agreed that it shall be; a stone, thrown into the air, does not fall again to the ground, because physicists have agreed that it should so fall. These things are true simply because they are true, and man must admit their truth, or be in error.

If truth is universally one, in everything else, why is it not also one in religion? God exists. All Christians admit that. God is a Being and as such, has certain attributes. All Christians admit that also. Christ lived on earth, and now lives in heaven. Certain things are true concerning Christ and certain things are not true. No one, even if he be not a Christian, denies that. While on earth, Christ spoke certain words; He laid down certain rules; He told facts concerning Himself and God, and He started a religion. In order to call oneself a Christian this must be admitted. Christ, said only one thing concerning each different question and He meant it only one way, else He would have been wrong.

Everywhere, on every side, we hear the contention that one religion is as good as another and we hear the contention that the Bible is the Word of God and that all men should be permitted to interpret it in their own way. Religion should be democratic and the particular congregations, scattered throughout the world, should be permitted to decide what is to be believed by them, and taught by their ministers in their own churches. There are about 202 different sects in existence, and we are told that one is as good as another.

Any fair-minded Christian must admit that one religion is as good as another in the sense that a man can save his soul, no matter to what religion he may belong, provided he conducts his life in accordance with what he conscientiously believes to be right. If a man is sincere in his belief and acts accordingly, he will surely save his soul, but does this prove that one religion is as good as another?

Suppose men were to divide up into 202 different schools on arithmetic, each school deciding what rules it will adopt and what the professor shall teach. One school would maintain that so and so's text book is the correct one, and that it should be adhered to exactly, and if questions were to arise concerning some point, that the writer of the book should be the court of last appeal, and his word, law. Another school would maintain the same text book to be the true one, but deny that the writer had any authority to settle any disputed question, holding that every student should be allowed to interpret the text to suit himself; that we ought to be democratic about it, and let everyone have his say about it. Another school would deny the authenticity of the text book altogether, and use another which maintained different rules. One school would admit the multiplication tables, as they are, and another would deny the seven tables and claim that seven times two equals twenty-five. Another would deny the universality of the law governing the sum of two and two, and claim that, when a debt of two dollars and two dollars is owed him, that the sum should be five, while when he owed two and two dollars to another, that the sum would be three. What would be the result? The grocer would sell beans at 10 cents per can, straight, and, by the addition he learned at his school, make two cans worth 37 cents. The customer who attended another school, where the free-thinking method was taught, having only 12 cents in his pocket, and knowing that the beans sell for 10 cents a can, would be able to buy two cans for his 12 cents, as his method taught him he could decide the sum of two numbers to suit himself.

This example is arithmetic only, but take any other science. What if the chemist, the physicist, the astronomer, the electrician, were to hold that each individual could interpret the rules of his science as he sees fit, what would happen? The chemist would mix up some H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and have us drinking sulphuric acid, claiming that the laws have nothing to do with it, and that H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> is water; the physicist would build railroad bridges out of straw, as the rule governing strength of material is arbitrary, the astronomer would say that we get our heat from the moon, and the electrician would use 100,000 volts on the light circuits in our houses on the principle that high voltage is not dangerous, as the rule saying that it is, is only arbitrary anyway and he has as much right to think

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the way he pleases about it as anyone else.

It is easy to see what the arbitrary interpretation of the laws of science would lead to. It never crosses a man's mind to say that one belief in the laws of science is as good as another, but yet, there are 202 religions, each differing from the other and still, each has reference to the same thing, in the same sense. The laws of all sciences are admitted by all to be absolute, permitting only one interpretation, and he who believes anything else, is admitted to be wrong. Is the truth concerning God and Christ less one and undeniable than the truth concerning chemistry? Christ cannot have been true God and not true God at the same time; Christ cannot be really present in the Blessed Sacrament and not present at the same time; Christ could not have made Peter the head of His church, and not made him head of His Church. Something is true concerning God and Christ and anything opposed to that particular something is not true. Something must be true concerning God and Christ. They exist, and therefore have attributes. Christ lived; He said certain things; He did certain things, and He meant what He said in a certain way. There are 202 different religions, each claiming to tell the actual facts concerning God, but each at variance with all the others. Certainly it ought to be evident that either there is no religion which is right, or else there is one which is right, and all the rest are wrong.

If a man conducts his life in accordance with what he believes, and is sincere in his belief, he can save his soul, but one religion is not as good as another to the man who wishes to be a follower of the religion, which is in accordance with the actual facts concerning God and Christ.

Religion is the science of the greatest truth in existence and the most unchangeable, and yet it is the only science where men claim that one interpretation is as good as another. We cannot be democratic with the laws of science. One thing is always true in each case and we must admit this or be in error. It may serve our purpose to be in error, but we are none the less wrong.

He who claims that one religion is as good as another, may go to heaven if he is sincere in his belief and live up to it, but even though he save his soul, he is none the less at variance with the actual truth. The really sincere upright man, the good man may get to heaven, but one religion is not as good as another to the man who cares whether he knows the truth or not. I may go through life and be prosperous and happy, and all the time think that two and two equal five, but although prosperous and happy, I am wrong. I may possibly save my soul in the belief that one religion is as good as another, but I am just as wrong as if I had lost it.

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