

God's Joy

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Preacher: Pastor Lisa Taylor

[0 : 00] 1975 Evolution Optimism So Element Theck Song This group Merry Christmas and welcome to Pendleton Center Church.

This is the fourth week of Advent, and we're preparing for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ on Christmas Eve night. I hope that you can feel His love and peace at this time of year. If this is your first time here, I hope that you'll pick up one of our welcome folders.

They're at the back of the sanctuary, at the connection site, or at the welcome and information desk. And for everyone, we'd like you to take a friendship card out of your bulletin and at least put your name on it so we know you were here.

If you would like to get the newsletter or need to update information, please fill in your address as well. On the back, you can put down joys or concerns or notes to the staff and pastors.

Again, welcome to Pendleton Center Church and Merry Christmas. Good morning. Merry Christmas. This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

[1 : 38] This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. This is the day. This is the day that the Lord has made.

Shall we pray together? Dear God in heaven, pour your Holy Spirit into this place and help us to experience the presence of God, the meaning of Christmas. God poured into our heart.

Bless all our worship. Bless all that we do as we offer our prayers in Jesus' holy name. Amen. I'd like to invite you, if you're able, to stand as we're going to sing together. O come, O come, Emmanuel.

Let me have this down so... I'm pretty sure these are not here. I can't miss you.

[3 : 02] I love those. I love those. Great, Arcturus. What is righteousness... I love those.

O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive, Israel, that poison.

And ransom captive Israel That boys in lowly exile here Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel O come, thou key of David, come
And open wide our heavenly home The captives from the prison free And conquer death's
deep misery

Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel O come, thou dayspring, come
and cheer Our spirits by thy justice hear Disperse the gloomy clouds of night And death's
dark shadows blow to flight Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel Shall come to thee, O Israel O
come, desire of nations

And bind, all peoples in one heart And bind, from dust thou brought us Lord to life And
deliver us from earthly strife Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel And Emmanuel And shall come
to thee, O Israel O Israel The Lord be with you Please be seated As we light this
morning's Advent candle We're going to invite the Thompson family To come up and join
us As we hear this scripture reading From Psalm 98 Sing to the Lord a new song For he
has done marvelous things

[6 : 35] His right hand and his holy arm Have worked salvation for him The Lord has made his salvation known And revealed his righteousness to the nations He has remembered his love And his faithfulness to Israel All the ends of the earth Have seen the salvation of God Shout for joy to the Lord All the earth Burst into jubilant song with music Make music to the Lord with a harp With a harp and the sound of singing With trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn Shout for joy before the Lord our King Let the sea resound And everything in it The world and all who live in it Let the rivers clap their hands Let the mountains sing together for joy Let them sing before the Lord For he comes to judge the earth He will judge the world in righteousness And the peoples with equity This is the word of our Lord

So this morning We are here to celebrate Christmas It's a little early We're going to celebrate tonight too In case you don't know We have a service at 5 o'clock 7 o'clock and 11 o'clock And invite you to come back and join us But we're celebrating Christmas with you as well Which is a time for sharing in the joys That God gives to us So what are you thankful for?

What do you have a joy to share tonight? Great So Jeff who was in a car accident Which is not a good thing Is actually starting to heal And the work of the doctors is going well That's a celebration Yes Both my girls are home How many people have somebody home for Christmas?

Wonderful I'll be home for Christmas Good to have everybody back Seeing faces I haven't seen in a while Yes Penny Well we're glad to have you here today too And to have your cousin here with us Celebrating You know I got up this morning And I walked out in the dark But it's not dark now So that's a good thing isn't it?

I had someone say to me I won't be here tonight Because I can't drive after dark So I'm glad we're here this morning Anybody else have something to share? One more Go ahead You've got to spend quality time with your niece And spend quality time with your family this week And that's a wonderful thing to do As we are thankful for all the great and wonderful things God gives to us Let's return our Thanksgiving with our morning tithes and our offerings Thanks for all the same things You're in the wilderness You're in the wilderness I see all the good things Thank you.

[10 : 07] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 37] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Are there. Are there others. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. will be open to the message of Jesus' grace and love. Absolutely. Anybody else? Let's turn our hearts and our souls to the Lord in prayer then, shall we?

[14 : 05] Dear God, it is a great blessing to be here this morning with you to celebrate on the Lord's Day such a wonderful time of the year, to celebrate the joy of you entering into our hearts and our lives and becoming alive for us.

We ask, Lord, that you would bring that grace to us in a powerful way this morning. Touch us all with your Spirit. Touch those who are not aware of God, particularly with the Holy Spirit presence this morning.

Breathe into us the blessings that only you can give that we might feel the presence of God in a particular way. Lord, we pray for the deep concerns of our church and our congregation.

We pray for the Fritz family, for those who are hospitalized this time of year, for those who are struggling with the loss of someone they loved or just struggling with Christmas itself, for those who are feeling pain while others are rejoicing.

Lord, we pray for many things, things that affect our lives, our health, our family, our work, our finances, our faith.

[15 : 27] And so, Lord, each of us now, we're going to lift up a moment, our prayers to you. So bend your ear, Lord, and listen to your children praying. And now, Lord, pull away from us the concerns, the worries, the troubles, the anxieties, all the fears and all the hurt, and just help us, Lord, to now feel and experience the wonder of God.

Open up your scriptures to teach us a blessing this morning. Be with Pastor Lisa and pour your anointing on her that she might bring to us a word of inspiration and power from your lips to our heart.

Be our strength this morning, Lord, and help us to rejoice with you. We pray all of these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. And now, shall we listen to the word of God?

Amen. Good morning.

Today's scripture lesson is from Luke chapter 2, verses 1 through 20. In those days, Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world.

[17 : 31] This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria. And everyone went to their town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem, the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.

She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid.

I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Savior has been born to you. He is the Messiah, the Lord.

[18 : 43] This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Suddenly, a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth, peace to those on whom his favor rests.

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Jeff. Good morning.

[19 : 59] I'm being a little standoffish this morning. I usually am running around greeting people and whatnot. Yeah. When we're done today, I will be offering you the right elbow of fellowship on the way out because we need to make sure that we're not, yeah, letting you get any of this because you don't want this.

I have tea, too, just in case. Mary and Joseph had been on a journey. We know about this, right? A journey that neither of them had expected they would ever be on.

There had been visions and dreams in which angels had told them of the miraculous thing God was about to do in their lives. And they agreed.

They agreed. They agreed to do them. They agreed to be part of God's plan. They agreed to have their entire lives changed so that God's love could be shown in them and through them in the birth of a child, the one who is God with us, Emmanuel.

This child, this savior the angels told the shepherds about, had come to restore the relationship between God and the world that God had made that had been broken so long ago by sin.

[21 : 25] Mary and Joseph made room in their hearts. They made room in their lives for God's will to be done.

One of my favorite Christmas hymns is Joy to the World. It brilliantly tells of the collaboration between God and human beings that saves broken relationships between us and makes it all whole again.

God comes and the earth and all that is in it is asked to receive the Lord as king. But God does not come as a king who imposes himself upon us, who makes us submit to God's whims whether we like it or not.

No. God's coming is joy for us. You know how the song begins. Joy to the world.

The Lord is come. Let earth receive her king. Let every heart prepare him room. And heaven and nature sing. Let every heart prepare him room.

[22 : 46] The receiving that's spoken of here is a willing act on the part of those who are being asked to receive the king.

God knows our hearts and our lives are full of all kinds of things. Things we believe, work we must do, people we must please, things we want to accomplish, relationships and stuff that we want.

The list goes on and on. Let every heart prepare him room. Do we have room for God?

Sure we do. We have room for anything we truly want to make room for. The question is, are we willing to make room for God's will to be done in our lives?

Are we willing to receive the joy God desires to pour out into us today? There's something about singing.

[23 : 56] I don't know what it is, I just know it is. that enables joy to manifest in us. And not just in us human beings, it says heaven and nature sings.

The scripture tells us the angels sang in the presence of the shepherds. They gave glory to God. Then, after the shepherds returned from telling everyone they could find about the Savior who had been born, who they had gone and seen, they praised God for all they had seen and heard about it.

This tells us something. It tells us something crucial about God's will for all of us in the world, about the reason God came to us in Christ.

The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Everyone. I remember the joy that filled my heart the day I came to repentance as an adult. I had no intention of attending the worship service where I heard the gospel message.

[25 : 19] In a way, I had never heard it before. See, it wasn't that I had not ever heard about Jesus. It was not that I had not experienced some things of God in my life.

But I had allowed all kinds of things to get in there. I had stuff to do. I had people to see. I had things I wanted to accomplish in my life. But God on that day touched me in a way that I had never been touched before by God.

And it changed me. I don't really know why I had decided to give up what I wanted to do during that worship time that morning.

But I know now that God had drawn me there and that I had made the decision to obey God as he pulled me toward him.

throughout my life there have been decisions I have made that I know were God's will. They were God's will to fulfill God's plan for my life in this world.

[26 : 32] And each time I have known I was following God's plan, I have felt a joy from God that I cannot describe. And this morning I wanted to share a song with you.

This is one of my favorite joyful songs. I want to share it with you because it describes the indescribable joy in a way that I even can't.

If you see me like dancing in my seat, you can join me if you want. You give me joy that's unspeakable And I like it And I like it Yeah Your love for me is irresistible I can't fight it I can't fight it Yeah Yeah If life is water, I was dry, it's too sundered If it's a gamble, I've already lost my shit If it's a journey I was dazed without a clue I'll flip you back to the first love I ever knew You give me joy that's unspeakable And I like it And I like it Yeah Your love for me is irresistible I can't fight it I can't fight it

Yeah You carry the cost of my strength I believe it I believe it Yeah You shine your light of amazing grace I receive it I receive it Yeah If life's a battle the invasion is complete If it's a rhythm I have found the perfect If it's a renaissance I've got a new birthday No I don't give it and we're won't Can't take it away You give me joy that's sweet And I like it I can't Your love for me is irresistible I can't fight it I can't fight it You carry the cost of my strength I believe it I believe it You shine your light on my amazing grace

I receive it I receive it I bowed and bowed to everything to all that I need your life what I have to see and how your love not ever be wrong and in my weakness you're ever stronger you're pulling me back where I belong give me joy that's unspeakable and I like it and I like it yeah your love for me is irresistible I can't fight it I can't fight it you carry the cross into my shame I believe it I believe it you shine your light of amazing grace I receive it I receive it you can make your lessons be gone and I like it yeah

[30 : 12] I can your love for me is irresistible I can fight it I can fight it you carry the cross into my shame I believe it I believe it you shine your light of amazing grace I receive it I receive it you give me joy that's unspeakable you give me joy that's unspeakable and I like it amen amen joy isn't something we conjure up out of ourselves and it isn't about feeling happy because of something that happens to us that we like joy as in joy to the world the Lord has come is about what happens inside us when we experience the reconciliation that comes from forgiveness when we know we have repented and

God has forgiven our sin we open ourselves up and we receive that forgiveness joy comes into us from God when we believe and receive the forgiveness God has made available to us so joy doesn't come from our circumstances it doesn't come from our families it doesn't come from our friends or our work or our play we can experience joyful feelings with the people and things in our lives that's absolutely true because God has given us those people God has given us those things but true joy the joy that's unspeakable that gives us strength from God to be and to do all that God wills for us that joy only comes from

God I have to admit even though I know I have God's joy in me I don't always now I know you're not going to believe this I just I don't always feel particularly joyful and I definitely don't always act joyfully you can ask Romney he's sitting over there any of our kids if you ask them to think back on when they lived in my house but because I have God's joy in me when I'm not feeling it I am the one who has to make the decision to connect with the joy that God has already given me the second verse of joy to the world tells us about that joy to the earth the Savior reigns let all their songs employ while fields and floods rocks hills and plains repeat the sounding joy repeat the sounding joy repeat the sounding joy there's a command here to employ song music music has this amazing property in that it impacts our emotions on a really deep level not just as we experience it in the moment that we're singing or that we're hearing it but in the way it evokes our memories our memories of experiences that are related to whatever song it is that we're thinking of wherever we are whatever we're doing those songs can stir up emotions that are related to certain events in our lives that mean something to us it's as if we're reliving them in our minds feeling those feelings again in our bodies experiencing love and elation and sorrow and brokenness as if it was happening to us all over again we talk about how when we're celebrating holy communion like we'll do in a little while we are re-experiencing the reality of

Christ's life death and resurrection as we recite the prayers each week did you know that traditionally the prayers and the responses were done in song that's why when you hear Pastor Tom lead us through the prayer of the great thanksgiving today you'll hear and so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn their unending hymn we sing hymns in many churches today they still sing those responses it feels different I wonder if I can do it I did it last night this comes from my childhood tradition Christ has died Christ is risen

Christ will come again doesn't it feel different and I know it was bad but doesn't it feel different to sing it and to sustain those notes to sustain those words than it does to speak the words without the music speaking the words isn't wrong it's good it's what we do but there's something about that singing the music together with the words touches us on a different level it brings us to a deeper place of joy joy this verse of joy to the world tells us to repeat the sounding joy there's a good reason for that sometimes as I said I do not feel all that joyful even though technically because I have received God's forgiveness I am filled with God's joy so when I'm feeling like that there's this progression

[36 : 48] I find I have to go through to get that joy from something that I know I've got to something that I'm experiencing fully in the here and now so many of you have commented to me over the years that I've been here that I always have a smile that I always seem so joyful in worship I gotta tell ya I don't always feel that way on Sunday morning when I get up this morning was one of them but I know that I'm supposed to share God's love with you that's part of God's will for my life as one of your pastors that's what I'm supposed to do here if you are a child of God if you are a member of the body of Christ sharing God's love and God's joy is part of God's will for your life too not just my responsibility or Pastor

Bear Ridge well Tonawanna Creek and there's the creek and the snow repeat the sounding joy pull into the parking lot and there's cars and there's people getting into the church repeat the sounding joy and get in and there's people waving and saying hi I'm going hi hi repeat the sounding joy and walk in and the people are talking and the people are starting to file in and there's the Christmas tree repeat the sounding joy and I see the cross and the manger and the candles are just starting to get lit repeat the sounding joy repeat the sounding joy repeat repeat the sounding joy joy, whenever I'm feeling like it, if I let the joy, whatever, I got to start that sentence again because that just did not say what I mean. Whatever I'm feeling like, no matter how crummy, no matter how bad, no matter who did what to me, whatever I'm feeling like, if I let the joy God has given me well up inside of me, it will burst out in love for people. So let's try this. You know that little kid's camp song, The Joy of the Lord is My Strength? It's like, if you don't know it, it's really, really easy, and that's all the words there are. Okay, so we should be good. It goes, you got to help. If you know it, help me. The joy of the Lord is my strength. There you go. Keep going.

The joy of the Lord is my strength. Okay, there's another verse. This is the verse that will really get you. If what we've sung so far doesn't have you starting on the way to feeling joyful, this one will do it. This one will do it, but you have to have a friend.

[illegible]

Isn't this good? Don't you feel a little closer to the people you're right next to than you were a minute ago? I know joy doesn't always feel like a giddy, silly thing.

[42 : 38] Like the calm, familiar assurance that someone you love is there for you. It can be the stillness of private moments with God when you know that even though you don't understand why things are the way they are, you can still trust God to be with you.

Whether we feel like it or not, at any particular moment in time, God has already given us everything we need to do and to be all God wills us to be.

But we have to cooperate with God to make it real in our own lives. If we want the joy that's unspeakable, if we want to always feel like God's love is worth giving up everything for him, we need to repeat the sounding joy until we can tap into that connection that God has already made with us.

The angels sang out the glory of God. The shepherds shared the good news and glorified and praised God.

[44 : 07] They did this because they were willing and ready to receive the truth of God's love and joy poured out of heaven to be with us forever.

Remember, when we choose to limit our expressions of joy, we limit our ability to receive more of it.

We have a choice every moment of every day. If we are in Christ, we can choose to let the joy we've already received from God come out of us as pure love, love for God, and love for the folks God has put into our lives.

We can love others as God loves us. Amen? I think we're going to sing joy to the world now. You want to sing that knowing what you learned just now.

Sing it out. Repeat the sounding joy. Amen. Joy to the world.

[45 : 20] The Lord is come. Let earth receive the King. Let every heart prepare Him for And heaven and nature sing.

And heaven and nature sing. And heaven and heaven and nature sing. Joy to the world.

A Savior reigns. Let all their songs employ. While fields and floods, Rocks, hills, and plains, Repeat the sounding joy.

Repeat the sounding joy. Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more that sins and sorrows grow. Nor thorns invests the ground.

[46 : 32] He comes to make His blessings flow. Far as the curse is found. Far as the curse is found.

Far as, far as the curse is found. He rules the world with truth and grace.

And makes the nations prove. The glories of His righteousness.

And wonders of His love. And wonders of His love. And wonders, wonders of His love.

Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever.

[47 : 48] Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. People from every nation and tongue.

From generation to generation, we worship you. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.

We worship you for who you are. We worship you.

Hallelujah, hallelujah. We worship you for who you are. You are good.

Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever.

[48 : 47] Lord, you are good and your mercy endureth forever. We worship you for who you are.

Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. We worship you for who you are. We worship you.

Hallelujah, hallelujah. We worship you for who you are. You are good all the time.

You are good all the time. All the time. You are good. You are good. You are good all the time.

All the time. All the time. You are good. Here we go. Ready? We worship you. Hallelujah, hallelujah.

[50 : 06] We worship you for who you are. We worship you for who you are. We worship you for who you are.

We worship you for who you are. Hallelujah, hallelujah. Hallelujah, hallelujah. We worship you for who you are. You are good.

Amen. You know, it's an amazing thing. Pastor Lisa gives us this wonderful lead-in about how we've got to prepare our souls for joy.

Then we sing joy to the world. And then we sing you are good. And I still see people going, when will it end? When will it end? And I do understand the commute.

I have that problem. You know, it's tough for me commuting all the way over to church here, you know. The truth is that God wants to fill our hearts, our lives, our whole living with joy.

[51 : 04] But we let the devil, we let Satan fill us up with bitterness, brokenness, pain, hurt. And so all of a sudden we bring that spirit right down. God doesn't intend that.

So we're going to take that and give that away to God and let God fill us up and transform us back to the joy he intended. Let's pray together. Dear God in heaven, I have sinned by some of the things I do, but even more the actions I feel.

That didn't make sense, I'm sorry. Even more, Lord, what I feel. I feel the pain.

I feel the embarrassment. I feel the frustration. The disappointment. The discouragement. The discouragement. The discouragement. When I know you just want to fill me with joy.

So forgive me, Lord. Fill me up with joy. Fill me up with joy. Cast out that demon. Take away that brokenness. Take away that brokenness.

[52 : 13] And help me to celebrate your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. All I got to do is one little prayer and I can't get it done.

But we can find joy in it. Amen. Because God is here and present with us and will overpower the brokenness. So in the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

Glory to God. Amen. All the time let's take a moment, if you're willing, and share the peace of the Spirit with one another together. I'm willing.

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atsächlich not. Be Hz. Be Hz. Like audible couches I sessionø ■ Two – ■■■■■ Or?? ouestm ■■■■■ Yes. Long time ago in Bethlehem, so the Holy Bible said, Mary's boy child Jesus Christ was born on Christmas Day.

[53 : 55] Hark now, hear the angels sing, new kings born today. And we will live forevermore because of Christmas Day.

Shepherds watched their flocks by night, they saw bright new shining star. And heard a choir from heaven sing, the music came from afar.

Hark now, hear the angels sing, new kings born today. And we will live forevermore because of Christmas Day.

Now Joseph and his wife Mary, they came to Bethlehem and night. They found no place to bear her child, not a single room was in sight.

By and by they found a little girl in a stable of Lord. And in a manger cold and dark, Mary's little boy child was born.

[55 : 17] Trompets sound, the angels sing, listen to what they say. That we will live forevermore because of Christmas Day.

And we will live forevermore because of Christmas Day.

God is always present and with us if we're willing to receive it.

God offers this table, not us. This is the table of the Lord. We come to receive the presence of God in our lives. So that we can experience the joy that Pastor Lisa was preaching about.

So that we can open up our hearts to the life that God wants us to live. We celebrate this table because it's God present with us.

[56 : 21] So this morning, wherever you come from, whoever you are, however you're feeling, whatever you may have thought coming into this place, God is calling you to come and receive that presence of joy.

That you might lift up your life, lift up your hearts, lift up this day before the Lord. Do we do this song? Oh, we're not going to do the singing thing.

We could do the singing thing. Should we do the singing thing? That would really kind of mess with people. I know the singing thing. The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts. Let's give thanks to the Lord our God. You know, it doesn't matter who you are.

You can find yourself in a need of God's praise and presence. In the midst of confusion, in the midst of our struggles, in the midst of all that life throws at us, God in heaven pours into us joy and wonder.

[57 : 32] God loves you and is with you and is your strength and peace and created you to be instruments of joy. And so with all the people on earth and all the angels in heaven, we join together in his unending hymn saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Hosanna in the highest. Dear God, your son is holy.

He has poured out blessings upon us by entering into this world. He has become Emmanuel in a stable in Bethlehem.

And God with us in our heart. We thank you, Lord, for his presence in that stable, but even more so as a man.

For he grew to teach and to heal and to bring blessings to those who are feeling downtrodden. And in the midst of darkness, he brought light.

[58 : 43] And even on the night in which he was betrayed, he gave this gift. He took the bread and he gave thanks to God. He broke the bread. He gave it to his disciples and he said, Take and eat.

This is my body broken for you for the forgiveness of sin. Eat of this, remembering me. When the supper was over, he took the cup. He gave thanks to God.

And he gave it to his disciples and he said, Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of this, remembering me.

And so in remembrance of these mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and in thanksgiving, as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again. God is a power and a force in our life to cast out all the darkness, all the brokenness.

[59 : 53] And dear God, we pray that you will send that spirit, that power into our lives. Pour it out upon us now and on these gifts of bread and cup, that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we might be for the world a witness to the joy that you have given us.

Be a strength for us, Lord. Be a presence in the midst of hurt and pain. Be a light in the midst of darkness to lift up our souls that we might sing joy to the world each day.

