

Rejoice! Exult!

Isaiah 66:10-14

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 4, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Rejoice! Rejoice, all you who love the Church. Exult! Exult an exultation with her all you who mourn over her.

The Church is more than any one congregation. The Church is more than just Immanuel Lutheran Church. The Church is more than our denomination. The Church is more than our church body. The Church is more than any one confessional group. The Church is more than just Lutherans. The Church is more than just Protestants. In other words the Church is more than just Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc. There are about 23 000 different groups in the United States. I am not going to list them all. The Church is more than just Catholics although it includes Catholics. The Church is more than just the Eastern Orthodox although it includes them as well.

The Church is the group of people on earth who believe in Jesus. Wherever and whenever you have believers in Jesus you have the Church. The Church consists of nothing other than believers in Jesus.

Therefore God is telling you, Rejoice! Rejoice, all you who love the Church. Exult! Exult an exultation with the Church all you who mourn over her.

The reason is that everyone who loves and mourns over the Church will have the benefit of her consolations. The Church abounds with consolations. She has comfort to offer to everyone. She has peace which passes all understanding. She has it for everyone. Everyone who loves her and everyone who mourns over her will receive in abundance all of her consolations.

The reason that people who love and mourn over the Church will rejoice and exult is that you will delight yourself in her glory. The Church not only has comfort. The Church also has glory. It is a glory that outshines anything else on earth. It outshines all other human institutions.

That is why, on this day of all days, I find myself discussing the glories of the Church and not the glories of the State.

The glories of our State are freedom, but it is only political freedom. It is only the freedom to say what you like without fear of reprisal from the State. It is only the freedom to write what you want without fear of reprisal from the State. It is the right to worship the way that you want without fear of reprisal from the State. And most recently it is also the right as private citizens to bear arms. It is the freedom not to testify against yourself. It is the freedom to move and go about without the State dictating how and where you should go or live. That is the glory of our State. It is a glory worth celebrating. But it does not compare with the glories of the Church.

You will delight yourselves on the glory of the Church. You will be satisfied from the consolations of the Church.

Thus says Jesus.

I am stretching to you a river of peace. Like a wadi that overflows is the glory of the nations. I am bringing the glory of the nations to you. You will be satisfied with the glory of the nations.

The Church is an international organization. She is not limited by boundaries of the States. She is not limited by politics or politicians. She is not limited by those who forbid her existence. She is not limited by those who permit her existence, but then limit her in other ways. She is not hindered by those who give to her with the right hand while they are taking away from her with the left hand. She is not

limited by poverty. She is not limited by wealth. She exists among the most powerful. She exists among the most impoverished. She exists among those who are powerful. She exists among those who are destitute and weak. She exists wherever faith in Jesus is found. She exists wherever reliance on His righteousness is found. She exists wherever the fear of the Lord is in whatever form she may take.

The glory of the nations is hers. Jesus has given the glory of the nations to her. We could stand and list all of the nations of the world, but that would be like listing all of the denominations of the world. It would take a long time to list them all. No matter how many nations there are, the Church is there. She is in China in spite of the government there. She survived Soviet Communism. She survives the murders in India and the Sudan. The reason is that Jesus has given the glory of the nations to you.

To the Church belongs the glory of the Soviet Empire. To the Church belongs the glory of Indian and Sudan. To the Church belongs the glory of Japan and China. To the Church belongs the glory of the United States. They do not know it yet and if they ever did know it they will forget it. Jesus gives the glory of these nations to you. Jesus gives their wealth to you. Jesus gives their power to you. Jesus gives their abundance to you. You will be satisfied with their glory.

Jesus reigns over every principality and power. He reigns over every government. He rules over every dictator, president, emperor, king or general. He reigns over them all. He reigns over them because He is risen from the dead. He reigns over them because He died for them. Only He holds the power of forgiveness of sin, death, eternal life, heaven, hell. Only He holds the keys of death and hell. Only He is raised from the dead. He has power over all nations. He has power over all governments. He has power over them because only in Him are they able to find eternal life. He will permit them to rule on earth for a time, but not forever. At some point in time, He replaces them at His will. And even while they are in charge they still must find everlasting life in Him. They still must find forgiveness of sins in Him. There is no other Name under heaven given among people by which we must be saved.

Since Jesus favors the Church that means that all of the power and the glory of these nations will be yours. It will all be yours. You don't have to fight for it. You don't have to worry about whether or not it will happen. It will not happen according to your time. But make no mistake, it will happen. Jesus will give you the glory of all of the nations of the earth. You will be satisfied from their glory.

"Upon the hip you will be lifted. At the breast you will nurse. Upon knees you will delight. It is like a man who mother comforts him so in the same way, I Myself will comfort you. And in My Church, you will be comforted."

You will see and your heart will exult. Your bones, like a green plant, will sprout. You will be like a child that takes comfort and security in its mother.

It is because the power of Jesus will be known with His slaves. The risen one favors the ones who believe in Him. He intercedes between them and the heavenly Father. He answers their prayers. He sends them the Holy Spirit. He preserves them in spite of what the nations do to them. He favors those who believe in Him over against other people. You see Jesus is prejudiced. He is prejudiced. He favors those who believe in Him and opposes those who oppose Him.

The power of Jesus is with His Church. It is the power to forgive sins. What is the Office of the Keys? The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His Church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Only the Church has this power. It does not rest with the State. The State cannot forgive you of your sins. It does not rest with your employer. Work cannot forgive you of your sins. It does not rest with your leisure. The golf course cannot forgive you of your sins. The State protects you from earthly enemies

and keeps people in line. It cannot afford to forgive sins. Your employer needs you to do a job and pays you to get it done. Your employer cannot afford to forgive you of your sins. Leisure is just plain leisure. Jesus has given His power to His slaves. His slaves are the ones who believe in Him. Therefore only His slaves have the power to say, "In the Name of Jesus, I forgive you." Only His slaves have the power to promise life everlasting. Only His slaves have the power to promise resurrection from the dead. The power of Jesus with His slaves will be known.

It is known now every time absolution is given. It is known now every time everlasting life is promised. It is known now every time resurrection from the dead is predicted. It will be known in the future when the forgiveness, resurrection and eternal life will be seen.

Indignation will be known to His enemies. The enemies of Jesus are those who oppose Him. They oppose His Gospel. They oppose the absolution. They oppose the promise of everlasting life. The enemies of Jesus are those who do not love the Church and do not grieve over her.

The enemies of the Church want the absolution silenced. They neither want to hear it themselves nor do they want others to hear it. The enemies of Jesus are those who want the promise of resurrection from the dead silenced. They do not want to hear it themselves nor do they want others to hear it. Whether they have bought into the thinking of the world or whether they simply don't want to admit their sins, the enemies of Jesus oppose Him at every turn.

They will silence the Gospel, by vilifying it, making it look and sound stupid, proposing other ways of living that make more sense, by killing those who bring the Gospel. They will silence the Gospel by using the power of the State. They will make good seem evil and evil seem good. They will seek to turn everything on its head. They will use all forms of media. They will use the rule of Law. They will use the influence of the majority. They will use threats. They will use ridicule. They will use whatever it takes to oppose Jesus and what He is trying to accomplish.

They will receive the indignation of Jesus. They will receive the indignation of Him who holds the keys of death and hell. They will receive the indignation of Him who died for them and therefore holds the forgiveness of their sins in His hands and has committed it to His Church. They will have the indignation of Him who rose again from the dead and is the source of everlasting life. The enemies of Jesus will receive His indignation.

Rejoice! Exult! You will enjoy the wealth of the nations.

Rejoice! Exult! You will be comforted.

Rejoice! Exult! Your bones will take on new life!

Rejoice! Exult! His indignation is with His enemies.

Rejoice! Exult! His power is with His slaves, with His Church.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.