

Preached by Dr. Carl A. Rush
Bush Hill Presbyterian Church
Alexandria, VA 22310
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Luke 3:7–18
Zephaniah 3:14–20

JOY COMES FROM DOING JOYFUL ACTS

Robert Frost had a classic lecture on metaphor as the basis of thinking. In this lecture he distinguishes between four beliefs:

- 1 – Self-belief, based on self knowledge and trust in one's self.
- 2 – Love-belief, brings two people into relationship with their families and their widows and sons.
- 3 – Are-belief, results in poems and novels, works of art are result from the leap of faith.
- 4 – God-belief, a relationship we enter into with God to bring about the future.

God-belief is believing the future into the present, believing the hereafter into the NOW! One way we epitomize God-belief is when we are singing! The first word of Zephaniah is sing!

Sing, Zephaniah says, because God no longer has to deal harshly with his family because they are distracted by piling up earthly security. The day is coming when our singing our joy will show from being in God's presence. Or more actually from being aware we are always in God's presence (v. 12) "The Lord is in your midst. A warrior who gives victory, He will rejoice over you with gladness! He will renew you in His love! He will exalt over you with loud singing!"

If we want a joyous Christmas, we will first need to graduate into God-belief about our family—friends of our church. In other words, we will need to focus on Jesus as the source of true joy rather than selling art for transient pleasures which are solitary and monetary. When Stuart Dickson read the end of John chapter 14 yesterday at the funeral, I had chill bumps – "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."

Peace which helps us understand Christmas is about doing - as if we could practice enough and get it right, or make enough rules to bring everyone into conformity! Christmas is about reaffirming our God-belief, so art, love and self belief can produce Joy!

I want to share some simple phrases I've been collecting to help you through this season. I've been collecting them from bumper stickers.

- Women who seek to be equal to men lack ambition.
- How can I miss you if you don't go away?
- We have enough youth; how about a fountain of Smart?
- I am out of bed and dressed; what more to you want?
- Sometimes I wake up Grumpy; other times I just let him sleep!

If we could bumper sticker ourselves into something about Christmas, maybe singing could take hold, then peace - then joy!

Pet all your loved ones during Christmas: your family, your animals, your friends, your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Touch those you love. Good relationships are high. Touch - just like good marriages, are high touch!

Did you know petting your animals lowers blood pressure? So does smiling at your spouse!

Take a walk. Five half-hour walks a week burn close to 1000 calories! That's 10 lbs. a year!

Pray without being explicit. You see Christ in praying more than we can imagine. So be still and know God's Joy!

Amen.