

Hebrews 2:9-11

November 29, 2009 – ADVENT 1

Jesus is Leading Us to Glory† **As the King who came in shame (v.9)**† **To perfect His family Name (vv.10,11)**

In the name of Jesus, our coming King, dear family of God:

Someone was having a bad day. I don't imagine yours would get any better if you were reading along in the paper and saw this headline: "Wipe that smile off your face!" It's about a woman who thinks she should write a book called, *I Snarled My Way Through Breast Cancer*. The book Barbara Ehrenreich did write is called *Bright-Sided – How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*. She's complaining how our culture demands smiles for everything, even cancer.¹ She quotes one billionaire CEO, "I'm the most lied-to man in America. Nobody will tell me the truth." Everyone is afraid of getting fired like an executive at Lehman Brothers who dared say the housing bubble would burst. Ehrenreich even connects the rise of mega-churches to "Pastorpreneurs" who strip away old symbols like Christ and the cross. No talk about sin or hell; people want to feel good.

Could that be why so many are depressed at Christmas? Is there a connection to the higher than usual statistics of death and suicide around the holidays? These are not statistics. These are precious souls bought with the blood of Christ on the cross. Light a candle. **Jesus is Leading Us to Glory...**

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Would anyone choose to be depressed? Would he choose to give up bright sunshine for clouds and rain? Jesus did. He did it for you. He left His Father's throne of light, His rainbow circled throne, left it all for earthly night for wanderings sad and lone. He left it all for you, to taste death for you, so that you would never have to suffer eternal death in hell for all your sins. God accepted Jesus' sacrifice of Himself in our place and has now *crowned [Jesus] with glory and honor* for His great victory over our grief and sorrow. Jesus is **the King who came in shame** and is now **Leading Us to Glory**.

We cannot see Jesus' glory now. The Bible says He ascended to God's right hand and is ruling all things for the good everyone who trusts in Him as Lord and Savior, *i.e.*, His Church. But look closely with the eyes of faith. What do you see? "*We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*" The unvarnished truth about depression is that it goes back to our first parents' rebellion in the garden paradise of Eden. Adam's sin brought grief and death into the world. We still feel the pain. But God promised Adam and Eve a Savior whom God sent in the Person of His one and only begotten Son. God loved the world that much, "*that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16) Jesus humbled Himself below the holy angels God created to serve His people.

The angels must shake their heads in sadness to see God's people depressed, especially as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth. Their angelic choir in the skies outside of Bethlehem shouted, "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.*" (Luke 2:14) But peace does not come from drugs and therapy. I've had pastors and lay Christians tell me how these only mask the symptoms and help very little with the underlying depression.

May I share what helps me? Some of you have heard my stories, and although everyone's emotional struggles are different, mine have been difficult too. Two passages in Isaiah are especially

¹ "Wipe that smile off your face!" by Zinta Lundborg, *Pioneer Press*, Sunday, 11-15-2009. Barbara Ehrenreich's book, *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*. Metropolitan Books.

helpful. The first: ***“This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.”*** (Isaiah 30:15 NIV) Did you catch that second part? The Lord God complains that His people do not want His peace. Let’s be honest. Sometimes we choose to be depressed. Not that we want to be sad. Not that it’s any good to paste on smiles and walk about as if nothing is wrong. The Bible even says, ***“The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure.”*** (Ecclesiastes 7:4 NIV) We fail as Christians to attack our depression with ***“the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.”*** (Ephesians 6:17) Isaiah 30:15 helps and heals. I go to God with my griefs and cares and ask Him to forgive me. “Lord, you deserve so much better from me. You created me with so many gifts and blessings. You redeemed me with the blood of your one and only begotten Son. You keep coming to sanctify my soul with Word and sacrament. Help me to remember I am baptized in your Name. Help me to be at peace. Forgive me for my sins of doubt. Lord, I do believe! Help me overcome my unbelief. ***In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength.*** Lord, I want all of that. I want all of you, here in my heart.” **Jesus is Bringing Us to Glory – As the King who came in shame...**

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“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.”

Look what God was doing. He is reaching out to you because He loves you so purely by His forgiving grace. You know how you appreciate people who do things for you when you cannot repay them. That’s what God did for us by sending His Son to be our Savior. God wanted us in His family. He wanted us to know how much He cares by how He was willing to suffer here with us.

Remember when Jesus first called His disciples ***“brothers.”*** It was not until Easter morning after they abandoned Him to die on the cross alone. Only John was there; the rest were hiding. They did not believe Jesus rose from the dead. So Jesus came to the least likely person, Mary Magdalene out of whom Jesus had driven seven demons. (Mark 16:9) She needed Jesus’ first sermon after His resurrection. ***“Go and tell my brothers, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”*** (John 20:17) They still did not believe her until Jesus kept coming to convince them He was alive. Finally at Pentecost the dear Holy Spirit empowered them to conquer their fears and spread Christ’s **family Name**.

That’s where Isaiah’s second passage comes in so clean and clear for me. Memorize this one too. This one is better in the old King James Version: ***“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”*** (Isaiah 26:3 KJV) When you’re suffering depression or just feeling blue, since you’re looking at everything backwards, look backwards at this passage. Are you missing God’s ***“perfect peace”***? The Holy Spirit explains why. Your mind is not ***“stayed on [God].”*** You are not trusting in Him. Otherwise, you would have ***“perfect peace.”*** How do you “stay” a tent in a summer storm? You pound the stakes deeper into the ground and tighten the ropes all around. How do you “stay” your soul on God? You pound the stakes of your faith deeper into God’s Word and tie the ropes tight on His Word of consolation. Then while the winds are howling outside, you will be safe inside. Before you realize what happened, you’re feeling better – not because you bought a new house or managed your mortgage. God’s Word gives peace, because ***“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.”*** ***“Peace”*** is God’s gift for every season **To perfect His family Name**.

We’ll let the doctors and therapists do what they can with their tools. If you want deep down peace that soothes the soul, you’ve come to the right place. Look at Jesus. Will you let Him do His work? Jesus is not ashamed of you. **Jesus is Bringing Us to Glory – As the King who came in shame, To perfect His family Name.** Pray, “Thy will be done,” because God’s good and gracious will is to give you ***“peace”*** in Jesus. This is the Advent of our King! Amen.

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