Heaven Rejoices

Have you ever thought about a celebration in __________? Yes, God our Father and the angels __________! We’re here to search the Scriptures for God’s will. The God of the ________ is the God of salvation and eternal life. He’s the God who _______ every person and wants what is _______ for us all. He’s the God of peace, the God of mercy, the God of forgiveness, and the God of all comfort. He’s also the God of ________, and we can rejoice in Him! God is love, and the God of love rejoices in what is good and right. Love “doesn’t rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the ________” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Loving and obeying the truth will bring us joy.

One thing I know about God: He cares for every person who is _______ and wants that person to be forgiven. First Timothy 2:3-4 says, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who _______ all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Some think of God as waiting for us to sin so He can send us to hell; but God takes no __________ in sending anyone to hell. He sent Jesus to ________ His love, which can bring about tremendous life, those changes that are inside of us that cause us to become new creatures in Christ. God rejoices in our newness of life.

God’s joy is not like the passing pleasures of happiness in this __________. It’s everlasting and full. Psalm 16:11 says, “You will make known to me the _______ of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” True, abundant life comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our hope and our joy forever!

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to Luke, chapter 15:4-7.

Many in our society don’t like to _______ about sin, hell, or the need for repentance. No one likes to hear something that they’re doing is _______. People don’t like it when you _______ with them about what they think or believe. Some even believe it’s _______ to ask them to repent. That was true in the days of the Lord Jesus, and it’s true today! Frankly, many people do not _________ that God sees repentance differently than we do.

The Pharisees of the first century were arrogant and thought they were _______ than others. They did everything they could to _______ the common people and sinners of that day. Luke 15:1-2 records their actions: “Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him. Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to ________, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and ____ with them.’” They believed if Jesus were truly a ________, he wouldn’t eat with sinners. They knew their traditions, but they didn’t know the heart of God. God _______ every person and wishes to bring them _______ to heaven. First Timothy 2:3-4 says as we mentioned, “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires _______ men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

This is why God rejoices over every sinner that _________. Just like the shepherd who searches till he _______ his lost sheep, the Lord Jesus says, “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more _______ in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). Just like the woman who searches until she finds a lost coin, so the Lord...
Jesus says, “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one ________ who repents” (Luke 15:10).

The Lord Jesus tells the heart of a father whose son finally returns penitently after going to a far country and living in _______. Luke 15:22-24 says, “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was ______ and has come to ______ again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.” People who live in sin are spiritually dead and separated from God, but those who penitently ________ to God can have spiritual life once again!

Let’s examine the reasons that God rejoices. First, God desires more than your salvation by love, faith, and obedience; He desires that you ________ and change your heart and your ways. God wants you to be ________ again with a new heart that wants righteousness rather than rebellion, purity rather than impurity, and holiness rather than worldliness. He wants you to be ________ from a person who follows after sin into a person who follows the Lord Jesus in purity and holiness. When people place their faith in Christ, repent of their sins and are baptized into Christ, they’re _______ again in Christ. That begins a _______ life of devotion to the Lord. Faith, love, and a changed heart and life continue as long as we live.

Second, God rejoices because He puts extreme ________ on your soul. Your soul is not worthless. The Lord Jesus said, “For what will it ________ a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in ________ for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26). Your soul is worth much, much more than you may imagine.

First Peter 1:18:19 says “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious ________, as the lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of C ________.”

Third, God rejoices that you’ve ________ a life that is sad, empty, and has no promise. Life apart from God is vain and futile. God wants something ________ for you than a sinful life. Ephesians 4:17-19 says, “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ________ that’s in them, because of the hardness of their heart, and they have become callous, having given themselves over to sensuality for the ________ of every kind of impurity, with greediness.” This idea of being ungodly means that ______ has no place in your heart or life. You don’t know Him, and you don’t ________. Ungodly people don’t take God seriously, so they ________ their hearts and their lives with godless and wicked ways. You have no future with God but a future with ________ if you’re ungodly. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

I see people who do evil things, speak the most unwholesome words, treat others disrespectfully, and live ungodly lives yet still have a necklace with a cross or a cross tattoo on their arms. This __________ everyone about righteousness. It’s as if Jesus Christ means ________ to the way they live. They can live as they ________ and yet still be considered all right with Christ. This, however, is a ________. You can’t live for the world and live for Christ at the same time. To do so is spiritual ________. You can’t be attached to God and have a worldly life on the side. James 4:4 says to those who want both, “You adulteresses, don’t you know that friendship with the ______ is hostility toward God? And therefore whoever wishes to be a ________ of the world makes himself an ________ of God.” Making an enemy of God is the worst thing that you can do.
Fourth, repentance takes God seriously and _________ for righteousness. We die to the desire for sin when we _________ We convert our hearts and convert our lives. When we recognize the _________ conditions that our sins have made against God and how they’ve caused that, we begin to _________ our eyes. Sin causes guilt and shame in our hearts. Sin can quickly cause us to be enslaved to habits that _________ our lives. Sin can _________ other people and destroy our relationship with God. As Isaiah 59:1-2 says, “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not so short, That it cannot _________; Nor is His ear so dull, That it cannot _________ But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have _________ His face from you so that He does not hear.” Sin causes spiritual death (Romans 6:23).

Repentance moves a person to _________ to leave everything that’s evil and to do what is right and good. A penitent person _________ making excuses and trying to justify his sinful behavior. He’ll be _________ with himself. Psalm 51:6 reminds us that God desires _________ in the innermost being. God knows when you have sinned, but He wants you to be honest and acknowledge it.

Some in our culture refuse to _________ anything is sinful. They don’t realize the harm and confusion they’re causing by _________ something that God condemns isn’t immoral. Nothing could be more harmful or oppressing than to relabel sinful behavior as okay. Do you really think relabeling sin _________ God’s mind or His will. We’re not the first to try that; oh, it didn’t work before and it won’t work now! Isaiah 5:20-21 says, “Woe to those who _________ evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight!”

Our culture has confused the _________ of many. They have often used the word “love” to _________ whatever they want to do. Love, however, can’t turn a _____ into the truth. Love can’t _________ _________ David’s love for Bathsheba didn’t justify his adultery or killing Uriah. Love doesn’t justify fornication in any _________ Love doesn’t justify pedophilia or same-sex activity. Again, 1 Corinthians 13:6 says love “does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the _________.” God rejoices and wants us to rejoice when we are righteous, but God doesn’t rejoice over _________ behavior. Someone says, “Well, God wants me to be _________.” Yes, He does; but God’s happiness _________ to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and those who are pure in heart. He doesn’t _________ those who take pleasure in sin.

Someone objects, “Well, God is not about _________ people.” That view of God is _________ but misrepresents God. God is love, but God is also light that is _________, and He’s light that is _________ He will not accept those who _________ in sin or darkness (1 John 1:6). Sadly, people _________ to themselves when they think they can live in sin and still have fellowship with God. The Lord Jesus said that His words, the things that He’s taught, will _________ us on the last day (John 12:48). Second Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may _________ what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” Though some think we should _________ judge anything, the Lord Jesus said, “Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment” (John 7:24). Loving others means telling them the truth. The truth is _________ than a lie that causes them to turn from God.

Repentance means that you’ll put to _________ the sin in your life rather than excuse it. Romans 6:11-13 says, “Consider yourselves to be _________ to sin, but _________ to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you _________ its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”
Christians should _______ those things that are evil. First Corinthians 15:33 says, “Do not be deceived: Bad _______ corrupts good morals.” They don’t want to _______ to the sin that they left when they repent. Second Timothy 2:22 says, “Now _______ from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

Fifth, repentance opens the _______ for change and obedience, which leads to salvation and eternal life. God sees our hearts; He sees our repentance and willingness to _______. When we obey, God’s _______ becomes deeper, richer, and fuller to us. We begin to understand more fully how deep and wonderful is the love and grace of God. Repentance means we want nothing more to do with _______ and everything to do with _______. The bitterness that came from recognizing we were lost is _________ with grace and joy for the penitent believer who obeys.

We’ll never know how sweet and marvelous God’s love is until we _________ how repugnant and offensive our sins against Him are. The Lord Jesus out of love paid a great _______ in suffering and dying upon a cruel cross so that we could be _______ from the guilt of sin. He wouldn’t have done so if the sin were not a real _______ to our souls. His love protected us from the _______ of God and against sin. His atoning sacrifice allowed us to stop being _________ to God and start being His children. We don’t have to fear and dread the Judgment if we’re cleansed by the _______ of Jesus Christ. We can have confidence in His love and forgiveness. That confidence will move us to love Him and find the joy of obedience and forgiveness.

Some people think the command to _________ is like the old practice of penance, where people _________ themselves for their sins. Repentance, however, _________ us and brings healing to our souls, our lives, and our consciences. Though God’s grace forgives, God expects us to _______ our hearts and ways. When grace and repentance work together they bring great healing to our broken lives. We become ______ people who can stand right with God and have a good conscience. We have no greater joy than knowing we have God’s blessing and favor. Are you right with God?

The prophet Micah knew the _______ of a heart devoted to God. God wants our hearts to _______ Him all our days. Micah 6:6–8 says, “With what shall I come to the LORD, And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling calves? Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you, But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?”

God washes away our sins when we’re baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16), but a baptism without faith or without repentance will not wash away sins. The New Testament has no record of unbelievers being baptized or the impenitent being immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins. The New Testament gives no teaching or example of an infant being baptized, since infants neither believe nor have a reason to repent. The people on Pentecost had a need to repent and were told in Acts 2:38 to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. Perhaps you have a need to repent. Won’t you repent and be baptized today for the forgiveness of your sins?

Perhaps you were baptized for forgiveness many years ago but have fallen away from the Lord and stopped worshiping at church. You may have allowed sinful thoughts and behaviors to lead you away from God. Why not consider your soul and those whom you love? Come home, penitent, confess your sins, and ask God’s forgiveness. Focus your heart on God by worshiping at church today.