



August 26, 2007

Joyful

His name was Henry Van Dyke. Henry Van Dyke was born in Pennsylvania in 1852 and became pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York City where he served until 1899. After that he became a professor of English at Princeton University and also was an American Ambassador to the Netherlands, he was a Lieutenant Commander in the U.S. Navy, he was a Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, he was Commander of the Legion of Honor and he was president of the National Institute of Art and Letters and finally chairman of the committee that compiled the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship. In 1907 Henry Van Dyke was invited to preach at Williams College in Massachusetts. At breakfast one morning he handed the college president a piece of paper saying, "Here's a hymn for you." He handed him Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee. He was later asked about the hymn and his response was, "These verses are simple expressions of common Christian feelings or faith and are not afraid that science will destroy religion or any revolution on earth will overthrow the kingdom of heaven. This is a hymn of trust, joy and hope." As I looked at that hymn I thought is it really a simple expression of the common Christian faith. Is it really like the Apostles Creed a statement of what we truly believe? And as I went through it verse by verse I was touched by everything that Henry Van Dyke put into it. So we take a journey through hymn number 25 Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee and we look at the Biblical references that support what Henry Van Dyke wrote.

First of all "Joyful Joyful, We Adore Thee" sounds a lot like Psalm 100:2, "Worship the Lord with gladness come before Him with joyful songs." That is why we are here today to praise God's name to lift the name of Jesus Christ on high and when we think about everything God has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ how can we help but be joyful. "Joyful joyful we adore thee God of glory",

is He really the God of glory? Psalm 19:1, "the heavens declare the glory of God." Yes just take a look at everything he's made and it tells you of the glory of God. Lord of love Romans 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us what a tremendous love a love that so great He gave us his only son even though we were sinners and we don't deserve it. We messed up his beautiful creation and yet He loves us. "Joyful joyful we adore thee God of glory Lord of love hearts unfold like flowers before thee opening to the sun above". What a beautiful analogy. People's hearts opening up just like the flowers do when the sun rises and I think of Psalm 69:34, "let heaven and earth praise Him." As the sun rises and those flowers open they declare the glory of God they praised His name and the beauty of that which He has created. He continues, "Melt the clouds of sin and sadness", these are the cries of someone who is desperate someone who is depressed everything is dark their life is cloudy and they are filled with sadness. Kind of like King David in Psalm 30:1, "Out of the depths I cry to you oh Lord drive the dark of doubt away." You probably know where this one's coming from. Doubt? Is there any greater doubt than what Thomas had? John 20:27, "Then Jesus said to Thomas put your finger here. See my hands? Each out your hand and put it into my side stop doubting and believe." "Giver of immortal gladness". The key word there is giver and that's exactly what Jesus says John 10:18&28, "No one take sit that is his life. No one takes my life from me but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again this command I receive from my Father. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish." Yes, Jesus is the giver of eternal life of immortal gladness. That first verse ends with, "fill us with the light of day". 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God who said let light shine out of darkness made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Verse one is a wonderful verse; it talks about praising God because he's given us His son who has given us eternal life.

Verse 2 is a verse that I think had a profound impact on the pastor who followed Henry Van Dyke at the Brick Presbyterian Church. His name was Maltbie Babcock and Maltbie was a very talented individual. But among his many talents he loved to be outside in fact, he used to say to his secretary, "I'm going outside to see my father's world", and then he would leave the church office and

go for a jog through the mountains. I think he had read and had sung what his predecessor had written. Think of what Henry Van Dyke is saying when he writes, "All thy works with joy surround thee earth and heaven reflect thy ray stars and angels sing around thee center of unbroken praise. Field and forest veil and mountain flowery meadow flashing sea chanting bird and flowing fountain call us to rejoice in thee." When Maltbie Babcock said, "I'm going out to see my Father's world I think that's exactly what he was looking at; going out into the fields and hearing the flowery meadow. Hearing the flashing sea, hearing the chanting bird, hearing the flowing fountain and knowing that the sound of each one of those or sight of each one of those calls us to rejoice in God. Think of that the next time you see a beautiful flower or beautiful animal it's calling you to rejoice in God and thank him for the beauty of His creation.

Verse three he continues, "Thou art giving", John 3:16, "For God so loved the world He gave his one and only son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." "Thou art giving and forgiving", Ephesians 4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you." "Thou art giving and forgiving ever blessing", Acts 14:17, "Yet He has not left himself without testimony he has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their season." Everything we have is a blessing from God. "Thou art giving and forgiving ever blessing ever blesses", Psalm 103:1, "Bless the Lord oh my soul and all that is in me bless His holy name." I thought of the woman at the well when He says, "whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst indeed the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life." That is the wellspring of the joy of living knowing that we are headed for our Father's house. "Ocean depth of happy rest", Matthew 11:28, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." This is something that Ella Warner knows know and I like the way he puts it, ocean depth, is there anything much deeper than the ocean? No, you could put Mount Everest in the deepest part of the ocean and there's still a mile of water above it. That's how deep our rest in God is. "Thou our father", it was Jesus who said, "This then is how you should pray our Father in heaven". "Thou our Father Christ our brother", Jesus himself said, "whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." He looks at us and he says, "brother sister." When we say we are children of God that is what God means we are brother and sister in Jesus Christ. "All

who live in love are thine.” “If you love me you will obey what I command” John 14:15, this is how we are to live a life of love and so he writes and says writes and says, “Teach us how to love each other.” Peter 1:8-9, “ Though you have not seen Him you love Him and even though you do not see Him now you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy for you are receiving the goal of your faith the salvation of your souls.” That is how we love each other we remember how much God loved us and when we remember that we are filled with a glorious joy which will lead us to love each other. Finally he ends verse three “lift us to the joy divine”, John 13:34, “A new command I give you love one another as I have loved you so you must love one another.”

What is our response? When you think of everything that the has said here we are to be joyful because God melts the clouds of sin and sadness, drives the dark of doubt away, He gives us immortal gladness, he fills us with the light of the Gospel, he’s given us the beautiful creation we live in, he’s always giving and forgiving, he’s always blessing us we’re supposed to bless Him, he’s the wellspring of the joy of living, He gives us that ocean depth of happy rest, he’s our Father our brother, if we live and love we are His, we are to live that life of love and he’s going to give us joy. When you think of all that how should we respond? He writes, “mortals join the mighty chorus which the morning starts began. Father love is reigning over us brother love binds man to man. Ever singing march we onward victors in the midst of strife joyful music leads us sunward in triumph song of life.”

I guess the question is are we loving? Are we singing? Are we marching are we marching victorious knowing that Christ has won? Are we filled with the joy of knowing Him as our Savior of knowing that God loves us so much that he gave Him to us of knowing that God loves us so much he’s always blessing us, he’s always forgiving us, he’s always giving us everything around us? There is no worry of death it has been swallowed up through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Joyful joyful we adore thee, this should be our song of our praise to God; a song that tells us what we really believe and why we should be joyful and why we should be here each and every Sunday adoring Him and more than that as we walk out of this house today adoring Him and praising Him in all that we say, all that we think and all that we do every day.

