



dc 138.^{11-12, 15-16, 18-19}— meditation

¹¹I saw the hosts of the dead, both small and great. ¹²And there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just... ¹⁵I beheld that they were filled with joy and gladness, and were rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. ¹⁶They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death... ¹⁸While this vast multitude waited and conversed, rejoicing in the hour of their deliverance from the chains of death, the Son of God appeared, declaring liberty to the captives who had been faithful; ¹⁹and there he preached to them the everlasting gospel, the doctrine of the resurrection and the redemption of mankind from the fall, and from individual sins on conditions of repentance.

Jesus' amazing power to gladden and encourage and deliver was on constant display during his mortal ministry. His ministry surpassed that of any other in this regard. I don't know how many dead people have the power to gladden and encourage and deliver, but Jesus did. Even in death, his impact on people was electrifying. We see this in his "advent... into the spirit world" and the jubilation his arrival caused. At his appearing, an "unnumerable company," a "vast multitude" was filled with joy and gladness," "rejoicing together."

With this, we come full circle, of sorts. At Christmas we enjoy reading (though it should be more often, but several times a year) about the humble group of shepherds who were, at Jesus' birth, visited by a choir of angels and were privileged to hear its most incredible performance. Among the lyrics that the choir sang were these

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you *good tidings of great joy*,
which shall be to all people."¹

This beginning and ending to Jesus' mortal life serves as a reminder of something that can, at times, seem somewhat trite: that "men are, that they might have joy."² A few centuries after Nephi's insight, the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, asserted that "Happiness is the meaning and the purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence." Many centuries later, Joseph Smith would say something very much like it: "Happiness is the object and design of our existence." It was not a choir of angels that woke King Benjamin from his slumber one night in hopes of delivering this same message. It was but one solitary, lone angel. But, this lone angel's purpose was no different than that of the heavenly choir of angels who visited the lowly shepherds.

¹ Luke 2.¹⁰

² 2 Nephi 2.²⁵

“Awake, and hear the words which I shall tell thee; for behold, I am come to declare unto you the *glad tidings of great joy*. For the Lord hath heard thy prayers, and hath judged of thy righteousness, and hath sent me to declare unto thee *that thou mayest rejoice*; and that thou mayest declare unto thy people, *that they may also be filled with joy*.”³

King Benjamin was true to his charge. He faithfully delivered the angelic message to his people. As a result, the angel’s hopes were fulfilled.

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and *they were filled with joy*, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ who should come, according to the words which king Benjamin had spoken unto them.”⁴

Truly, it is an understatement of gigantic proportions to say that the glad tidings about Jesus and the willing fellowship he extends to us is joyous. Fellowship with him always results in this sort of peace and joy. Just imagine. Day in and day out for three years Jesus’ disciples had joyous fellowship with Jesus. It must have been addictive. Little wonder, then, that on the last night of his earthly ministry, and just hours before his jubilant advent into the spirit world, Jesus was under necessity of comforting his disciples as the realization that he would not always be with them came crashing down on them, crushing them. Among the comforting promises Jesus made them on that last night was this,

“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”⁵

One of that night’s participants and recipients of the promise was John. He must have experienced the fulfilment of the promise, for he was anxious to pass it along to others and have others join him in the joy of fellowship with Jesus.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”⁶

No one brings the kind and level of joy and happiness that Jesus brings.

“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? *A voice of gladness!* A voice of mercy from heaven; and a voice of truth out of the earth; *glad tidings* for the dead; *a voice of gladness* for the living and the dead; *glad tidings of great joy*. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that bring *glad tidings of good things*, and that say unto Zion: Behold, thy God reigneth! As the dews of Carmel, so shall the knowledge of God descend upon them!”⁷

This is gospel. I hope it is the gospel you experience. If not, the Lent and Easter Season is the perfect time to ask, “Why not?” It is the perfect time to seek Jesus and the joy he so richly promises. If it *is* the gospel you have experienced and do experience, then the Lent and Easter Season is a good time to share the wealth. It is a good time to do as King Benjamin did, as John did, as angels have done, and above all as Jesus himself always does. Become a bearer of glad tidings so that others “may also be filled with joy” so that, together, our joy may be full.

³ Mosiah 3.³⁻⁴

⁴ Mosiah 4.³

⁵ John 16.²⁴

⁶ 1 John 1.³⁻⁴

⁷ DC 128.¹⁹

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

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