

**A Jubilant Life in Christ**  
**based on Lev. 25, David Jahnke, 1/10/16**

A few weeks ago the pope mentioned that this year was a Jubilee year. This got me very excited as a Jubilee year only comes around once every 50 years! I was thinking, “This is the first in my lifetime! How cool is that!”

Well, it turns out that the pope can declare a Jubilee Year whenever he feels like it and the last one was in 2000 for the millennium and there was one in 1983 as well. But I was not going to lose my Jubilee just because of that! In fact, I figured if the Pope can proclaim a Jubilee year for his flock, I can do so for mine! And I am! Now we can proclaim all we want, but it is finally up to you whether to live into the Jubilee of God or not.

So you are probably wondering by now, “What exactly was Jubilee?” As we read today, Israel was called to let the land rest once every seven years and live off what they had stored and what grew naturally. And then every seven times seven years at the start of the fiftieth year, the ram’s horn would be blown on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, to mark the year of Jubilee. A joyful forgiving Spirit would descend upon the tribes of Israel as they remembered they were one; and as the financial debts of the poor were forgiven on the same day that their spiritual debts were forgiven. Slaves would be set free. And the land and everyone would enter into a year of rest.

As someone pointed out Thursday, we Christians are meant to celebrate Jubilee every year. And this is because of the joyful forgiveness that Jesus showed the world.

I would like to now show you the next scene in the movie...

[We are watching the mini-series Jesus of Nazareth this week and when he and his family made a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem, his father bought him a lamb to sacrifice. They get to the temple and the ram’s horn is blown and Jesus looks up at the temple while holding onto this lamb around his shoulders.]

It struck me that Jesus surely knew that little lamb would die so that his family’s sins would be atoned for. And the same would be true for him in another 30 years or so. This is the scandal of Christ’s Jubilee. That little lamb around Jesus’ shoulder did not deserve to die. Nor did Jesus. But he did so that you and I would know the Jubilee of God. That 1. we could absolutely assured that our sins were forgiven and put to death. And 2. that we would know without a doubt the gift of eternal life and rest and peace because of the resurrection.

The assurance of these two things should lead to the Jubilant Life not just someday but every day. What can possibly keep us from joy when God has forgiven all of our sins, past present and future? And when we know that eternal life is real? And if God's Spirit reigns over us and is flooding the earth now which Pentecost teaches, what have we to fear? Is not the Spirit bringing the Jubilee of heaven to earth day by day and year by year, and how can we not join the liberation of giving and forgiving now once every 7 x 7 years but 70 x 7 times every year?

My family and I were blessed with a week of Sabbath rest after Christmas. We went on a civil war tour while we were down in Charleston. And we had this wonderful tour guide who spoke a mile a minute and startled everyone by hitting his binder really hard while telling these great stories. He told us about Dred Scott who was a slave who had been moved to my home state of Minnesota. When his master moved, he leased his slave out to other families, bringing slavery to a free territory. Dred Scott saw and came to know free blacks. So he sued for his freedom time and again, only to be disappointed by time and again by the courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court.

Now we personally know next to nothing of the horrors of slavery. So this comparison is feeble in some ways. But I think the human spirit gets glimpses into Kingdom freedom like Dred Scott did. And yet, time and again, we are disappointed by the powers that seem to govern life and the world. And because of this, we feel enslaved; enslaved by work; enslaved by judgment— others judging us and our own judgment of others; enslaved by fear, loneliness, doubt, anger.

I watched a documentary this week about an adopted girl who struggled, as I and I think most of us do, with these things. She grew up in France. And one day someone who looked just like her and was born on the same day contacted her on Facebook. They learned they were both adopted from Korea and they started skyping and grew close very fast. They decided to do a DNA test and while they were meeting and getting to know each other in London, they learned, to noone's great surprise by this time that they were indeed twin sisters.

The one who grew up in France had a harder time growing up in terms of not having other siblings; wondering whether her parents only adopted her because they could not have children; for looking different and not being accepted in her hometown.

She said that she had been waiting a long time for something to happen in her life...she did not know what...just something. And then that something finally came. And now she has another person in her life who will always be there for her. Someone who is of the same stuff as her and can relate to her situation like no one else. She finally felt like she really belonged.

This presents the key to the Jubilee of God. Because we all have a brother who is of the same stuff as us; someone who knows us inside and out and will always be there for us no matter what; someone who is also a brother to everyone out there and teaches us that we are all brothers and sisters.

Jesus wants to mysteriously come to you and connect with you and speak love and grace and acceptance and belonging to your heart. And Jesus wants you to know that you can find family in anyone who believes the human family is one and that we are connected by love. That's the work of the church. That we are all adopted by the Father and one with the Son-- and thus with each other through love.

Because love is the only thing that properly binds us. Everything else between human beings which is not connected to love enslaves rather than binds. And God will not have that for his children.

So I am throwing off the shackles of judgment and criticism and grumbling and grudges and guilt. I'm throwing off the shackles of self-righteousness and self-degradation and self-doubt. I am throwing off the shackles of fear and isolation.

I am throwing off the quote-unquote "justice" of what I deserve and my rights and how my wife Hailey should be like this and how my sons Seth and Dietrich must do that! No more binding them to me. No more binding myself or others to my work with thoughts of, "If only I could do this..." or, "If only my church would do that." I am going to strive and strain with all that I am to gain the freedom and joy and rest that Jesus and Jubilee promise.

And I hope you join me. God wants your 2016 to be filled with the joy and freedom of His Kingdom. So let go of all the judgment that binds and let the joyful, loving, forgiving, graceful inclusive Way of Jesus become your Way in the year ahead.

