

## Rejoice With Me

*A reflection offered by Jennifer A. Hudson at the Celtic Service for Healing, St. Paul's on the Green Episcopal Church, Thursday, November 7, 2019*

Rejoice with me. Rejoice with me.

Twice we hear this phrase from Jesus—first in the parable of the lost sheep and then again in the parable of the lost coin.

A little over five years ago, I had no idea what it meant to rejoice. I was unhappy and didn't understand why. I had a wonderful spouse, a good career. How could I not be happy? What was wrong with me?

I realized what was wrong was that I wasn't being honest about who I was or what I wanted from life. In sum, I had been a people pleaser, and my lived reality greatly clashed with my inner one. The true me that I had kept repressed and hidden was beginning to claw her way out of her prison. And she was hurting and lost. There was even a point when she saw no other way out of her situation than to exit this life. The pain was that deep.

Then an event happened that changed everything.

I had a powerful personal encounter with Jesus. I can't explain how I experienced what I did. I'm also not going to offer the details. But I will tell you this: for someone who felt God could never love her, to feel and understand that God loved me far more than I ever thought possible—completely and without condition—was mind blowing. Jesus made it clear that he wanted me to be free and whole. He wanted me to love myself and to live honestly. He wanted me to find joy.

So here I am at St. Paul's, where my healing journey has continued. Here is where I've found joy. Here is where I've found new life and a purpose for it. Here's where I've learned how to "live to the Lord." And I know for many of you, St. Paul's is where you have found healing and new life as well.

Not everyone gets an extraordinary experience of God's healing like mine, or perhaps yours. God more often shows up in very ordinary ways, such as in bringing God's love and healing grace to those who might feel hopeless, helpless, or neglected.

So how might we help these friends beyond St. Paul's find healing and new life? Maybe it's in tutoring incoming refugee students with Norwalk International Academy, or helping to get medically-tailored meals prepared and delivered to chronically sick and shut-in New Yorkers through God's Love We Deliver, or visiting women incarcerated at York Correctional Facility through the Kairos program, or simply offering a word of encouragement to a co-worker, friend or stranger. We can be God's voice and hands. We can help others find reasons to rejoice.

Rejoice with me and give praise to God—not just for my healing or yours or ours but for those who have yet to experience it. Rejoice in a God who heals and makes whole. Rejoice that God works through us. Rejoice with me. Rejoice.