

# 7 Reasons to Rejoice at the End of 2020

My friend, Barbara, who lives in northeast Georgia, had a vivid dream back in August. In the dream she was decorating her home for Christmas. She knew it was December. She was stringing lights and placing pine boughs and candles on shelves. She was also setting several tables with plates and silverware, in expectation of a big gathering.

At the close of the dream she took a big cake out of a box and set it on a table. The cake had big letters on it, in icing, that said, "REJOICE." The dream ended when she put the cake on the table. When she woke up she knew the Lord was telling her clearly: "You will rejoice in December."

Rejoice? What is there to rejoice about in 2020? This has been an awful year. We've experienced a pandemic. Many people have died or lost loved ones. Others have lost jobs. Businesses have closed. Churches have been on lockdown, or, if they're open, half the people aren't attending. There has been unimaginable racial tension and political division.

I don't associate a delicious cake with 2020. This year was not what I could call "sweet." If 2020 were a food, it would be more like fried liver and onions.

2020 has been so bad that some people decided to cancel Christmas. Since they can't travel, dine inside restaurants or visit loved ones, they kept their Christmas trees in the attic and skipped the holiday altogether.

But I'm not buying that. Christmas isn't about a tree, shopping, stockings, eggnog, gingerbread, parties, toys, Santa Claus, elves, gift cards, wreaths or snow. Christmas is the warmth, joy and gratitude we feel because Jesus Christ was born. No virus can cancel it. No tyrant can outlaw it. No

Grinch can steal it. No Scrooge can humbug it.

I will forever celebrate Christmas in my heart, even in the middle of a pandemic. I will rejoice no matter what this year has been like.

2020 wasn't easy for me. I make my living from traveling, so most of my schedule was canceled in March. But the Bible calls us to rejoice in the Lord no matter what is happening around us. In fact, Paul wrote those very words, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" from a prison cell (Phil. 4:4).

If the apostle can rejoice while bound in chains, I certainly can celebrate in a pandemic. Here are seven reasons I choose to rejoice at the end of a horrible year:

1. **We have a powerful Savior.** Christmas is Christmas, whether we have big dinners together or celebrate alone. God became flesh and dwelt among us. Rejoice in the fact that Jesus came to earth and that He has saved you from sin and death.
2. **His blessings are overflowing.** Psalm 103:2 says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Have you thanked Him this year for health, protection, financial provision and all the other ways He has cared for you?
3. **The church has thrived in a challenging season.** In spite of canceled services and empty church buildings, we've learned to use technology in 2020 so that our outreach extends farther than ever. We would never have learned these new methods of ministry if the pandemic hadn't force us to change.
4. **God's people are praying in unprecedented ways.** The challenges of 2020 drew many Christians into their prayer closets. We went deeper in intimacy with God.

Prayer is arising like floodwaters all over the world, preparing us for a great spiritual awakening.

5. **The Holy Spirit is still moving.** God's Spirit has not been social distancing during this pandemic. He has been drawing people to faith in Christ during these dark times. In 2020 I led an immigrant to Jesus, and he is now sharing his faith with his friends in India.
6. **Jesus is still on the throne.** No matter who occupies the White House, Isaiah 9:6 says of the Messiah: "...the government shall be upon His shoulder." Don't let an election steal your joy. If your candidate didn't win, God can still protect our freedoms and guide our nation back to Him.
7. **His light shines in the darkness.** I hated 2020 mostly because of all the hatefulness and political conflict that raged in our streets and in our social media posts. Relationships were severed this year because of strife; even families have been divided. Yet we know that when the darkness gets darker, God's light shines brighter. We can rejoice that in the midst of chaos, confusion and moral depravity, the message of the gospel will become even clearer in contrast.

2020 wasn't easy, but we will find many sweet surprises in this bitter year if we learn to rejoice in every situation. I pray you have a Merry Christmas! {eoa}