

Devotion: Rejoice

Text: Philippians 4: 4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

In the name of Jesus:

There is probably no harder thing to do at this moment in time than rejoicing. It is hard to have joy when we hear the number of coronavirus cases rising daily, when the death toll from the coronavirus rises exponentially everyday. We see so much suffering in the world around us. People are being laid off, unemployment claims are at new highs, and there is anxiety in the hearts and lives of many. People are staying inside, but the news is still bleak. Rejoice? At this time? You may be thinking, if only I could rejoice, I would!

God gives us reason to rejoice. Just listen to how Paul starts out this section of Scripture: Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice! Our ability to have joy and our rejoicing is in the Lord. Yes, it is difficult, nearly impossible to rejoice in all of the bad news that we are hearing as a result of this Pandemic. The world as we know it is passing away. But that is what God has been trying to tell us all along. Just listen to the

Apostle John in his first letter: “The world is passing away along with its desires.” (1 John 2: 17). The Apostle Paul echoes that thought in his letter to the church at Corinth: “The present form of this world is passing away.” (1 Corinthians 7: 31). The reason why this world is passing away is because all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. We have shown our sinfulness in rebelling against God. How? By raising up the things of this world to be substitutes for God. We haven’t loved God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. We have placed our trust in the things of this world, which are currently passing away.

But God doesn’t desire the death of the sinner. He wills that all come to Him in repentance and faith so that we might live, move, and have our being in God. This is why Paul tells us that you and I can rejoice always, because God loves you with an everlasting love. While we were still sinners, God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world, not to condemn the world but to save the world through Him. This is the Good News that we will celebrate in the upcoming Holy Week. Christ Jesus has lived, died, and rose again and now sits at the right hand of the Father. All things have been placed under Him. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Paul, knowing this, invites you to bring your worries,

your problems, your concerns, your trials and tribulations to Jesus, to cast your anxieties on Him, for He cares for you. He has forgiven all of your sins and placed them on Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God who has taken away your sins and the sins of the world. Jesus loves you, He cares for you, and He will never hurt you. He wants you to be at peace, He gives you His peace, peace that the world cannot give. Peace that surpasses all understanding, so that you might know for certain that God is in control of all things. Not only is God in control, but also He loves you and promises to work all things out to your good and His glory for He has called you to be His child in Jesus.

That is why Jesus reminds us in His Sermon on the Mount that we should not be anxious or concerned about what might happen, for our loving Heavenly Father holds all things in His hands and promises to act for you in love. Jesus says: "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about

clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. So seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

So do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. Rejoice, for God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit loves you and is now at work on your behalf to bless and keep you as His child. Note, Paul says this twice. He is emphatic, he repeats for emphasis. Rejoice, we can rejoice, for our joy and rejoicing is in Him, who created us, who

gives us our daily bread, who loves us in Christ and who sends His Holy Spirit to bless and keep us as His children. That is why Paul says that the Lord is at hand; you don't need to be anxious about anything, because you know that God loves you and cares for you. Your Heavenly Father invites you to come to Him with your prayers of supplication and thanksgiving. Let God know what is on your heart and mind. Turn your cares and worries over to Him. He will take care of you. And when you do, you will find the peace that alone He can give. And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen

And now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, so that you might always rejoice in the Lord!

Amen