

Text: Philippians 4:4-7

Theme: Rejoice

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

My dear beloved flock, the text for our meditation this morning is the Epistle lesson of Saint Paul to the church in Philippi, the fourth chapter verses four through seven.

Good Morning Ladies! Have you ever felt sad or gloomy? I am sure you have. Even adults feel that way. It is hard to always be happy, to always have a smile on your face. Yet, how does Saint Paul begin our text for today, he says “Rejoice always, I will say it again Rejoice!” In the midst of sadness, pain and hurt, how can we rejoice? Ponder that question as you listen to the rest of the sermon. You may go back to your seats and those who love you.

After his specific admonition to Euodia and Syntyche, Paul returns to a more general encouragement. Sounding the keynote of this epistle once more, he describes the spirit that should fill the hearts of the Philippians and all believers all the time. “Rejoice in the Lord!” Paul says. This time he adds “always.” The purest, highest joy should always shine forth like sunshine from Christians’ lives. Joy should be a fundamental mark of every believer’s personality. Because it does not always seem reasonable to rejoice, especially when believers are facing difficult and trying circumstances, the apostle repeats his encouragement, “I will say it again: Rejoice!”

Yet, can we always rejoice? Does Paul mean that we have to walk around constantly with a smile plastered on our face? No. It is hard to feel joy, even as Christians. Can you really feel joy in your hearts when you are troubled by past sins? When Satan

attacks you and says that you are not worthy of heaven because of that stealing, murdering, coveting, idolatry, and much more that you love to do time and time again? Can you rejoice when you, or those whom you love are facing life's sharp edges of unemployment in the turmoiled world that we live in? Can you rejoice when faced with financial problems? When sickness, uncertainty, pain, and death come upon you, can you feel joy? Remember, Paul wrote these words as a prisoner, a man with years of "the fellowship of sharing in [Christ's] sufferings" (3:10) behind him and an uncertain future ahead of him. Yet he wrote this epistle with a song in his heart and words of praise on his lips.

We can rejoice! To rejoice does not mean that we walk around, no matter the circumstances with a smile always plastered on our face. Rather, Saint Paul's lesson is this. No matter the outward circumstances that happen, they do not, and should not, determine the condition of a believer's heart. Even when everything around them is dark and gloomy, Christians can be joyful within. They can be joyful because of their oneness with Christ. We have joy found in Jesus' incarnation, leading to His death and resurrection from the dead. Christ sends us His Spirit through the waters of Holy Baptism that fills our hearts continually with real gospel joy: the joy of forgiveness, the joy of knowing that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, the joyful assurance that Jesus is coming again to give us the full physical possession of our eternal inheritance in glory. This is how we can be joyful, even in the midst of dark doom and gloom. These unshakable gospel assurances, we call them to mind each day. We will understand that it is far from unreasonable for the apostle to urge us to

rejoice in the Lord always. Nor is it unreasonable for us to urge one another to always rejoice.¹

Rejoice, I say it again, Rejoice! Rejoice in the midst of your pain, sorrow, suffering, and anguish, in the midst of all of your dark and gloomy times because of the promise and assurances given by your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ until the day when He comes again in power and glory.

May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard and keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Kuschel, H. J. (1986). [*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*](#) (pp. 88–89). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House.