

Philippians 4:1-9

1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. 2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Book of Life – The Good Father Lerch—rewards given for correct answers, extra credit and participation.

Philippians would certainly get a gold star in the book of life. They were his FAVORITES .

Philippians reading gives a great recap of the whole letter.

- Cliff's Notes
- Armchair Theologian

Purpose to reinforce the good behavior that was already happening in Paul's favorite church plant.

How know his favorite? Not scolding like in Corinthians, but strong emphasis on joy.

Kinda like KJV Matthew's wise men when they finally, FINALLY get to where they are going and know they are in front of the Christ child: they rejoiced with exceeding great joy

Joy main theme—16 times mentioned in 104 verses.

Written in 62-63 A.D. from prison in Rome—waiting execution. Odd talk from a guy who is imprisoned waiting to be executed in a dungeon.

Many examples of things that are funny, are satisfying, are small snippets of “fake joy”...kinda like a fake laugh.

Story about growing up and watching TV:

My three sons, Mr. Ed, the Munsters. Shows from that black and white genre watched on Nickelodeon TV watching as a kid. Laugh tracks. Paul not talking about those kinds of canned responses that are fleeting. No Dick Van Dyke, Bye Bye Birdie “Put on a happy face” kind of joy. NO!

Paul talking about joy that is deeply rooted, joy that radiates out of us, joy that comes from knowing that WE ARE GOD'S BELOVED and that we need to find that same belovedness in our lives....all of which comes from the knowledge that we are LOVED of God. This joy is anchored in the Lord, despite whatever obstacles we run into.

Not ha-ha funny, but the joy that literally has the **power to transform us, to change our lives.**

Too easy to get focused on all that is wrong with us, all that is wrong with the world, all that is stupid about “those people,” all of the ways that we are sinful....INSTEAD of celebrating the fact that we are beloved of God and are forgiven.

Commentator: “We complain too often about the lack of holiness instead of remembering what we are as children of God. We are too often frustrated by feelings of weakness instead of being delighted about the strength of the Holy Spirit working in us.”

Paul’s words are so relevant to us today right now. If we had to measure the joyfulness in our life together as a congregation or the “degree” of joyfulness we feel in our lives, I think we all could use a little more joy. In the world right now: Hurricanes, wild fires, North Korea, oh my!

Need to remember that joy is here—joy is in our lives literally ...everywhere. And we make the joy Paul talks about happen here.

Ultimately, real and lasting joy comes from the confidence that, no matter what happens, we are inseparably connected to God and saved.

Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39

³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Joy-bringers: Here’s what brings me joy:

We have youth who want to come to church—and who sell pumpkins to raise money to go on a pilgrimage that will literally change their spiritual lives and deepen their faith forever. [Will hear more from the group that went to Iceland this summer after the 10AM church service today.]

Joy that comes from helping others: Backpack Buddies. Green Sheet. Ask any of those people if what they do gives them joy knowing that dozens of children will not go hungry and literally starve over the weekend thanks to those volunteers.

The joy that comes from worship:

- choir, singing hymns, saying prayers, giving thanks.
- love we receive and love we give—to family, to friends, to those who we care deeply about.
- ...and satisfaction that comes from struggling with something, working at it and working at it...maybe even several failures along the way, but then mastering that which you struggled with for so long.

Our ability to love and be loving with that exceeding great joy, of the wisemen, of Paul's joy over the church of Philippi can only come from God, as a gift freely given to us, God's beloved.

That's what we have to give thanks for—that we both have that ability to give that joy, but to receive that joy.

We should give back to God with that same joy. Do so because of not what the church receives, but what WE have ALREADY received from God, our ever-loving creator.

Said it last week: our response of giving back to God, out of joy and thankfulness is so much more about our NEED to give than it is for the church to receive. BUT, if it helps you, think about all of the joy that you are helping to bring into the world because of all that you give back to God.

This place—this parish family should be a place and a people of joy. We should find joy in all that we do and give when we are here. As we work together, as we help to bring the love of God in Christ to ourselves and our world, as we minister together in the name of Jesus, let us do so in joy, in thanksgiving for all that God has blessed us with. And I promise that “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” will become our anthem of joyful thanksgiving as we praise God for all that God inspires us to do and to be at St. Martin's in the Field. AMEN.