

MESSAGE OUTLINE—TRUE JOY: REJOICING

Philippians 4:1-9 (NIV)

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! ²I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

True Joy comes from rejoicing...

1. In the _____.
My joy and my crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. **Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)**

2. In the _____.
Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. **Philippians 4:12-13 (NIV)**

3. In the _____ of _____.
Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God... put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I want to cultivate my relationship with God. I want all of life to be intimate — sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously — with the God who made, directs, and loves me. And I want to waken others to the nature and centrality of prayer. I want to be a person in this community to whom others can come without hesitation, without wondering if it is appropriate, to get direction in prayer and praying. I want to do the original work of being in deepening conversation with the God who reveals himself to me and addresses me by name. I don't want to dispense mimeographed handouts that describe God's business; I want to witness out of my own experience. I don't want to live as a parasite on the firsthand spiritual life of others, but to be personally involved with all my senses, tasting and seeing that the Lord is good. I know it takes time to develop a life of prayer: set-aside, disciplined, deliberate time. It isn't accomplished on the run, nor by offering prayers from a pulpit or at a hospital bedside. I know I can't be busy and pray at the same time. I can be active and pray; I can work and pray; but I cannot be busy and pray. I cannot be inwardly rushed, distracted, or dispersed. In order to pray I have to be paying more attention to God than to what people are saying to me; to God than to my clamoring ego. Usually, for that to happen there must be a deliberate withdrawal from the noise of the day, a disciplined detachment from the insatiable self.

—Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS WEEK OF OCTOBER 11, 2020—TRUE JOY: REJOICING

CONNECT:

- When or where are you most likely to find yourself truly rejoicing? Share a time when you found yourself truly rejoicing in the past week.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

Silence: Quietly sit still for two minutes, imagine yourself in the presence of God.

Lectio Divina: Ask three people to read one paragraph of Philippians 4:1-9 aloud. Circle whatever instruction, direction, or promise stands out to you. What do the words you choose communicate to you?

Listen and Reflect: Ask 7 people to slowly read through each of the following sentences. In silence, check 2-3 thoughts you feel God is drawing your attention toward.

- I need to get along better with others.
- I need to support those who “contend for the gospel.”
- I need to stop grumbling or arguing to create space for rejoicing.
- I need to develop gentleness in my life.
- I need to examine the impact of my anxiety on myself and others.
- I need to set aside time to meditate (think) on those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.
- I need to be content with things as they are right now.

Listen and reflect: Ask 7 people to read the sentences again, replacing the word “need” with “want.” Silently consider what you most deeply want to experience.

Group Debrief: Did replacing the words “I need” to “I want” change anything for you? What do you observe in yourself as a result of this practice?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION

- Reflecting on this week’s passage and message, what stands out to you? What questions or resistance does it raise?
- What attitudes and behaviors make it possible for Christians to rejoice in difficult situations? In what way do these attitudes and behaviors lead to unity?

- What reasons does Paul have for rejoicing? What could rob him of joy?
- What do you imagine fueled Paul’s passion and commitment to prayer? How does the quote from Eugene Peterson stimulate your thinking about prayer?
- In what way can prayer help a community to build unity and resolve conflict?
- What would you say is the difference between the peace mentioned in verses 7 and 9?
- What have you “learned” from Paul that you would like to “put into practice” this week?
- Where do you need the “peace of God” this week? Where do you long for “the God of peace” to be with you this week?

PRAYER AND BENEDICTION

Prayer Requests: Is there someone or something you could release from your worries into God’s care? Looking toward the week ahead, how would you like us to pray for you?

Praying for one another: Be creative in assigning each group member another person to pray for. Once everyone has a name, offer a short prayer asking God to bless them based on Philippians 4 or something they shared.

Benediction: (Based on Colossians 3:12–14)

Therefore, because we are God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, let us clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. May we bear with each other and forgive one another or anyone else of any grievance. Let us forgive as Jesus has forgiven us. And over all these virtues, let us put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Amen

DAILY PRACTICE: Continue to spend time with God daily in Solitude, Scripture, and Prayer (download Reading Plan and Playlist from website to guide you). This week spend 5 minutes in silence, 5 minutes meditating on Philippians 4, and 5 minutes in prayer. Keep a journal to record whatever God brings to mind for you.