

Title: The Secret of Joy

Text: Phil. 4:4-7

Date: February 1, 2014

Place: DCOG

Theme: Philippians

Here we are on Superbowl Sunday talking about joy. Is your team in the Superbowl? Do you have a favorite for tonight? Will the conclusion of the game determine your joy?

Since we are a month into a new year, let me ask a series of significant questions.

1. Has this New Year been more of a disappointment than a blessing?
2. Do you have bitterness in your thoughts today?
3. Have you experienced rejection recently by some significant person in your life?
4. Are you experiencing sustained frustration in your vocation, in your family, in your family relationships, or in both?
5. Have you had a major failure recently?
6. Would you like to cry right now, or have you wanted to cry this week to release your emotions?
7. Are you hostile toward someone? Do you feel someone has mistreated you, messed up your world?
8. Do you feel like a bomb ready to explode?
9. Are you totally sad or discouraged? Is that the major factor in your life right now?

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions, you may be perplexed by what Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice!”

Philip. 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! [5] Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. [6] Do not be

anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. [7] And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philip. 4:11-12

I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. [12] 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.

Philip. 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

I. Consider the facts of the situation.

- A. Paul is in prison in Rome.
- B. He was probably facing a death sentence.
- C. The people in Philippi were either experiencing or facing persecution.
- D. Paul had been persecuted in Philippi (Acts 16).
- E. These were rough times.
- F. The Philippian Christians were also having some difficulties with each other.

II. If you are experiencing failure right now, consider what can happen as a result of negative experiences.

- A. So preoccupied with griefs or disappointments, you may not hear what the Lord has to say to you through this message.
- B. If you have resentments, bitterness, hurts, frustrations involving people in other places, you probably will express the frustrations in this fellowship.
- C. Look around. – You are in the company of human beings, all of whom are suffering or recently suffered in some way.

Even so:

- D. Paul says, “Rejoice.”
 - a. Rejoice has a definite relationship to joy.
 - b. Pretension is not suggested.
- E. Paul challenges us to rejoice in the midst of difficulties.
- F. This is different from rejoicing because we feel good.

*The highway department of another state discovered the lights along a stretch of highway were a foot lower than specifications permitted. Accordingly, the state awarded a million dollar contract to have them raised.

When a tax payer complained about the expense, a friend told him, “You should be thankful they’re just raising the lights. They might have decided to lower the highway.”

We can always find something about which to rejoice.

III. Let’s discover ways to have the rejoicing spirit.

- A. Joy begins in our effort to be gentle to all persons.
 - a. The word for gentleness is variously translated as magnanimity, patience, or forbearance.
 - b. It is not difficult to be gentle with some people; it is with other people.
 - c. Some have a gift for acting gently; most of us have to work at it.
 - d. Gentleness is not a doormat attitude – it is thoughtful consideration for the other person.
 - i. Jesus was considered gentle.
 - ii. He spoke to the Pharisee Nicodemus gently about the new birth
 - iii. He spoke to hypocritical Pharisees calling them liars and whitewashed tombs.
 - e. Gentleness is more likely to be present if we recognize our own frustrations and hurts, rather than deny them.
 - f. Sensitivity is a part of gentleness.

*Notice what Paul tells Timothy...

1 Tim. 6:11

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

- B. Another component of joy is affirming “the Lord is near.”
 - a. One way we affirm the Lord is near is by saying it.
 - b. A second way we affirm the Lord is near is by acting like it. We can act out the Lord’s presence in our life.
 - c. A third way is by worshiping in God’s presence rather than as if we have to call on Him long distance.

- C. Another way to have the rejoicing spirit is to express concerns openly to God instead of worrying.

*There are two ways of handling pressure.

One is illustrated by a bathysphere, the miniature submarine used to explore the ocean in places so deep that the water pressure would crush a conventional submarine like an aluminum can. Bathyspheres compensate with steel plate several inches thick, which keeps the water out but also makes them heavy and hard to maneuver. Inside they’re cramped.

When these craft descend to the ocean floor, however, they find that they are not alone. When their lights are turned on and you look through the tiny, thick plate glass windows, what do you see? Fish!

These fish cope with the extreme pressure in an entirely different way. They don’t build thick skins; they remain supple and free. They compensate for the outside pressure through equal and opposite pressure inside themselves.

Christians, likewise, don’t have to be hard and thick-skinned, as long as they appropriate God’s power within to equal the pressure without.

- a. Let God know exactly what it is that concerns you – confess your inadequacy and ask His help.
 - a. It is sometimes wise to trust a few close friends.
 - b. Not necessarily for counseling.
 - c. So they can love us and pray for us.
 - b. Prayer produces joy.
 - a. God can begin to work in you, work with you, or work in the situation.
 - b. God can make you a better person rather than make your situation more comfortable.
 - c. Prayer includes thanks.
 - a. It helps us remember our blessings.
 - b. Remember His promises – God has something wonderful He is going to do with us and for us.
- D. Relax your heart and mind in the peace God gives. (v. 7)
- a. Accept the peace God has promised. This takes practice.
 - b. Release your heart.

*Don't worry, be happy.

- c. You can tell your muscles, your mind, your nerves, and your blood, to relax for you are at peace with God.
- d. Peace with God can even help the family to relax.

E. You can have joy by learning to live in all circumstances: in need or in plenty. (v. 11)

*A wife was telling her neighbor about her fishing trip with her husband.

“I did everything wrong on this trip. I talked too loud, I made too much noise. I used the wrong bait, I reeled in too soon, and I caught more fish than he did.”

- a. Doing everything right is no guarantee of joy.
- b. A person with plenty can be discontented.

- c. Paul and the Philippians were going to have difficult circumstances – not ones that they would choose.
- d. If you are going to have joy in life you are going to have to have joy whatever the circumstance.

Conclusion: Are you searching for joy?

Philip. 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Philip. 4:19

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Rejoicing is part of our worship of the Lord.

It brings us close to Him which gives us even more to rejoice about. Will you join me in this circle of joy?