

REJOICE IN THE LORD

(Congregational Theme 2012)

A. Universal Desire For Joy.

1. Everyone wants to be joyful or happy; happiness is a basic human desire.
 - a. In Japan, there are groups of people that get together every morning just to laugh.
 - b. In America, we think “the pursuit of happiness” is one of our “unalienable rights” endowed upon us by our Creator (Dec. of Ind.).
2. Happiness is perhaps the most pleasant emotion we can experience.
3. And it’s not sinful to seek happiness either; God made us to experience it & even long for it.

B. Pursuing Joy.

1. And yet happiness can be elusive; it can be very hard to find & hold on to!
2. The Preacher in Ecclesiastes tells us that people will look for happiness in the wrong places.
 - a. Pleasure, possessions, work, strength, health, education, acceptance.
 - Solomon tried them all, & found them to be counterfeit sources of happiness.
 - He said trying to find happiness in those things was like trying to catch the wind.
3. Pursuing happiness is kind of like shooting off fireworks.
 - a. You can spend a lot of time & money picking out the ones that give you the greatest thrill.
 - b. You bring them home & in 30 minutes it’s all over.
 - c. {Building model rockets; it’s over in 30 seconds & the rocket drifts right back to where it started.}

4. In our culture we have so many opportunities to experience happiness derived from *pleasure* that we have actually dulled our senses to what is lasting joy.

C. Congregational Theme Of Joy.

1. This year I want us to possess the kind of joy that will never fade away.
 - a. The kind of joy God created us to possess.
2. Our congregational theme is going to be called simply, “Rejoice in the Lord.”
 - a. The emphasis is on, “in the Lord.”
 - b. I want us to see that the pleasures of this world are just temporary illusions.
 - c. I want us to learn to find our joy in the One who doesn’t change—”the Lord” (**Heb 13:8**).

3. Our theme verse is not difficult to memorize, but it is hard to obey.

- a. **Phil 4:4** – “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

- Paul repeated himself as if to say, “Yes, you heard me right, & I know it’s hard, but find your joy in the Lord Jesus in every moment of life.”
- That’s what I want us to be able to do more effectively this year.
- I want us to set aside the inadequate sources of joy & discover a joy - in the Lord - that will remain forever with us.

[Words that indicate “joy” (rejoicing, gladness, blessed) occur over a thousand times in Scripture. And yet, an abiding joy is often missing in our lives.

This year we will seek to prevent that from happening from here on out.

Let’s begin by understanding our theme verse.]

I. LEARNING JOY FROM GOD

A. Joy Is A Command (Phil 4:4).

1. Joy IS NOT just a feeling (emotion); IT IS a choice we must make either to obey or disobey this command.
 - a. Our obedience to this command will require our trusting faith in the Lord
 - b. Why? We're going to face many circumstances in life that appear to be without any cause for joy.
 - c. At those times, our faith must not allow our feelings to interfere with our obedience to this command.
 - d. There are many commands like that aren't there; commands that conflict with feelings (Col 3:18-20)?

B. Joy Is A Comprehensive Command.

1. Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always".

- a. Do you wish Paul would have said, "Rejoice in the Lord most of the time"?
 - "I think I can do that! But to rejoice in Him always means I have no excuses not to rejoice in Him."
 - We must rejoice in Him even when we feel sad, depressed, mistreated, angry, unsettled.
2. Understand that to "Rejoice in the Lord always" doesn't mean that we must always feel like laughing & smiling.
 - a. The shortest verse in the Greek New Testament is, "Rejoice always" (1 Thess 5:16).
 - b. The shortest verse in the English New Testament is, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35).
 - They are not contradictory! Our Lord & Savior could weep & yet have "fullness of joy", even as He faced the cross (John 15:11).
 - Paul commands us to weep with those who weep (Rom 12:15), & yet to rejoice always.

- God's people have the capability to both mourn for their sins ([Matt 5:4](#); [Jas 4:9](#)) & to feel inexpressible joy & full of glory ([1 Pet 1:8](#)).
- c. So Being a Christian doesn't mean you will be removed from problems, but it does mean you can have joy in the midst of them!
- Joy is a safeguard to our faith; it is an expression of our trust in the Lord even in the face of the darkest of days ([Phil 3:1, 2-14](#)).
3. If we call Jesus "our Lord", then out of love & respect for Him we will rejoice in Him always.

C. Joy Is A Centered Command.

1. The joy we are going to pursue this year has only one source—"the Lord".
- a. If we try to find joy any place else, it will only be temporary & greatly insufficient.
 - b. The only joy that is always present is the joy in a Lord who is always sufficient ([2 Cor 3:5](#); [12:9](#)).

2. So we cannot have this joy unless we are rightly related to Christ, & wholly devoted to Him.
- a. David wrote, "**Happy** are the people whose God is the LORD!" ([Psa 144:15](#)).
 - b. Solomon echoed, "And whoever trusts in the LORD, **happy** is he" ([Prov 16:20](#)).

Lawrence of Arabia went to Paris after World War I with some of his Arab friends. They saw all the magnificent sights of Paris, but what amazed them most of all were the water faucets. They could just turn the handle & water poured out. When they were ready to leave, Lawrence found these men in the bathroom trying to detach the faucets. He said, "Why are you doing this?" They said, "Arabia is so dry, we need these faucets so we can have all the water we want!" Lawrence explained to them that the effectiveness of the faucets depended on the immense water supply to which they were attached.

3. People treat joy like that too. They want the faucets, but they miss the connection.
- a. True & lasting joy can only come by walking in harmony with Christ; He is its only source.
 - That is why "joy" is a fruit of the Spirit ([Gal 5:22](#)); borne by those who walk in the Spirit ([5:16, 25](#)).

D. Joy Is A Uniquely Christian Characteristic.

1. **John 15:11** – *“These things I have spoken to you, that My **joy** may remain in you, & that your joy may be full.”*
 - a. The words of Christ can produce in us a joy that is overflowing!

2. **Rom 14:17** – *“the kingdom of God is not eating & drinking, but righteousness & peace & **joy** in the Holy Spirit”.*
 - a. Joy is just as important a matter as holy living & peace with God!

3. **Acts 2:46-47** – *“So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, & breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with **gladness** & simplicity [sincerity] of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God & having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*
 - a. It wasn't just the food they were glad about, they were rejoicing DAILY in their newfound freedom from sin in Christ.

4. Song: STTL #262 – Rejoice In The Lord Always.

CLOSING

- A. **In our next lesson** we'll talk about those things that cause us to “rejoice in the Lord, always” .
 1. His forgiveness
 2. His purposes
 3. His people
 4. His home.