

REJOICE IN THE LORD

(Congregational Theme 2012)

A. **Last Sunday evening** we began our theme for the year, based on Philippians 4:4 from which we touched on four points.

1. “Rejoicing in the Lord always” is a command from an apostle – who, btw, was in prison for the cause of Christ when he issued it.

2. It is a comprehensive command: “always”.

3. It is a centered command: “in the Lord”.

4. It is uniquely a Christian trait.

B. **Some people face life** with great pessimism; they can find a cloud in every silver lining.

1. But a Christian cannot be like that; we cannot shine as lights in the dark world (**Phil 2:14-16**) while always looking on the gloomy side of life.

2. {Pause} We all know how difficult it is to be around a person with a negative spirit.

3. So how effective can we be as Christians if we rarely see anything good in any situation or in any - one?

C. **Yet, as bad as the negative spirit is**, there is something much worse: a worldly spirit.

1. A person with a worldly spirit may actually be very upbeat & positive, but the problem is - he’s focused on the wrong things.

2. The worldly spirit focuses on the world’s reasons for joy (lust, pride) rather than God’s reasons.

3. It’s amazing how we can live in a world that God created, where His power & glory are so clearly evident, where His word is so abundantly available, & yet we often rejoice in those things that are passing away or even dishonor Him.

4. What makes you happy? What or Who do you love? What kinds of things come to mind?

5. We live in a world that has trained us to answer those questions with worldly responses, rather than spiritual ones (**Eph 1:3**).

[Our theme this year is intended to correct that perspective.

Yes, “rejoicing in the Lord always” is going to be about having a joyful, positive outlook on life.

But more than that - it’s going to be about learning to rejoice IN THE LORD; learning to be happy in those things that make God happy.

Now, what does that kind of joy look like? What does it mean to rejoice IN THE LORD?

We’ll expand on that question throughout the year.

But today we’re going to rejoice in what may be four of the most important things about which we have to be joyful.]

I. REJOICE IN THE LORD’S FORGIVENESS

- A. Don’t ever get tired of hearing about God’s forgiveness, because forgiveness = eternal salvation – and that ought to make most of us extremely happy!
 1. **Acts 8:39** – Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; & he went on his way **rejoicing**.

 2. **Acts 16:34** – Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; & he **rejoiced**, having believed in God with all his household.

 3. **1 Peter 1:18-19** – knowing that you were not ***redeemed*** with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish & without spot.

4. **1 Peter 1:8-9** – whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you **rejoice with joy inexpressible** & full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.

B. You see, the great difference between the joy of the world & the joy of the Lord is this...

1. The joy of the world says, “Forget about the old concept of sin. Do what you want.”
 2. The joy of the Lord says, “Sin is a real bad action that leads to a very bad outcome.
 - a. It separates us from God.
 - b. It harms us & those who live with us.
 - c. It condemns us.
 - d. We are guilty of it.
 - e. We can’t deny it.
- So, in order to find lasting joy we must seek God to be rid sin (**Rom 6:23**).

C. One time Jesus sent his disciples out to teach the gospel, to heal the sick & cast out demons.

1. When they returned they were excited at what they had done & the response of the people.
2. But Jesus put their euphoria in perspective when he said, “Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but **rejoice** that your names are written in heaven” (**Luke 10:20**).
3. Take the most exciting moment that you’ve ever experience – it is as nothing compared with knowing that your name is written in heaven!
4. **Psa 32:1-2** – **Blessed** is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. **Blessed** is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him. (That man is “in Christ”.)

[We need to learn to rejoice in our forgiveness & salvation (not take it for granted). Even the angels rejoice for us.]

II. REJOICE IN THE LORD'S PURPOSES

A. Isn't it true that most of our frustrations in life come from our purposes & plans going unfulfilled?

1. But if we can become more consumed with God's purposes, then joy will replace our frustration.
2. **Acts 5:41** – So they departed from the presence of the council, **rejoicing** that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.
3. Paul was in a Roman prison & the men who envied his authority availed themselves of that opportunity to advance their preaching careers (**Phil 1:12-18**).
4. **Phil 1:12** – What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; & in this I **rejoice**, yes, & will **rejoice**.

B. If we are going to rejoice in the Lord always our greatest desire must be to see the purposes of the Lord fulfilled.

1. This will allow us to see our disappointments through the lens of Scripture (**Rom 5:2; Jas 1:2**).

[As long as our joy is tied to our plans & our desires then our joy will be short lived.

However, if our joy is to see the purposes of God succeed then we will always have a constant source of joy—because His purposes never fail.]

III. REJOICE IN THE LORD'S PEOPLE

A. God's purposes involve PEOPLE, so lasting joy can only be found in a proper view of others; seeing them as God sees them.

1. But that's not how most of us pursue joy; we pursue joy by pampering ourselves.

B. Rejoice in serving others.

1. **Acts 20:35** – I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more **blessed** to give than to receive.’”
2. **John 13:15, 17** – For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. ...¹⁷ If you know these things, **blessed** are you if you do them.

C. Rejoice in the spiritual growth of others.

1. **Phil 2:2** – fulfill my **joy** by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
2. **1 Thess 3:8-9** – For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. ⁹ For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the **joy** with which we **rejoice** for your sake before our God,

3. **1 Thess 2:19-20** – For what is our hope, or **joy**, or crown of **rejoicing**? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?
²⁰ For you are our glory & **joy**.

D. Rejoice in the salvation of others (Luke 15:10).

[Lasting joy can only come by learning to rejoice in the lives of others who are striving to please God.]

IV. REJOICE IN THE LORD'S HOME

- A. **Finally, learn to rejoice in** the great & final reward of your own salvation: a home in the Lord's house.

1. In the book of Revelation John entered heaven & recorded the preparations being made for the faithful children of God.

2. **Rev 19:6-9** – And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters & as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad & **rejoice** & give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, & His wife (the church) has made herself ready.” 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean & bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, “Write: **‘Blessed** are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” And he said to me, “These are the true sayings of God.”

a. You don’t want to miss that supper for any empty passing pleasure in this world.

3. **John 14:1-3** – Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go & prepare a place for you, I will come again & receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

4. The 12th century song that makes this point beautifully, “Jesus The Very Thought Of Thee,”

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be Thou our glory now
And thru eternity.

[What a great place to start our “rejoicing in the Lord”. We will find lasting joy in our forgiveness, in God’s purpose, in God’s people & God’s home. What else is there?]

CLOSING

A. Life can be extremely difficult at times, but Paul’s command (**Phil 4:4**) is not to be like salt in a wound.

1. In fact, the very opposite is true: “*rejoicing in the Lord always*” is the only way to ease the pain.
2. Unlike the pleasures of this life, the joy of the Lord doesn’t give out—it is ever present.