

Text: Philippians 4:4-7  
Theme: "Tis the Season...

December 9, 2018

We know the song. We hear it on the radio and we hear our kids sing it in their school programs, "Tis the season to be jolly. Fa la la la la, la la la la." Yet, as you look beyond your excited kids or grandkids, is it obvious or is it rather difficult to find amid all the frantic activities of the season? Paul, while sitting in prison, writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice." But, we're struggling, to say the least, struggling to rejoice, let alone always.

I. Every season, but particularly the Christmas season, is a season for rejoicing. A. Yet, as we all know, it's not always happening. 1. It's not happening because we've forgotten the reason. We can insist, "I know the reason for the season," but do our actions match our words or are we claiming one thing, but actually doing another? None of us would argue that this is a season for rejoicing, yet, our challenge during this frenzied season is to do what we know, to rejoice always when we're surrounded by many who are not rejoicing at all. Before we let the attitudes of others rub off on us, Paul says, "Rejoice. Do it because you do have a reason to rejoice."

2. It's not happening because we're just too busy. What's the busiest time of the year for retail stores? What's the busiest time of the year for us? Now, what disappears most quickly in the midst of our busyness? It's surely not our stress, our exhaustion, or our weariness, is it? What disappears most quickly is our joy. As we run here and there, as we plan this gathering and get ready for that event, joy suffers; rejoicing always quickly becomes rejoicing occasionally. Because we are so busy, too busy at times, the season of joy, the reason for great joy gets put in the closet because we think we don't have time to express our joy.

B. That being true, what reason do we have to rejoice? 1. We rejoice because we have a Savior. Remember the words from Isaiah, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." The best news, the news of great joy today is that you have a Savior, that I have a Savior. With great boldness and confidence, we can say, "He is mine!" What if God sent His Son to earth but He only saved 1231 people out of the entire population of the world. Thankfully, our Savior came for us, for everyone, for all seven billion people, and He came for one purpose. He came to save, to offer us the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven. Now, that's a reason to rejoice always.

2. We rejoice because our Savior is near. We find the words in our text, but they seem to be in a rather strange location, "Let your gentleness be known to all. The Lord is near." It's almost like those words don't belong in our text at all. But as we search for reasons to rejoice, those words are great words! The more familiar words, "Immanuel, God with us" remind us that God is near. God is right here, right now. He is with you in your great moments and He is still with you in your most challenging moments. When we remember He is with us, that He's in control of everything, that He is always ready to hear our prayers, we find a reason to rejoice.

3. We rejoice because He came as our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Any one of those would have been a reason to rejoice. But God went far beyond our expectations. As our Wonderful Counselor, He provides insight, wisdom, and direction. As our Mighty God and Everlasting Father, He assures us that He has unlimited power. He can do anything we ask or

think. In our challenging times, we need to know His power is unlimited. And then there's Prince of Peace, the assurance that peace can exist in our hearts and that peace will one day be ours in heaven. His reasons to rejoice are simply amazing!

C. Because we have the reasons, how do we rejoice in this season? 1. We rejoice by setting aside our anxiousness. "Do not be anxious about anything." We say, "Wishful thinking," and God says, "Just do it!" Suppose we had a barrel setting here this morning and each person who chose to put their anxious agendas into the barrel would walk away anxiety free. Would you get in line? Because rejoicing is what God wants from us, He says, "Give it all to Me. Right here; right now. Toss it in the barrel and walk away empty-handed. I can handle it; you cannot." As we give it to God, we are free and prepared to rejoice always.

2. We rejoice by recommitting ourselves to God through prayer. "But in everything by prayer and petition, present your requests to God." If you were named "Person of the Year," would you show up for the presentation event? As we look for reasons to rejoice, God says, "Show up. Talk to Me. Lay it all on the table before Me. Give it to Me in prayer. No holding back; no reservations. Give Me everything for when you do, your heart will leap for joy because you have given your burdens to Me." 'Tis the season for rejoicing, and, likewise, 'tis the season for recommitting, for connecting to God in fervent prayer, in prayer that changes lives.

3. We rejoice by finding thankfulness. Did you notice that little, but powerful phrase in our text, "With thanksgiving?" Can fervent, heart-wrenching, soul-empowered prayer, prayer that we truly expect to change our lives occur without thanksgiving? Paul would say, "No. You can't have one without the other." Maybe that's one of the key factors missing in our prayers today. Prayer with thankfulness says, "Not only am I asking, but I'm also thanking You for the answer that You are going to give before it even arrives. I'm so confident that You will do what is best that my heart is overwhelmed with thankfulness as I make my requests."

4. We rejoice by experiencing the peace of God. Paul writes, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." If God is standing as the watchman for our hearts, if He is guarding the gate to our heart, will He allow anything inside that doesn't meet His approval? When we know God is on guard, we know God will fill our hearts with peace. And as that happens, we find ourselves at peace, at peace with our decisions, at peace with our responsibilities, at peace with the expectations of others, at peace with ourselves because it's no longer us, but God who is now in the driver's seat of our lives.

5. Our kids may sing it and we may hear it elsewhere, but this, this isn't a season for jolliness. This is a season for joy, a season where we say or sing from our hearts, "'Tis the season for rejoicing. Christ, our Lord has come. Let His work be done!" Amen.