

Introduction

Indiana Yearly Meeting was held last week, and Susan Morris from Hardin Creek Friends Church gave a meaningful message on *Philippians 4* that resonated with me.

If you have your Bibles, turn with me to Philippians chapter 4.

These are the words of God for the people of God.

(Response: Praise be to God.)

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV), *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”*

Let’s hear it again—Paul’s call that echoes across centuries and suffering: Rejoice!

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

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, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Main Point

Friends, Paul’s words ring out not like a whisper, but like a bell pealing over a weary land:

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

We hear these words and might be tempted to resist them.

“Rejoice? Now? In this economy? In this illness? In this grief? In this war-torn, polarized, anxious world?”

And yet Paul, writing from prison chains—not a garden retreat—issues not a suggestion but a command. Rejoice. Not once, but twice, he repeats himself. Why?

Because joy in the Lord is not dependent on circumstance, it’s not a mood or a dopamine rush. It’s not a denial of pain. It’s the **resilient decision** to root our gladness in **God’s unchanging presence**, not in life’s shifting ground.

Rejoice in the Lord Always... But sometimes we let ourselves get in the way. Rejoicing sounds simple—until you realize how easy it is to miss the moment. Sometimes the very people called to lead in joy and gratitude hesitate...

Illustration: A Pastor's Sin

Yes, that's right; we are not all perfect. A few months ago, I had an opportunity to spend some alone time with God. This wasn't on my drive to work, first thing in the morning or before I went to sleep, or at 2:24 in the afternoon. It was 20 minutes before Bible study last Thursday. One of the striking things about new Christians is that they invariably begin to manifest a different attitude toward things they once thought appropriate. In some of the more blatant forms of evil, such as attitudes about lying, drunkenness, or stealing, they find immediately that their attitude has changed. That is because the Spirit of Christ lives in them, and light can have no part with darkness. Even our attitude toward our selfishness changes. We see how selfish we have been. It looks ugly and distasteful in our eyes, and we want to be free from it.

The Holy Spirit also convicts and causes us to examine ourselves. For instance, Scripture speaks of an "inner" witness. In **Romans 8:16**, Paul says, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." That is one way you can know. There is an inner testimony, a feeling, a sense within produced by the Spirit of God who dwells within you. And it was during this alone time that the Holy Spirit opened my eyes. This is an inward affirmation that we are God's children—a Spirit-born sense of belonging.

That 20-minute period was one of the most serene and tranquil moments I've experienced in weeks or even months. You see, we all lead busy lives filled with work, family responsibilities, and various commitments. Often, we become so engrossed in our routines that we neglect to take a moment to rest in the presence of Jesus. When I finally sat down and opened my heart to God, I was enveloped (wrapped up) in a sense of peace and well-being. Spending that time alone with God was genuinely rejuvenating, knowing His spirit provides comfort, guidance, and unconditional love.

The name of this illustration is A Pastor's Sin... So, what was the Pastor's Sin? Hesitation, curiosity, and missing an opportunity:

My family and I had supper with a friend the evening before at a pizza joint. We were talking and catching up on the most recent events when the food arrived — just sharing a good moment and enjoying each other's company. Now, I am not the world's greatest pray-er. I pray for thanks and guidance, and I usually keep it simple. I don't think prayer is a time to preach to those listening. It is for communication, adoration, thanksgiving, sharing love, and worship of God. So, when the food arrived, I was curious about whether someone would ask to say grace. There was a hesitation on my part to share God's love through prayer with the people I was enjoying life with. I quickly realized that people were still talking, laughing, and reaching for food. I said a quick, silent prayer of thanks by myself, and then joined right in. But being a Pastor makes me accountable (responsible and compelling) to share God's love with everyone.

That night as I laid down to sleep, some thoughts popped into my head, “ Am I a true Christian, or am I a counterfeit? Am I only putting up a front? ” Then I thought of the opportunity lost and the lesson I relearned about the peace and well-being of being with God in prayer from last Thursday. This self-examination caused me to realize that I missed out on sharing God’s love with people I care about. That is my sin — the hesitation, the curiosity of hearing someone else pray, and the missed opportunity for me to be bold in calling for a time to pray. I am sorry, my Lord Jesus.

That’s when it hit me. I had missed the moment. And my heart spoke plainly...

Praying before a meal is not just some ritualistic formula for Christians that we must follow before eating. It’s about recognizing that meals are sacred moments—opportunities to name grace, to give thanks, and to share the love of God with those gathered.

Every moment together is a time to rejoice.

Take Away: Continuing to Rejoice

Joy, for Paul, is not escapism. It’s resistance.

It’s a protest against despair, a holy defiance in the face of death, a discipline that says, “*You may take my freedom, but not my song.*”

The early Quakers called this inward assurance “*the joy of obedience.*” A joy that comes not from everything going right, but from everything being surrendered to the Light of Christ within.

Paul does not say, “*Rejoice in your health,*” or “*Rejoice in your success,*” but “**Rejoice in the Lord.**”

Because *the Lord is near* (v.5), and in that nearness is peace that passes understanding (v.7).

So today, whatever you carry—may you rejoice.

Not because life is easy.

Not because you have answers.

But because **Christ is present**, and His love cannot be shaken.

And if joy feels out of reach today, borrow it from the community of saints around you.

Let someone else’s hallelujah carry you for a while.

For joy, like light, is contagious when shared.

So I say it again—**Rejoice!**

Call to Action

So may we not wait for perfect circumstances. May we rejoice now—in our kitchens, our workplaces, our conversations, our shared meals. May joy be the flavor of our witness.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, help us rejoice—not in ourselves, but in You. Help us be bold in our gratitude, courageous in our joy, and quick to share Your love in the simple moments of daily life. Teach us not to hesitate when the chance to bless is near. Let our rejoicing be a light. Amen.

Philippians 4:4–7 (NIV)

Main Idea

Joy is not escapism—it is **resilient faith** rooted in the unchanging presence of God. Paul commands us to rejoice, not because life is easy, but because **the Lord is near**.

Highlights

- **Joy is not based on circumstances.** It is a response to God's presence.
- **Paul wrote these words from prison**—not from comfort.
- **Rejoicing is resistance:** a holy defiance in the face of despair.
- **We often miss moments to share gratitude or pray aloud**—but every moment can become a sacred one.
- **Even simple gestures—like praying before a meal—can share God's love.**
- **Friends' call it “the joy of obedience”**—a surrendered life to the Light within.

Call to Action

- Don't wait for perfect circumstances.
- Rejoice now—in your kitchen, your workplace, your shared meals.
- Let joy be the **flavor of your witness**.