

## Thanksgiving

*Sermon Road Map*  
Pastor Roger W. Huffman

**Philippians 4:4-9**  
November 24, 2021

### **Learn to choose a life of rejoicing and thanksgiving in Christ.**

- The song proclaims our culture's creed: *It's the most wonderful time of the year. ... It's the hap-happiest season of all.* A holiday season that starts with Thanksgiving.
  - ♦ Starting earlier. Making up for 20 months of pandemic restrictions and precautions
  - ♦ Not everyone feels this. That makes this season even harder for them.
  - ♦ But those who enjoy this holiday spirit wonder, *Why can't it last all year?*
- Paul says it can and should for disciples of Jesus.
  - ♦ Not mere holiday cheer, but **rejoicing in the Lord always**. Yes, always!
  - ♦ This seems unrealistic and silly to many, if not most. Maybe even to you.
  - ♦ Is this hyperbole? Paul is speaking from an ivory tower, separate from real life?
  - ♦ Actually Paul was writing from prison - house arrest in Rome, after experiencing...
- Let's put it this way: Which life will you choose?
  - ♦ A life of rejoicing always, full of prayers and thanksgiving to God or
  - ♦ A life of grumbling, anxiety, fear, sharp wounding words and quips, doubts, being grumpy, pessimistically waiting for bad things to happen
  - ♦ Which would you prefer? Actually, which will you choose?

### **Learn to choose a life of rejoicing and thanksgiving in Christ.**

- ❖ Start here. **Which reality will you let rule you?**
  - What you see and experience
    - ♦ Allowing observable circumstances rule you as the whole picture of reality
    - ♦ Is this something I can control? Can I escape the unpleasant and be safe?
    - ♦ I can only rejoice if I am safe and surrounded by good things - life my way.
    - ♦ I can't rejoice always. Rejoicing depends on my circumstances. Joy ebbs and flows.
  - What you think is happening or expect to happen. Your projected *reality*
    - ♦ Based on experience - maybe a sixth sense
    - ♦ Not happy if I don't have a plan to address the problems I foresee
    - ♦ Allowing not only current circumstances but also project circumstances to rule me
  - The *spiritual* belief in *energy* or *vibes*. *What you put out, you get back.*
    - ♦ Choose negativity - my life will be filled with negative things.
    - ♦ Choose to be positive - positive and good things will come back to me.
    - ♦ What's their basis for rejoicing always? I create my own good by choosing to rejoice.
  - What do all 3 things have in common? A world view with **me** at the center
    - ♦ Rejoicing depends on me having good, pleasant, or fun things to rejoice about.
  - The reality of the Christian: the good news
    - ♦ The gospel empowers us to **see beyond**:
      - the surface - our current circumstances
      - our expectations based on experience, senses, or emotions
    - ♦ To see *the Lord is near* us, keeping us safe, close to him in his kingdom of care
    - ♦ To see Jesus ruling over the universe, working everything out for our good
    - ♦ To know suffering means we are the Father's beloved, disciplined for our growth - to be freed from sin's impure thinking and passions for a harvest of righteousness. Heb 12

- ♦ This reality became ours in Baptism where:
  - The Father claimed me as his own dear child, bringing me into his kingdom of care
  - Pledged to continue to cleanse me of my guilt by the blood of Jesus
  - Gave me a new life and its new view on life through the wisdom of his word
  - Pledged to rescue me from anything that would separate me, to bring me home safe.
- ♦ The gospel is more than a cure for guilt. It's our reality - our new and lasting reality.
- Which reality will you let rule your head, your heart, your mood, your outlook?
- ❖ Let this truth rule your life.
  - *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
  - *the peace of God* - the peace which God has and gives
  - It's rooted in the removal of our guilt and declared righteous in Christ's status with God.
    - ♦ The Spirit delivers this gift, creating living faith - the new self in God's image
    - ♦ This gives us restored fellowship with God - in him and he in us.
    - ♦ What was missing with sin and death is replaced - **wholeness and health in God**
  - This peace goes far beyond relief and tranquility. It *surpasses all understanding*.
  - It stands as a powerful sentinel to our hearts and minds. That surpasses all enemies.
  - Just holding this before our eyes and close to our hearts we *Rejoice in the Lord always!*
  - Those who live in the truth abound with thanksgiving. That's what the good news does.
- ❖ The reality of the gospel fills us *always* as we act on it in the ways Paul advocates.
  - Begin each day, each week, choosing to make *Rejoicing in the Lord* your life.
  - When worry creeps in, take the matter straight to God's throne, based on his promises.
    - ♦ Don't let the negative thoughts or fears color your prayers.
    - ♦ Populate your prayers with thanksgiving - for your caring Lord, the faith growth he is preparing for you through the trial/discipline. - Thanks based on God's promises.
  - The gospel has led us to see sin is bad - a deadly deception. Addictive and destructive.
    - ♦ Choosing to see reality through the gospel calls for us to choose to *think about whatever* God has revealed is *true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, commendable*.
    - ♦ Thinking of these things crowds out the stuff that kills rejoicing. Rejoicing flourishes.
  - Did you notice the one little phrase I passed over?
    - ♦ *Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.*
    - ♦ Greek word translated *gentleness* is rich. It refers to *magnanimity, forbearing spirit*
      - willingness to yield one's legal rights - for the good of another.
      - *Christians would much rather suffer wrong than inflict it. Self-sacrificing like Christ. Where others loudly demand their rights, believers will gladly yield theirs.... In this area, too, all of us have much growing to do. Gentleness is not always evident in our Christian homes, much less in our relationships to our neighbors in the world.*<sup>1</sup>
    - ♦ *be known to everyone* - people know it by experience, our spirit and way of life
      - In this current political climate, remember this word. It's compatible with rejoicing.
    - ♦ *The Lord is near.*
      - This reality puts **everything** in proper perspective.
      - So many things we're tempted to *think are so important* now, will be nothing then.
      - Let this reality - under the gospel - rule your perspective. *Rejoicing always* is not ridiculous. It's our new life in Christ.
  - For Christians Thanksgiving isn't a day or Sunday morning thing. It's a way of life.
    - ♦ Use your hymns to train your focus, voice, and tongue.

## Learn to choose a life of rejoicing and thanksgiving in Christ.

---

<sup>1</sup> The People's Bible: Philippians, p. 90, NPH.