

Joy

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! And as always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us, you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, we are excited today to get into God's Word, but most of all, let this Word get into us and truly transform these hearts. Today's message is called Joy, and we're in a brand new series from the book of Philippians called Rejoice.

This is week number one, and if you want to go ahead and turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter one, that would be great. Now, life is full of moments of rejoicing.

The excitement of Christmas as a kid when you ran out to the Christmas tree to discover those gifts wrapped up for you and your siblings. And as a parent, that can be special to watch your kids light up.

Or what about when you got your license, that first car? Mine was an 88 Ford Ranger for only \$700 that I drove way too hard.

[1 : 10] But I remember the joy I felt flying around in that five-speed truck all around this county. Or when you meet that person who just seems to bring that balance and joy into your life.

When you meet the one and how sweet those early days are, especially when God is in it. And then as the man in the relationship, you propose dreaming of the future.

And that big day arrives where all your friends and family rejoice with you as you say I do. And you begin that life together. Or when that day comes when you rush to the hospital in expectation of a child.

And as you stare into those little eyes, you rejoice in having a child to love. Or what about the joy of when you or a family member chooses to surrender your life to the Lordship of Jesus, getting baptized into Him.

The freedom of knowing that your sins are washed away as your future is secure in Jesus. Rejoice. And guys, we could talk through moments of rejoicing with a job or grandchildren, graduations, retirement.

[2 : 25] Even the joy of knowing that your time is drawing near. And you will get to go with be with Jesus soon. As His disciples, we rejoice in that fact.

And while I just threw out several big moments of life that absolutely cause us to rejoice, I wonder if you and I live lives of rejoicing in the regular day-to-day moments.

Because yes, it's a joy to remember holding each of my three kids in my arms and saying, Hi baby, it's daddy. I'm going to love you with all my heart.

Or even before that, seeing Bethany walk down the aisle in her beautiful white dress and the floodgates, aka my tear ducts, they open up in rejoicing.

What a powerful moment of joy. And yet if you are a born-again believer in Christ Jesus, then you can live a life of rejoicing.

[3 : 26] Daily walking in the joy of your salvation. And there's a reason you've heard me say in these probably first three or four minutes of this message, you've heard the word rejoice, rejoicing, or joy 18 times.

Because I can't be the only one who's listening to this right now who struggles with contentment. I guarantee that I'm not the only one who sometimes feels more like my life is full of anxiety and pressures and anger and insecurity and fatigue and sometimes just blah.

And I want to let you in on a little secret. Daily rejoicing only comes when you have a healthy relationship with and a dependence on Jesus.

And as John 15 teaches us, when he is the vine and we are the branches, not the other way around. When he is the treasure you seek. Sitting at his feet daily in prayer. Letting the Bible transform your thinking as he changes us. Knowing him deeper, day by day and hour by hour. Finding contentment. Not in a religious duty or an occupation or status or material things.

[4 : 42] Because those things will leave you absolutely empty in the end. That's why we're always chasing bigger and better. Have you noticed? You get this car and then you want this one and then you want this one.

That's why when one of the richest men in American history, when John D. Rockefeller was asked, how much money does it take to make a man happy? Here was his response.

Just a little bit more. Because while stuff may give you a dopamine hit in the moment, it will not bring lasting joy when your head hits the pillow at night.

But rejoicing. We're talking true joy. That comes as you daily walk with the Lord. So let's start this new series today as we work our way through the book of Philippians.

It's all about rejoicing no matter our circumstances. And while we may not cover every word of this book in the eight weeks that we have, we're going to focus on eight different passages that truly grab a hold of the Lord's heart, inspiring Paul to write this letter.

[5 : 49] And if you want to go ahead and start turning to the book of Philippians, that would be great. I believe it's the 50th of 66 books that make up our Bible.

So it's going to be kind of towards the end. The books behind it are usually pretty short. And if you're newer to the Bible, don't feel bad about using that table of contents in the front until you learn your way around.

Now, let me set the table a little bit so we can understand the words that we're going to read. As this book opens, we learn that Paul is in chains because of the good news of Jesus.

He's in Rome, but it's not exactly prison as we picture. It's probably better explained as house arrest because we know from both Philippians and Acts chapter 28 that he was guarded by soldiers, allowed visitors, and was free to preach the gospel.

He even appeared to have a private dwelling of some sort. And yet he's not sure what the verdict is going to be for him. If Rome decides that his God is a danger to Caesar worship, which by the way, he absolutely is, then he could easily lose his life.

[7 : 01] And yet Paul takes this opportunity while he's in chains to write to churches that he had started years earlier. These Holy Spirit inspired letters are called the prison epistles.

They make up four different New Testament books, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. And the theme that we see permeate this book of Philippians is this idea of joy, rejoicing regardless of my circumstances.

And as we see Paul's heart and attitude in this book, he doesn't just talk the talk. Man, Paul is walking the walk, rejoicing in Jesus, even in chains, even in suffering, spreading the gospel, even when comfort eludes him and hardships seem to come regularly.

So let's jump into Philippians chapter 1. And before we get into our passage today, let's look at the short greeting from the Apostle Paul, starting in Philippians 1 verse 1.

Here's what he says. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. Now let me just stop there for a second. We live in a culture. It's always been this way since the beginning of the church, but we live in a supercharged culture where we've become this celebrity Christian culture, where pastors no longer just get our respect, but now they're somehow rock stars, okay?

[8 : 37] And we hold them up on these pedestals. And I can't tell you how many pastors that I have really admired over the years who have great doctrine, who preach fantastic sermons that help me to grow.

And some of these heroes of mine, for whatever reason, they bought their own press, and they have had some great crashes because you were never meant to be a celebrity as a pastor, as a Christian.

And yet here's Paul saying, listen, I am a sinner saved by grace, and I just want to be faithful to Jesus. He introduces himself as a servant of Christ Jesus, not a celebrity, a servant.

And then it says this, to all of God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.

Now that word overseers is another word for elder. So those who are in charge of the preaching and teaching, of prayer, of protecting the church, of shepherding the church, those who are kind of the main leaders overseeing the church.

[9 : 49] And then deacons were those hands-on servants who are right there on the front lines leading different ministries within the church. And then verse two says, grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so you just thought that was a simple greeting, huh? But hey, if you're a note taker today, one way you can always see our outline of our notes is you can go to the YouVersion Bible app, Y-O-U version Bible app.

That is a absolutely free download that you could probably download pretty quick right now. The YouVersion Bible app under the menu under events. And then you can click on our church, First Christian Church of Greensburg, Indiana, and you can see the outline.

So I want to point us to three things that this passage just lays out before us today, okay? And here's the first thing. Living in joy requires thankfulness.

It requires me to be thankful. Now, I like how someone once said this. They said, gratitude is the attitude that sets the altitude for living.

[11 : 02] Now, let's see how the Apostle Paul actually says this in Philippians 1, 3, and 4. He says, I thank my God every time I remember you.

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. That word thank in the original Greek is the word eucharistio, which is where we get the English word eucharist.

We often in our church call it communion or the Lord's Supper, but more liturgical and Catholic churches often call the taking of the bread and the juice.

They call that the Eucharist, okay? So that's another name for communion. And the reason that word is used is because communion is a time where we are thankful for Christ's death on the cross as he gave his innocent life for our sinful ones.

But in this context, Paul is showing his gratitude for God's church, saying that in his prayers for them, he's praying with joy. And I hope you can see this connection here.

[12 : 07] When you are a thankful Christian, you'll have no problem seeing the blessings of God in your life, rejoicing, even when your circumstances may not be perfect.

You know, I'll never forget going to visit my mentor in the hospital. This was probably around 2012. And one day he was fine in his early 60s, known as the Energizer Bunny of ministry.

And the next day he has a lung issue where he can't even walk to the mailbox. He ended up getting a lung transplant that lasted about a year or two before he passed.

But even before that, when he was in the hospital, Bethany and I went to visit him. And as we walked in worried about our friend, all he was concerned about was how we were doing.

And for probably 45 minutes, in sort of a whisper, because he couldn't really get his breath, he asked all about the church that we were at at the time, how things were going.

[13 : 10] He already knew a lot about that ministry and just some rough stuff we had gone through. So he spent that time simply encouraging us, even though he could barely breathe. And he really reminded me a lot of the Apostle Paul, who, as he wrote Philippians, was in chains with the potential to be executed for his faith in Jesus.

And listen, he's not complaining, not whining, not worrying, not slandering those who are going to decide his fate. He is focused on everyone else, giving thanks and overflowing with joy.

He's remembering God's faithfulness through the amazing work God has done in the church in Philippi that Paul and Silas were able to start on their second missionary journey.

And while they were planning to go to a place called Bithynia, the Holy Spirit actually redirects them to this area where they come to Philippi. And the first convert there was a lady named Lydia, whose hospitality and generosity were an absolute blessing to Paul.

And then there was a young demon-possessed girl who brought good money to her owners through fortune-telling, okay? And as Acts 16, 16 shares, Paul actually cast that demon out of her and set her free.

[14 : 29] And then because he just cost her owners their business money from fortune-telling, they had him thrown into prison where he and Silas worshipped through an earthquake, leading the Philippian jailer to Christ.

Those were the first families in the church at Philippi. And Paul is rejoicing in how God has continued to work in them and through them. And the church has grown. He even rejoices in the church's kindness and gifts that have kept him going in his ministry. So listen, when you and I are tempted to get frustrated by things not going the way we want, when we're enticed to grumble, be like Paul.

Choose to see the blessings that God has lavished on your life and even what he can do in those trials that you walk through. And I'll tell you, when we take time every day to intentionally count our blessings, thanking the Lord in every situation, we will discover the joy of our salvation.

Because what did we just learn in the nine weeks of studying Genesis there in Joseph's life? We learned that God is moving in those circumstances that may seem crazy to us.

[15:43] God is working for our good and for his glory. So we can rejoice knowing that he's got it under control. And I really like how Hebrews 12, 28 and 29 put this.

It says, therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, I love that, let us be thankful. Let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and all for our God is a consuming fire.

And if you want to be a person who rejoices in life, start with being a thankful person. Start with scheduling time every day to just give God praise for all those blessings that he continues to shower on you and your family.

And then second, living in joy requires partnership. It requires partnership. Now the churchy word for that is fellowship.

And I like the simple definition that I've heard. Fellowship is just two fellows and a ship going the same place. Go in the same direction, okay? So we might as well, if we're going to be in the same boat, we might as well do life together as God's word teaches us to lift each other up.

[16:59] Be that support system in the good, in the bad. And now let's look at our passage here at Philippians 1, 4 and 5. And I'm going to read verse 4 just so that we can have a little context, but we're going to focus in on verse 5 here.

Here's what Paul says. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. Now watch this. Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

One of the greatest joys in your Christian life is partnership. First with God, knowing that you have been washed white as snow, partnering with him to share the message of hope with others, the good news of Jesus to those who desperately need it.

And how cool is it to see the Lord moving among this church family like he has? So many Sundays when everyone else is gone from this building, I will just pause and I'll say, wow, God, you are awesome.

Thank you for using broken vessels like us to share your hope, seeing lives transformed by you. You know, it's the greatest thing in the world to be on team Jesus.

[18:17] And then the other part of that Greek word, koinonia, that means partnership, the other part of that word is with other believers. We are designed to partner with one another.

I truly believe, just having been in the church for a couple decades now as a leader, I truly believe that 50 to 75% of Christians absolutely miss out on having healthy biblical relationships with other believers, with those who are redeemed by the blood, with those who want to grow in their understanding and maturity in Christ, who want to pursue to be more like Jesus, hopefully just like you do.

And I'll never forget a story that I shared a couple years ago, but you know what? It's too good not to share again. There was an elderly lady who lived by herself and she was starting to have trouble doing some basic chores.

That happens to everyone. And she just so happened to have a young man, probably mid-20s, that moved in right next to her. And when he saw her getting groceries out, he'd run out and he'd carry them in for her.

He'd even pick weeds from her landscaping. He would mow the yard for her each week. And anything that broke, he would do his very best to try to fix. And she was just so impressed with this respectful, kind young man.

[19:36] And one day after she thanked him with a pie, she asked, well, how did you become such a fine young man? And that's when he said, well, ma'am, when I was a boy, I had a drug problem.

And she said, no, not a nice young man like you. And he said, yeah, I had a drug problem. My parents drug me to church on Sunday morning.

They drug me to their small group on Friday night. And they drug me to youth group on Wednesday where I gave my life to Jesus and found a support system. I was drug to all the right places.

And it's the gospel that's changed me and made me who I am today. You know, Hebrews 10, 24 and 25 put it like this. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Now watch this warning. Not giving up meeting together. Man, so many Christians just don't see the value in being together in church and even those small groups of people in the church who get together and support each other.

[20 : 46] He says, not giving up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day approaching. Church, here's the reality.

We need each other. It's that simple. And when you read like the book of Acts, when you read the book of Acts and you see the example of the early church, they wouldn't dare have done life on their own.

They knew that wouldn't be in their best interest. It's such an American idea that we are these lone rangers even in our faith. But the early church truly formed a partnership with one another in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They did life together. And you know what? For those of you who just listen each week here on the radio, one thing we have recently done in our church is we have grown to the point, we have three services on Sunday.

We have an 8 o'clock, a 9.30, and 11. Our 9.30 and 11 have grown to the point where we have pretty much run out of seats for people to have in our main sanctuary.

[21 : 56] So what a great problem to have, right? God has just been blessing things in incredible ways. And so starting this Sunday, we are moving over to the Family Life Center gym for worship services.

And I have said to the church family, because we love our sanctuary, of course there are a lot of great memories that are attached to it. And I told them, listen, I know this is hard for all of us, but the reason we can make that move is because we see the big picture of our mission to help people belong to, believe in, and become like Jesus.

The reason we can do that is because these buildings are not the church. They are wonderful blessings that we've been given and hopefully have stewarded well.

But if you look around you, when you sit in a church service, if you look around you at those faces that sit beside you, you are looking at the church, the body of Christ.

And I love this anonymous statement that I read this week. It says, this is my church. It is composed of people just like me. It will be friendly if I am.

[23 : 07] It will do a great work if I work. It will make generous gifts for many causes if I am generous. It will bring others into the fellowship if I bring them in.

Its seats will be filled if I fill them. It will be a church of loyalty and love, of faith and service if I who make it what it is am filled with these things. Therefore, he says, with God's help, I dedicate myself to the task of being all these things that I want my church to be.

So, let me encourage you. True rejoicing in Christ is found when we are thankful people, when we are partnership. We are in partnership with the body of Christ.

Doing more than just slipping in and slipping out, but instead building relationships that strengthen one another for the glory of God. Encouraging one another, praying for one another, helping one another, serving one another, and even getting in each other's grill when one of us has gotten off course.

Because that's true love, and that's partnership. And then the last thing I want you to see today, living in joy requires discipleship. It is absolutely crazy how some have watered down what it means to be a Christian when the Bible is so very clear about the commitment that we're making to follow Jesus.

[24 : 32] But if you're around these people enough, you'll hear things said like, well, I prayed a prayer or got dunked in the water when I was nine, so man, I'm good to go, even though I live like the devil now.

Or, I come from a family that had five preachers in it. If that don't get me into heaven, I'm not sure what will. Or I give \$10,000 to the church every year. That's got to be my meal ticket. Or I go to church twice a month and even throw in an amen to try to make the preacher feel better about himself. And yet, we're not saved. The Bible teaches us, especially in Romans, we're not saved by any good deeds because our good deeds are like filthy rags. But only, we are saved only by the grace of God through our faith that always bears fruit in our lives. Here's what Jesus said in Luke 9, verse 23, when he was talking about, when he's talking to his disciples and to the crowd about what it truly means to pursue the heart of God. He says, whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. See, this picture of what a disciple was in the first century is sobering to me because it truly calls me to follow Jesus with all that I am.

[25 : 51] And when he called his disciples, they left everything and they followed him for three years, learning, growing, being changed more and more into his image. And setting Judas aside for a moment, all but one gave their life sharing the message of Jesus. And listen, John, the one who wasn't killed for his faith, sure did suffer for the sake of the gospel. So as we come here looking at Philippians 1, 3 through 6, we see joy in this idea of discipleship. All discipleship means is just growing more and more every day into the image of our Savior, letting him purify us, getting rid of that junk that holds us back so that we can truly walk in his joy. So let's go ahead and read this whole passage and we're going to focus in on verse 6. Paul says, I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Now here's where we're going to focus. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[27 : 09] As beautiful as it is to see God's salvation, to see someone repent of sins, believing on Jesus, surrendering their life to him through baptism, what a glorious day that is.

But that's just the start. And he's not only the God of your salvation, but he's also your Lord who began that great work in you. And listen, he's not done with you yet. And if you and I will let him, he will carry it on to completion until that day comes when you stand before him receiving the most amazing inheritance possible. So church, as Paul starts off this book that's all about rejoicing and the hope you have in Christ, he doesn't waste any time making it known that joy comes with the proper ingredients. A heart that counts our blessings in thankfulness. A passion to partner with the Lord and your church family for the sake of the gospel and to even have that support system that we all need in this tough life.

[28 : 13] And you know what? That commitment to growth, that is so important as God is daily transforming these hearts more and more into the image of Jesus so that we can walk more and more in his unstoppable joy.

You know, last Sunday I got done preaching at the 11 o'clock service and I went back to my assigned seat. I'm kidding because you know how we all are. We like to sit in the same place, right? And behind us sets two families, a mother and a son and then the mother's oldest daughter and she has a family of her own. She has two kids and a husband there with her. And I just reached back and I just tickled this nine-year-old baby named August on the belly and he smiled real big and he let out a laugh. And what a joy it was when I was supposed to be paying attention to the communion meditation, I kept tickling this almost nine-month-old little guy hearing him belly laugh and it was the most contagious thing.

[29 : 16] And you know what? If we can't laugh in the church, then man, there's a real problem. So let me ask you this as we close. When's the last time you belly laughed?

When's the last time you truly rejoiced in your life and the joy of your salvation? When's the last time you counted those blessings from God and chose to walk every day rejoicing in the fact that hey, my God loves me.

He died for me. He has saved me as I've given my life to him and he will carry it all on to completion when I someday stand in his presence.

Church, one mark of a follower of Christ is that they know how to rejoice. We should be the most joyful people in the world because we have Jesus.

So I want you to say this word with me. The word is rejoice. Rejoice. And no matter where you are in your car, if you are at home, whatever you're doing, at work, wherever, I want you to yell out this word and make people around you think you're crazy.

[30 : 22] Okay? Are you ready? The word is rejoice. Say it with me on three. One, two, three. Rejoice. Because that's what we can do in Jesus.

Pray with me. Father, we are so very thankful for just how good you are. You are so very faithful. So good.

We worship you today. Thank you for your word. Let it stir our hearts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Hey, real quick, I want to give you this invitation today. If you have more questions about your faith, about the church, you can connect with us.

We are First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. My name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here. And you can call us at 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com. Hey, God bless you. Have a great week.