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[0:00] Amen. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So there was a poll released earlier this year that found that in the year 2020, Americans are the most unhappy they have been in the past 50 years.

Let that sink in for a minute. The need for joy and contentment are basic to our humanity. We all look for joy and contentment, don't we?

The question that we have to ask ourselves is this. Are we looking in the right place for joy and contentment? If we are the most unhappy that we have been in 50 years, what might that suggest to us?

It might suggest that we are looking for joy and contentment in the wrong place. I don't know about you, but it seems to me that the year 2020 has been a bit of a rough one. What do you think?

[1:15] But I think that part of the reason for that, not all of it, but part of the reason, is that the earthly things that we look to for security have been much more uncertain.

The economy has taken a hit. Our usual habits have been disrupted. It has been a rough year for satisfaction in things of this world. And let's be honest, as believers, we are not exempt from that temptation to look for joy and to look for contentment in earthly things, are we?

That temptation is always there in times of prosperity or in times of hardship. The temptation to look for joy in all of the wrong places.

This year has just caused us to realize, in a new way, that putting our trust in things of this world will always disappoint.

So what's the secret to lasting joy and contentment? Joy and contentment that don't change with our circumstances. Well, I think we see that question answered in this morning's reading from Philippians.

[2:27] Remember, the Apostle Paul was writing from prison, and he's talking about being content in all things.

How and why? How do we be joyful and content in all things? That's what I want us to think about together this morning. Well, what's the first thing we see in this morning's reading?

What do we see as an instruction that leads to joy? Well, picking up in verse 4, if you would like to look there with me, we read this. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I will say rejoice. So what's the secret to joy? Step 1. Look for joy in the right place.

Where is the right and the only lasting place to find joy? Well, the answer is clear from our text, isn't it? In the Lord. Doesn't the Christian of all people have every reason to rejoice at all times?

[3:36] We have the Lord, and that makes all the difference. So the thing that every human being is looking for, the thing that our hearts look for, the thing that we are created for, whether we realize it or not, is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

And that is what we as Christians have. The thing that our hearts were created to find our highest joy in is ours in Christ Jesus.

We have God as our loving Father, that relationship that we were created for through our adoption as His children in Christ. That means also that we can be confident that all things, that means all things, will work together for our good, because our God watches over us in such a way that not a hair can fall from our heads, apart from His will.

And all things must work together for our eternal good. In addition, we have Christ as our Savior. What does that mean?

It means that our sins are forgiven. It means that all of our failures, however awful they may have been, have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

[4:55] It means that He has taken our sins on His shoulders and put them as far from us as the East is from the West. That means that right here, right now, we can be assured that we have passed from death to life.

That we will indeed glorify God and enjoy Him forever. That our place in heaven is secure. Why else should we rejoice in the Lord?

Well, if that's not enough, as Christians, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, transforming us from the inside out, praying for us when we don't know how to pray.

And that means that no matter what this life throws at us, we are never alone. So I wonder at all then, that the Apostle Paul tells us to rejoice in the Lord at all times.

The greatest gift in the universe is ours in Christ Jesus. And it is a gift that the changes and the chances of this life can never take away from us.

[6:07] Being in Christ is the only way to true and lasting joy and contentment. Yet we sometimes fall back into looking for joy and contentment in the wrong places, with the wrong attitudes.

Anyone ever been there? Yes, I have. What happens when we do that? Well, I think we see what some of the symptoms of that problem look like in what Paul says next in our text.

First, if we are not focused on our joy in the Lord, if we are not rejoicing in the Lord, we can quickly become unreasonable.

Paul says this, Let your reasonableness, or gentleness, be known to everyone the Lord is at hand. So it's a known fact of human nature that discontentment and a lack of joy has a way of breeding grumpiness.

Doesn't it? Just a few verses prior to our passage, Paul had directed two women in the Philippian church who had been at odds with each other, Euodia and Sentyche, to be reconciled.

[7:20] When we don't keep our focus on the Lord, when we don't look for our joy in the Lord, what happens to us? One thing that happens is that we become unreasonable. We become harsh instead of gentle.

It's like me when I'm hungry and I'm focused on the rumbling in my belly instead of my joy in the Lord. My reasonableness and gentleness are not my most obvious traits in that situation.

Confession time, guys. But that's what happens more generally than that when we look for our security and our joy and our contentment outside of Christ.

We don't have to let worldly motivations drive us and drive us to harshness when we realize that the Lord is at hand, when we realize that the Lord is with us, when we realize that the Lord is coming again soon and that all of the worst struggles of this life will look very different to us in light of eternity.

What else happens when we forget to rejoice in the Lord at all times? Worry is what happens.

[8:38] Worry creeps in easily, doesn't it? It has a way of doing that. Paul goes on, Paul tells us not to be anxious about anything, and that is important because we're tempted to worry about just about everything, aren't we?

Doubt, anxiety creep into our minds. We hear that inner voice that says, it's not going to be okay. But here's the thing.

As Christians, we have that assurance that no matter what life throws at us, when it's all said and done, we're going to be okay. We know how the story ends.

We've read the last chapter of the book, haven't we? And we know the one who was on the throne, and we call him Father, and he calls us his beloved sons and daughters.

We have two great assurances, brothers and sisters, when we are tempted to worry. The first is this. Our God is sovereign. He reigns over all things, and his purposes for us will never fail.

[10:08] The second assurance is this. This God who is on the throne loves us with a never-ending, unfailing, and undying love. So instead of worrying, we can rest.

We can tell our loving Father from grateful hearts what our requests are, knowing that he is able to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Instead of worrying, we can rest in the peace that comes from God in Christ, which is the only peace that never fails.

The only peace that lasts. We can focus our hearts and our minds on the peace of Jesus. Paul continues.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.

[11:29] So let's think about the implications of that. It is really easy to fill our minds with garbage, with things that are untrue, things that are dishonorable, things that are impure, and things that are unlovely.

It's easy for that to happen, isn't it? And that's what tends to happen when we draw our focus away from rejoicing in the Lord. Because this fallen world presents no shortage of dishonorable, untrue, impure, and ugly things for us to fill our hearts and minds with.

We don't have to look very far to find it. We can fill our minds with all kinds of dark things, and what happens? Happens with worry, too.

Those things go on repeat. And they play over and over in our minds. So we're stuck in a place of negativity.

That's why we must always remember to rejoice in the Lord and to look to Him for our contentment and our peace. Where do we find lasting joy?

[12:47] We find lasting joy in the Lord and in Him alone. What difference does that make?

It makes all the difference in the world, doesn't it? Look at Paul's example. He's writing from prison. He's on trial for his life. And here's what he says.

I've learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low. I know how to abound in any and every circumstance.

I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him through Him who strengthens me. What's the secret?

The secret is finding our contentment in Christ. That's the secret to being content in all circumstances.

[13:58] Being brought low, abounding, facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. In Christ, we can face any of those things with peace and contentment, the kind of peace which this world cannot give.

May we say with Paul, I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Now I just have to say this verse is often misapplied. Paul is not saying that if we believe in Jesus, then we can pull ourselves up by our bootstraps.

Paul isn't saying that if we believe in Jesus, every dream we have will come true as if we wished upon a star. It's not like Paul is saying that because he has Jesus, that means if he sets his mind to it, he can run a marathon while he's chained in prison.

He is saying that having Jesus, he has joy, peace, contentment, no matter what. Brothers and sisters, may that be true of us too.

In all circumstances, may we be content in Christ. Christ Jesus is the answer. Jesus is our hope. Jesus is our joy.

[15:19] Jesus is our peace. Jesus is our strength. And Jesus is our great reward. And Jesus never fails us.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.