

ALL AGE - Rejoice in the Lord

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Preacher: Paul Dudley

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 30th of January 2005. The preacher is Paul Dudley.

His sermon is entitled Rejoice in the Lord and is based on Philippians chapter 4 verses 1 to 7. Be seated. Well, I wonder if all the kids want to come up the front. Or any adults as well if you really want to. I'm not going to stop you. Oh, good. Sit on the floor there.

That's the way. You got your ballerina bag? That's good to hear. Well, it's lovely to see you here. Do you know this is my last service here for Olivia and Georgie and for Caitlin and Michelle and myself. It's our last service today, which is very sad.

[1 : 08] Do you know what? It's Scruff's last service too. And he's been getting things ready and organized. He's going to come with us. Oh, here he is. Oh, hello, Scruff.

I haven't got him on a stick, Paul. Yes. Oh, do you want to say hello? How about we all say hello? Because we're all very excited. We all say one, two, three. We say hello, Scruff. One, two, three. Hello, Scruff. Hello, everybody.

It's a bit weak. Yeah, Scruff. Scruff? Yeah? Is that one of the church's good tablecloths? Well, in a manner of speaking.

Just put it down a little bit lower, okay? Where's Paul sitting? Right. Scruff. Very sad. He is. Very sad. I wish you hadn't brought it up, Paul.

Yeah, yeah, I know. It's very sad, Scruff. But we had a great time. Oh, we had the holiday program. We had a great time at the holiday program. And it's been very, very...

[2 : 07] I've been thinking a lot about it. You've been thinking about it? I've been thinking a lot about the holiday program. You've been thinking about the holiday program? I have. Yeah, and what have you been thinking? I've been thinking that we learned a lot. We did learn a lot. And we've got a video.

We've got a video? We've got a video. We're going to show some of the holiday program. That's exactly right. Oh, that sounds exciting. Let's have a look then. I hear it's been tweaked. Okay, let's have a look. I've played guitar for a few years.

I just wanted to try it to band. So, here we go. We formed a band. What do you think?

I like the hairstyle, but... It's not what we're looking for. Sorry. It's a note from me.

Oh, you're beautiful. You're fantastic. You've got so much talent, but... We're kind of looking for a puppet. It's all in slow motion.

[3 : 11] Another turning point
A fork stuck in the road
Time grabs you by the rest
To ask you where to go
So make the best of this task
And don't ask why
It's not a question
But a lesson learned in time
It's something unpredictable
And in the end is right
I hope you had the time of your life
So take the photographs
And still frames in your mind
Hanging on a shelf
In good health and good time
Tattoos and memories
And asking on trial

For what it's worth
It was worth all the while
It's something unpredictable
It's something unpredictable
I hope you had the time of your life
It's something almost – ■■■-i-i-i-i-i
Amor ring, you are you
It's something unpredictable, but in the end that's right
I hope you at that time of your life
I hope you at that time of your life

I hope you at that time of your life
I will be able to tell you about that
And I think that one of us needs to stay behind and tell people
What do you mean? Well, people need to know and one of us has got to tell them
You're going to stay here.

I'm going to stay. Oh. Oh, no. Well, Scruff, this is very sad. You don't have a hanky, do you? I do.
Hang on. This is very sad.

Oh, this is very sad. You've got a bit of a hanky there. Here we go. Oh, come on. Thanks. All right. Oh, this is not one of the tablecloths again, is it? Again, in a manner of speaking.

[6 : 20] It could be. Scruff, this is very sad. You want to stay? I mean, this is a great thing to do, to stay here and tell the kids about Jesus. That would be a great thing. You sure you really want to do this?

Yes. Oh, Scruff. Well, that would be lovely. That would be a great thing knowing that you're here. That's very sad. Can I have a bit of that hanky, Paul? You can have a bit of hanky too. Here you go. Here you go. Oh, Paul. Oh, that's okay, Scruff. Oh, dear. I don't have a back.

Well, Scruff, I guess that's very sad. But do you know what, Scruff? I think I should leave you some advice. Yeah? Yeah, I think I should leave you some advice, Scruff. I was just going to ask you about that.

I knew you were. Because I wrote it. Yeah, that's right. It's handwritten, though. The Bible passage today has got some great advice, which I think would be really good for you to know about when you're staying here telling the parents and the kids about Jesus.

[7 : 21] Oh, that would be great, Paul. I think it's really great. That would be great. What's it say? Well, the first thing it says here, it says, see, Paul, who's writing this letter, he's writing this letter to his friends in a church, and he wants to encourage him, and he talks about how he loves him, but he says, stand firm.

Paul? Yeah. What does that mean? Well, do you know, when I was thinking about standing firm, who's ever been in a big storm where the wind's blowing, and there's thunder, and there's lightning? Imagine being on a boat where you're on this boat, and the waves are crashing, and it's going up and down the wind and the rain, and it's so scary. It's so blowing everything.

But then the captain, he yells out, stand firm. His strong voice that tells all the crew and everyone to hang on, hold on, not to give up, to keep on going to the very end.

So, Struth, we need to stand firm. It must be difficult living in a stormy place like Philippi or Geelong, but I think I've got just to think.

[8 : 30] Well, I wonder what he's got. You wonder too? I wonder too. Let's have a look. What have you got there? Hey. Where's the button going? There.

Hey. Look at that. Look at that. See? It's an umbrella for the storm. You were talking about the storm. Not real storms. I'm talking about the storms of life. You see.

Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Do you know, Scruff, I meant, like I was talking about figuratively. Look, what I mean is, do you know, sometimes boys and girls, we have a great relationship with Jesus, but do you know what?

Sometimes there are some things that take us away from being God's friend. Things that can distract us. Things that are like the storm that can make us get unstuck and get scared.

But there are things like that that can get us unstuck from Jesus. So, I don't need the umbrella. No, you won't need that. Far. But, Paul. Yeah. You're saying that things could get us unstuck.

[9 : 33] Yeah. But we weren't at the holiday program that Jesus is our best friend. That's right. What could get us unstuck? Well, do you know, the passage today tells us about some of those things.

The first thing is, the first thing we've got here in a couple of verses, talks about having arguments. Now, who's had an argument in the last week with their brother or sister? Yeah, I thought so, Joshy. Yeah. Oh, there's Emma, yeah. Do you know, there are lots of little arguments that we have, but the Bible tells us in today's passage that we ought not to have arguments and fights, but we ought to work for the same goal of living to please God.

So, Scruff, that's the first thing is, we ought to, if we want to stand firm, make sure that we struggle together to actually get things right and head in the right direction.

And not have fights. Yeah. I've got it. Hang on a sec. Hang on a sec. He's got it. I wonder what he's got this time. Bear with me. Sure. Or dog with you.

[10 : 32] Dog. Please, don't do that. Time to do it. On.

No. Same. Name. Oh. Oh. Paul, this is Grunch's teddy bear.

You were the one who took it. You're being having a bit of an argument with Grunch. I don't understand why you've got the tape on your mouth. Let me just... What's with the tape?

So I can't argue with people, Paul. I mean, he took my bone. Yeah, I know. But if I had tape on my mouth... I think that you and Paul should get together with Grunch. And get together and try and

sort this out.

But Paul doesn't like dogs. Boom, boom.

[11 : 37] I'm left speechless. Just follow the script. Sorry, Paul. Well, no, look.

I think Paul will make sure... Because it's important. Because see, Paul here says that you should actually get together with someone and sort these problems out. So this is the first thing. We need to sort out our problems so that we can listen and follow what Jesus is saying.

That's great advice. That's a great advice. Now, you remember that one. Okay, what else? The second one says here, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. We need to rejoice.

That's what we need to do, Scruff. Paul? Yeah? How can we rejoice? You're leaving. I'm staying. It's going to be a busted up partnership. It just...

Here. Blow your nose. You all right? Do you know what? Thank you. Do you know what, Scruff? It is sad that we're going.

[12 : 35] And do you know what? There are lots of things that are very sad and very hard in life. But do you know what? We can actually keep on rejoicing even in the midst of sadness. Do you know why? Because Jesus loves us and cares for us and always will.

And boys and girls, we've got a great place that we're going to, heaven. And that means we don't have to worry about anything. So there you go, Scruff. There's the next thing. We need to rejoice always.

Now, boys and girls, here's another one. This one is for everyone listening carefully. Okay. It says here, let your gentleness be known to everyone.

We need to be gentle. What are you doing, Scruff? Are you trying to be gentle, are you? Am I convincing?

Well, you look like a bit of a wimp, actually. Isn't that what being gentle means? Being a wimp? Being a wimp. No, no, no, no, no. Being gentle here means that we don't look to our own interests, but we look to the others.

[13 : 41] We care for other people. We don't do what we want to do, but we do what is best for other people, like Jesus did. That's what we need to do. So it's not being a wimp. It's not being a wimp.

It's not about being a wimp. It's about caring for others. Oh. Got it? Oh. Right, now, hang on. Now, there's another couple of things here, Scruff. Yep. The last one here, don't worry.

Even when things are going chaos and people are walking all around you, don't worry. Don't panic. Don't panic, okay? Don't panic, everyone.

Don't panic. Are you panicking? Don't panic, right? Don't panic or worry. But, Paul. Yeah? It's going to be dark and you're going to be gone all these spiders and snakes and all the rest of it and I won't know what I'm doing.

Ah! Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hey, whoa, whoa. Ah! Oh. Don't panic. Scruff. Scruff, scruff. Hey, hey. Listen. It says here, don't worry, but in everything, pray to God.

[14 : 42] Oh. God, listen to us all the time, wherever we are. And you know what? If we pray to God, that says here, there'll be a great peace. In our lives.

So there you go, Scruff. There's some great advice that I've got for you. It's from the Bible. From the Bible. Now, you remember those things, don't you? Now, Scruff, see all these kids here? See all these little kids here?

Oh, there's Josh there. Yes, I know, Josh. And there's some Misho kids there. And, oh, there's some Tainch kids there. Oh, the Dudley kids are coming with me, though. Oh. Yes, they are. Although they wanted a holiday with Paul Barker. Can I go too? France, I think they said. See all these adults out here, Scruff. Have a look at them all. Do you know what? I love them very much. And I care for them very much. So, Scruff, what I want you to do is make sure that they keep on keeping on. Okay? You've got to keep on telling them to never give up.

[15 : 46] And to follow the advice. And to follow the advice that the Bible tells us. Important things. You think you can do that? Scruff, I'm a little bit worried. Why are you worried, Paul? Well, do you know what?

I think we might need God's help in this. I think you are. So, how about, boys and girls, I pray that both the mums and the dads, and all of you, and me, and Michelle, Olivia, Georgie, and Caitlin, never give up following, never give up following Jesus.

So, let's pray. Father, we do indeed thank you for your great love for us. We thank you that we don't have to worry about anything, that we can be people who rejoice. We pray that we'll be people who are gentle, looking to the interests of others.

Father, we pray that your spirit will help us in these things, that we may never give up, so that we may be together again on that great day in your heavenly kingdom. We pray this in your son's name.

Amen. Boys and girls, do you think you'll look after Scruff for me? Do you know what? I'm not too worried, because I can always make another one when I get up there. I'll have a cousin in Canberra.

[16:51] Yeah, that's right. That's right. Friends in high places. Friends in high places, that's right. Boys and girls, if you want to go back to your seats, I'm going to say goodbye, so say bye-bye. If you go back to your seats, and I think we're going to sing a song again.

See you later, Scruff. See you later, Paul. See you later, kids. In the next little bit. I'm getting used to making farewell speeches, but they don't get easier to make. For the last three years, we've benefited from the ministry of Paul and Michelle Dudley, and enjoyed their fellowship with us at Holy Trinity.

I remember first meeting Paul at the Sydney home of friends of mine when I was looking for a curate, and I was in Sydney interviewing or meeting a few people. And fairly quickly, I think I established that of those that I'd met, he was certainly the person who I thought would best fit what we're looking for here.

One of the difficult aspects of selecting staff is to ensure that they're not like you. Most of us, I think, if we're looking for our sort of assistant minister or whatever, would probably tend towards looking for somebody who's like them.

And to do ministry the way that we would do it, with the same sort of skills, that's not a good thing to do. And I was determined that I wouldn't fall into that trap, so that I would make sure that I found someone different from me.

[18:07] And although, I must confess, it crossed my mind that it was a bad start, perhaps that we actually had the same name. But I realise that that's made it easier for dozens of people here, and it means that no one calls me Phil anymore.

Let alone Hillary. So in looking for someone different, Paul has come to us. He came with a wife and children.

That's different from me. He came with creative flair, an extrovert with expertise with children's ministry in particular, with gifts of hospitality, a willingness to have breakfast with people.

That's different from me as well. An engaging manner, theological thoughtfulness, and an inquiring mind. And he also came with a large rubbish bin. Having said all that, he also came nominally challenged.

That is, he doesn't always remember people's names. That's a bit different from me, I guess. He once told me, not all that long ago, that somebody had said to him that they were going to bring a couple of people to a meeting.

[19:20] He could remember what the meeting was, but he couldn't remember the person who was going to bring the couple of people to the meeting. He said that she was older with grey hair and glasses. So all of you here obviously know who he was referring to.

He also came with what I might call last-minute-ism. Some time ago I had to set him a curfew of midnight on a Saturday night to finish his sermon preparation.

He was up till when? Going on for two o'clock this morning. I was actually up till going on for one o'clock this morning writing his speech. So I'm a bit of a hypocrite in that sort of thing. And I knew that last-minute-ism was one of his sort of characteristics from within a few minutes of meeting him because I think he was punctual, but it was very clear quickly that he still had an essay overdue at Moore College.

Another aspect where perhaps he's a little bit different from me is that he came with a dubious ability with books, bending spines and covers and even, shock horror, losing one of mine.

Two books now. Seriously though, Paul, we want to give thanks to God for the many gifts that he's given you and which you've used so willingly and generously for our benefit here in the last three years.

[20:52] You've led some people to faith in Jesus Christ for the first time in their lives, some who are here today. You've strengthened the faith of many, often in the face of difficulty and adversity in

their lives.

You've encouraged parents and couples to maintain strong marriages and deep love for their children. You've preached faithfully, creatively and engagingly from the scriptures. You've done all this with very good humour, worked well in a team and you've had a Christ-centred desire to glorify God.

You and Michelle have modelled sacrificial ministry and discipleship. For a start, it's not easy to leave a city and state where friends and family are in abundance and to minister in a foreign place. Yet you followed the call of God and me, we're different, to come here for which we're grateful. And personally, Paul, I've learned much from you. You've made me think deeply.

You've made me wrestle with difficult issues. You've helped me analyse my preaching and have, by your words and examples, spurred me on to love and good works. You've been a strategic thinker and helped me be the same.

[21 : 50] There are exactly the sorts of things that a good assistant ought to do. And in addition, you held the fort here admirably while I was on long service leave last year. You've done what Paul urged Timothy to do. You've done your best to show yourself approved by God, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

And for this, I thank you and thank God deeply. Michelle, we also give thanks for you today. Paul's effective ministry would not be possible without your partnership with him, your generosity in letting him serve here, as well as your own significant ministry in hospitality and in the discipleship, mentoring and fellowship of many women and young families here.

And Olivia and Georgina and Caitlin, we thank God for you too, for your fun and your warm contribution to our life at Holy Trinity in the front row at 10 o'clock. Thank you.