

Rejoicing Every Year, Every Season

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[0 : 0 0] Philippians chapter four, verse four. Let me read that key verse one more time. And let's jump into some of these questions about rejoicing and consider, does God want us to be happy? What about heaviness?

What about sadness? What about things when things don't go well? I think there's some important study that we need to do this morning. Scripture says this, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice.

This book of Philippians is a short letter written to a church in a place called Philippi. And it was written in a time when there was actually quite a lot of bad stuff going on in the world in general and within the lives of both the writer and the recipients.

So Paul, the apostle Paul's the writer, and at this time he's in prison, but he's not just in prison. There's other preachers that are out there, you know, other fellow Christians that are kind of like some of us.

We just love to poke fun at each other, right? We just love to irritate each other. There were some preachers out there that were saying, hey, Paul, you're locked up, but I get to be out here preaching. And there were others that were genuinely concerned for Paul, and they were preaching the gospel, and they're saying, hey, let's carry on the mission.

[1 : 0 9] I don't know about you, but that's just irritating, right? If I can't do something, but someone's out there gloating, that's no fun. But that's kind of what was happening to Paul. And he's writing a letter to a church that had some internal strife and turmoil.

In the second verse of this chapter, he speaks directly to two people, Yodas and Syntyche, and says, listen, y'all need to get on the same page. We have the same minds in the Lord.

Apparently there was some tension that we don't know exactly what it was, but they needed to get some things straightened out. And so he writes all of this stuff, and he comes down to verse number four, and he says, rejoice.

Now, when we get to rejoice, it is a command word. It's an imperative in scripture. In fact, he repeats it twice, right in the space of that short verse, rejoice and rejoice.

It's very clearly said that this is something that God desires for us to do, but it's kind of hard to get a hold of. And the first question is, does God really want us to be happy? And even using the word happy, is that the right word?

[2 : 1 2] Because, you know, there's happiness that kind of gets a bad rap. And there's some things that, you know, we've heard said, some things that I've said in teaching the Bible that aren't necessarily very helpful.

Let me give you a couple of these, and you might have heard of these before. God doesn't want you to be happy. He wants you to be holy. You ever heard that said? I've said that.

God doesn't want you to be happy. He wants you to be holy. Now, I think there's a kernel in there that is instructive, right? There's, in holiness, we are set apart for the Lord, and we are set apart from sin.

And unfortunately, there's the things that are our sin and wickedness and evil. At one time, we may have found some enjoyment in them, right? We may have considered them to be happy things to do.

And so we look and say, well, God wants us to be holy. He doesn't want us to be happy. But that's problematic, because God does say that we are to be a happy people. In fact, he says in Psalms that happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

[3 : 20] And so that statement kind of sets these two things in tension, but they're not. Happiness and holiness, they can go right together. It's a weak statement because it sets them at odds, and it ignores the fact that happiness is commanded.

You see, the thing is, when we heed God's call to holiness, when we say, yes, Lord, I will be holy as you are holy, we get a taste for those things that will truly make us happy.

You see, that's the problem with sin, and that's the problem with Satan, and the problem with the world is he's a deceiver, right? And so he desires for you and me to think that those things that are evil, and those things that are sin, will make us happy, will bring us some enjoyment, will bring us some pleasure.

But God says, no, they don't. He exposes them for what they are. They are, they're trinkets, they're worthless, and there is no lasting joy in sin, right?

And that's why he says, holiness, holiness, be holy for I am holy, and holiness is also happiness because sin is deeply unsatisfying, and it's really just like a joy-sucking leech just gets stuck to you and sucks the life out of you.

[4 : 34] That's what sin does. Now here's another statement, okay? Ready? Joy and happiness aren't the same thing. Joy is enduring. Happiness is circumstantial. Now I've said this too, and I think it's well-intended.

However, we're gonna look at some definitions of joy and rejoicing, and the thing is, if we read those definitions, as I was reading those definitions this week, I was like, hold on a second.

These definitions of what it means to be joyful and to be rejoicing, that sounds kind of happy. It really does. It's like, this looks like a pretty happy person.

If you show me a happy person and a joyful person, I think they'll look pretty similar. And so let's look through this and say, okay, what is this thing of rejoicing? What is joy? Is it happiness?

And here's the other thing that I believe is an issue with that statement of separating joy and happiness. If joy is not happiness, then you must not be able to feel happy when you're joyful.

[5 : 32] Are you following with me? If joy and happiness are two different things, then you certainly can't be happy if you're filled with joy. But I don't think that's the case.

I think that's kind of an unhelpful distinction. I regret that I've said that in the past. Let's look at rejoicing. Let me ask you, as we look at these words and we look at their definitions both in dictionaries and in scripture, think with me.

Does this describe a happy person? And I think we'll see that it does. Randy Alcorn wrote a book called Happiness. It's a long book, wonderful book. And he writes this.

There are 2,700 scripture passages where words such as joy, happiness, gladness, merriment, pleasure, celebration, cheer, laughter, delight, jubilation, feasting, exultation, and celebration are used.

2,700 references of happy things. Throw in the words blessed and blessing, which often imply happiness, and that number just goes up.

[6 : 34] He says this. God is clear that seeking happiness or joy or gladness, delight, pleasure, or rejoicing through sin, that's wrong and that's fruitless. It's not gonna get you anywhere. But seeking happiness in him is good and right.

Psalms 144, 15 says this. Happy is that people that is in such a case. Yeah, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Man, if we have God, he's our Lord, he's our Savior, does that not bring at least a little bit of a grin to our face?

Proverbs 14, 21 says this. He that despises his neighbor sinneth, but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he. John 13, 17, Jesus said, if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

And he was speaking about washing one another's feet, serving one another. He says, if you know that this is good, and if you know that Jesus came as a servant, if you do that, you will be happy.

1 Peter 3, 14, one of the places where we see the truth that happiness and suffering can actually coexist. Listen to this. But, and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.

[7 : 54] Chapter 4, verse 14 says, and if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you. All right, so God calls us to rejoicing.

We see that very clearly in Philippians 4, 4. So what is it? Let's work on some definitions. Rejoicing. The Bible sense lexicon says this, rejoice to be cheerful, to feel happiness, or joy.

Old Noah Webster had a good definition. He said, to experience joy and gladness in a high degree, to be exhilarated with lively and pleasurable sensations, to exult, to make joyful, to gladden, to animate with lively, pleasurable sensations, to exhilarate.

Think about those words. Does that describe a happy person? I think it does. You see, rejoicing is throughout the Bible. If we just take the words rejoice, rejoicing, or rejoiceth, you get that 285 times.

One of the first references is where God speaks to the Israelites, to the nation of Israel. And he's talking to them about a feast, literally a seven-day party, where they're going to camp out.

[9 : 06] They're going to enjoy time with their family. They're going to worship the Lord. They're going to sing. They're going to do all these things. And listen to what he says. Leviticus 23, 40. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook, and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

He's basically like, let's go camping. Let's go make ourselves a little survival shelter. That was one of those things that I loved doing as a kid, was like, okay, how can I build this survival shelter? And let me get us one of those foil blankets, and let me go sleep out in the woods in November in Ohio when it starts to rain, and I'm going to have my little campfire, and I'm going to do all these things.

Does anyone want to guess how long that lasted? I made it to like maybe 1130, and I was like, I'm going back inside. That's cold. But he says, listen, we're going to have a good time. They were much better equipped to build their own shelters and sleep outside than I was.

But he says, you're going to rejoice. They rejoiced about generosity. Another good verse for offering devotions, 1 Chronicles 29, 9, where the people are bringing an offering, and David's rejoicing.

They're just excited. They rejoiced with music. They sang and they praised. That is a very strong connection in the Bible, right? That the things that we have been doing, this whole service of singing, of hearing music that is truth-filled and is lifting up the Lord, that is part of rejoicing.

[10 : 35] The children of Israel, they rejoiced in victories that God gave them. Let's look at this. 2 Chronicles 23, 21. I believe we'll have this. We have this in the slides here. 2 Chronicles 23. The people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

Athaliah was a wicked ruler in Israel who just had done terrible things in that nation, and a new king had been coronated, and they had a party.

They had rejoicing. Rejoicing in the Bible in Nehemiah's day was loud. It says that the people, they came together, they heard the word of God, they were obeying God, and they rejoiced, and it says the joy of Jerusalem was heard far off.

That out in that place, you could hear from a long distance the joy and the celebration that was happening in Jerusalem. Rejoicing in the Bible is often accompanied with the word glad.

It often says be rejoiced. Rejoice and be glad. Reading all those, thinking about all those, do you think that happiness is an appropriate description for rejoicing?

[11 : 44] I kind of think it does. There's three really vivid Bible examples of rejoicing that I want to walk us through, and hopefully this will give a sense in your heart and in your soul of what does it mean to rejoice?

You know, I think sometimes we've gone so long and we approach life, I approach life as just drudgery, and it's the grind, and I'm going to get through it, but I don't think that's how God would have us walk through life.

Listen to some of these things. Proverbs 29.2 speaks about rejoicing when there's righteous rulers. Let's listen to this verse and think about it for a second, and I think you'll be able to feel this one in your heart.

When the righteous are in authority, the people do what? They rejoice, right? But when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. When the right person is in charge, and they're leading wisely, and they are honoring God with their decisions, and there's justice being done in our communities, in our country, we say, wow, this is amazing, right?

That's a wonderful thing. But think about the flip side of that. If you've got somebody who's in power, who is not just, who is not wise, who is foolish, who is wasteful, who is ignorant, who is opposed to God, it's just like, man, what in the world is going on?

[13 : 05] Why are things wrong? Why is this person in power? That's an awful thing. Another one, I want to skip, I want to just show you two, let me, this is my favorite one. Proverbs 27, 9.

Now this one is kind of a little, it's a little bit of a strange verse to think about rejoicing, but it gives us just a vivid, vivid picture. Proverbs 27, 9 says this, ointment and perfume rejoice the heart.

So does the sweetness of a man's friend buy hearty counsel. All right, can I ask you to do something real quick? Think with me about one of your favorite smells growing up.

All right? Maybe it was, I was talking with Lauren about this yesterday, and I was like, what's your favorite smell from your childhood? And she said it was Nana's spaghetti. Going over to grandma's house on Sunday afternoon, and Nana has her special spaghetti recipe.

Walking into the room, and there's the tangy sauce, and there's garlic bread, there's a loaf of garlic bread that's cooking in the oven. Just walking into that and just smelling all those things, and it's like, wow, this is the right place to be, and we're going to have a really good meal in just a few moments.

[14 : 13] What's yours? What's your favorite smell, maybe now or growing up? A lot of you are smiling. A lot of you are like, thinking about that, and it's like, I've got some, I got some things that I enjoy.

For me, I tell you, having Ohio, I don't know, it's just northern stuffing on Thanksgiving, that is really good. Dressing is good, cornbread dressing is good, but stuffing, that's where it's at.

I tell you, smelling that, so good. When you put a steak on the grill, that's a smell that rejoices the heart, does it not? When you pull some apple crisp, fresh out of the oven, that's pretty good too, that rejoices the heart.

I tell you, my favorite, probably fresh ground coffee in the morning, that rejoices the heart. Man, you guys are so carnal. You're excited about food. But here's the thing, what you just felt, thinking about those things, is that not rejoicing?

Those things are rejoicing your heart. They are giving you those warm fuzzies. I'm not much of a warm fuzzy person, but thinking about fresh ground coffee, there's something warm and fuzzy going on there.

[15 : 23] That is rejoicing. You see, here's the thing about rejoicing. Rejoicing is not uniquely spiritual. Can I give you a couple verses in the scripture that talk about people who rejoice in wickedness?

The Bible uses that phrase. Judges 16, 23. This is a time when the Philistines, which were like, you know, the children of Israel, it's like they're arch enemies. The Philistines, they got the upper hands.

They got the victory over Israel. And listen to what it says. Specifically, it was Samson. Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their God and to rejoice, for they said, our God, little g, false God, has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.

Think about that. Those people were rejoicing. They were celebrating. They were happy. They were like, our enemy, Samson, that guy that's just been afflicting us and defeating us and destroying us, we got him.

And our false God, he did this for us. Of course, their false God didn't do anything for them. And God's victory was going to be won in the end. But they were rejoicing. They were rejoicing.

[16 : 39] I think this brings us to a really, really important point. Everybody rejoices. We all rejoice. We all know how to rejoice. But we don't always, we're not always very well practiced at rejoicing in the Lord.

And that's the key. Because I think this matter of rejoicing is kind of like faith or worship, right? Everybody in the world has faith. Everybody in the world believes something. But not everybody believes in Jesus. And that's the difference.

Everybody in the world worships something. But not everybody worships our God. Everybody in the world rejoices in something. But not everybody knows how to rejoice in the Lord.

And that's the key to this whole thing. Rejoice in the Lord. Always. And again, I say rejoice. Uniquely Christian rejoicing is knowing how to find happiness.

Knowing how to find joy. Knowing how to, that, that, that, whatever you felt when you thought about your favorite smell and about something wonderful that is just a delight to you, that, knowing how to get that as we are thinking and meditating on and walking with Jesus, that's what this is about.

[17 : 49] Rejoicing in the Lord. Let's back up to verse 1 in Philippians 4. Because what he's going to say is he's going to use a number of things where he says, in the Lord, in the Lord, in the Lord.

Philippians 4.1, Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, and long for my joy and crown, stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. There's a bunch of commands in this passage, and we're going to kind of tie these into rejoicing.

He starts off, he says, stand fast in the Lord. Make sure your life is grounded in Jesus. That's kind of like a prerequisite. If that is not true of your life, if your life is not founded on the Lord, founded on his word, you're probably not going to be able to rejoice in the Lord.

Stand fast in the Lord. Verse 2, I beseech Iodias and beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind, again, in the Lord. We're not going to be able to have right relationships with others unless we know how to stand fast in the Lord and be of the same mind in the Lord.

All of those things are very important. Verse 3 says, I entreat thee also, true Yelkfellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life.

[18 : 57] He looks out and says, listen, collaborate with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Work together with them because y'all are all in the book of life. You know, Jesus talked about that with his disciples.

They were excited about things that were happening in their ministry, things that were happening with Jesus, but Jesus corrected them one time and said, listen, rejoice in this, that your names are in the book of life.

That is like the core of our rejoicing in the Lord. And is it any wonder that he goes right into verse 4 and says, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice. So what should we rejoice in?

Well, we know in the Lord. Let's expand on that for a second. Everything that is in the Lord, his character, his goodness, his power, just the wonder of who God is, that ought to make us happy.

That can make us happy if we learn to get a taste for those things. Everything that is from him, his creation, the good gifts that he gives, those are things that we can be glad in, we can be happy, and we can rejoice in.

[20 : 00] His people, we can rejoice in. It's as we learn to live well with others around us. Would you look with me at verse number 5? This is kind of fascinating that right after rejoice, it talks about relationships.

It says rejoice in the Lord. Now let me tell you, talk to you about how you're going to relate with others. He says let your moderation be known unto all men. And moderation is the idea of not pushed to extremes, but in the middle.

Gentleness we could say. Graciousness. That we're not angry, we're not dismissive, we're not annoyed with others. So here's the thing about moderation.

I think every single person in here knows how to be moderate in your actions towards others. Okay, when the police officer pulls you over on the side of the road, you're probably pretty moderate.

You're probably like, if you're wise, you'll probably say, yes sir, no sir, I'm sorry sir, I didn't realize that sir, right? And you'll have your license ready to go. You know how to be moderate. You know how to act appropriately with the police officer.

[21 : 01] But you may not with those people that are just irritating. But what does he say? Let your moderation that you have, that you know how to use, let that be known to all men.

And where's that come from? That comes from standing in the Lord. That comes from knowing how to, allowing the Lord to shape you and to mold you and to cause you to act properly towards others.

Rejoicing, what do we rejoice in? Psalm 914 is a good one. You might write this down because this is just like, it just goes right, so well. I will rejoice in thy salvation.

I will rejoice in thy salvation. It doesn't get simpler than that. What was it like for God to save you? What was it like for you to be deep in your sin? What was it like for you to be hopeless?

What was it like for you to feel like you're just drowning and there's nothing I can do to fix my mess? And for the Lord to save you and to change your life. There's nothing better than that.

[22 : 00] And I hope that, I think what the, I'm not going to say I hope, I believe what the scripture's telling us is that in our hearts and minds we can go to that point and say, man, he saved me.

His salvation is good and wonderful and call it joy, call it happiness, I'm going to call it happy joy. All right, we're going to get really happy and we're going to get really joyful about what the Lord has done.

Now, I promised you that we'd talk about sorrow and sadness and heaviness, right, because this is, this is great and all, but it might feel, you know, I don't want to be insensitive, right, because for someone to step into your life or someone to step into my life on difficult days and say, hey, rejoice in the Lord, be happy, be cheerful, get glad, right, you might be like, come on, man, leave me alone, right, I am not feeling good, I'm going through a difficult time and you might even be looking at me right now and saying, who do you think you are to tell me that God wants me to be happy?

You might be looking past me to the Lord and saying, hold up a second, God, you're telling me that, you're commanding me, you're telling me that I should be happy, that I should rejoice in you? God, don't you know what I'm dealing with?

You see, the thing is, being happy in Jesus does not mean that we will never feel weighed down. Sorrow and weeping and heaviness and lamentation, like, that's just part of the Christian life.

[23 : 33] hardship, but here's the thing that I want, I believe the Lord would have us to get a hold of. Sorrow and joy, like, sorrow doesn't have to be absent for joy to exist.

Okay? Sorrow doesn't have to be absent for joy to be present and real in your heart and life. Right? And those are those moments that we call bittersweet.

Right? Those are the moments that are hard, but at the middle of it all, we need to be anchored to the Lord.

And that gives some glimmer of hope, even though sometimes it just feels like everything's closing in around us. Rejoicing in the Lord definitely does not mean we become disconnected from reality.

I made the unwise decision to take Lauren on a date to go see the Lego movie. Anyone like the Lego movie? I'm a fan of the Lego movie. Everything is awesome. All right, some of y'all just hate me right now, right?

[24 : 34] Because that's going to get stuck in your head for the next four hours. Emmett, the character, the main character in that movie, he's like this naive, oblivious, just bumbling guy.

He's running around, his favorite song is Everything is Awesome and he's just like, why can't we all be friends? Why can't everything be great? And he realizes that, you know, there's more than just everything is awesome, like there's difficult things that need to be done in the world.

But that is not what rejoicing in the Lord is. You see, being, actually being happy in the Lord is like getting down to the bedrock foundation of what is true, okay?

If you clear away everything else in my life, what is most true about my life? What is most true about my life is that Jesus loves me, he died on the cross for my sins, he saved me, he's preparing a place for me that being absent from this body, as much as I enjoy being here with you all, he says that being absent from this body is to be present with Jesus and that that is far better than anything else that we could imagine or experience or obtain or enjoy in this life.

That is what is most true about my life. If you clear everything else away, that is what's most true. So rejoicing in the Lord is not rejecting reality like, eh, everything's good even though it's like, you know, the walls are falling down.

[26 : 00] It is saying, now let me get down to the core here. Let me get down to the foundation. Rejoicing in the Lord is really just living like all that the Bible says truly is real.

Now that's hard sometimes. I fully agree with you on that. But that's really what it is to be happy in Jesus, in his truth. You know, finding joy also doesn't mean that we don't weep, right?

Because there's also scripture that tells us to weep. One of the worst things I think you could do with this scripture is to go up to somebody who's, you know, got some bad news, somebody who's struggling, somebody who's just down and say, come on brother, come on sister, you need to get rejoicing, right?

You need to get some rejoicing in your life. Because the scripture also tells us to weep with those who weep. Okay? Weep with those who weep. So it's almost like saying, don't go to them with rejoicing.

Go to them and sit down in the ashes and learn how to feel what the other person is going through. And take on some of that weight yourself.

[27 : 12] Weep with those who weep. To the point where their tears start flowing out of your eyes that you know and you can feel even though you're not in the same circumstance, even though you're not facing the exact same thing, but you can be with them in the heaviness and just be there with them and just show them, hey, I'm here and I love you and I'm sorry.

Weep with those who weep. And you know what I find happens? If we go all the way down into the deepest pits and to truly be able to feel that, feel the pain of somebody else, usually right on the other side of that moment, there's an opportunity to say, hey, this is really rough.

I'm sorry. I love you. And you know what? Jesus is with us too. Jesus is with us too in this moment. And he feels it all and he knows it all and he's got you and he loves you.

And then you can maybe over time get to some rejoicing and then you can rejoice with those who rejoice. It's not us just coming in and saying, okay, let's all just set all of our problems aside and let's rejoice and rejoice and rejoice.

But sorrow and joy, sometimes they live right side by side. How does that work? I've not got it figured out. But I think the scripture says, we weep with those who weep, we rejoice with those who rejoice and we can also, we can rejoice in the Lord always because he's God.

[28 : 46] He doesn't change. And there's always something enduring. There's always something durable to be a little happy about because we got the Lord. Philippians 4, 6 through 7 highlights this for us.

He says, listen, be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. What do we do in those darkest places, right? We take our care.

We don't let it consume us, but we bring it before the Lord and we bring our requests and say, Lord, here's my request. I'm trusting you with it. Verse 7 is so wonderful. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

See, when you're in the dark places, please remember that all is not lost, right? Because that is when things really get dangerous, spiritually and in our lives, right?

Is when we say all is lost. Because we know that with the Lord, all is not lost. All is not lost. Would you listen to Psalm 30, verse 5? Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

[30 : 00] There are certainly times when it's just like all we have is weeping, but there's always times after that when rejoicing comes in the morning. So as we come down to the end of this, you know, how do we get a hold of this?

Can we just, can we end there? And I really want to encourage you. Rejoicing. Rejoicing. It is possible. But let's do this.

Let's go back to Philippians 4, 4. He says, Rejoice in the Lord all way. And again, I say rejoice. Can we take that phrase by phrase for a second? He says rejoice.

He's saying, You, put your name in there. Bo, you can rejoice. And in fact, I'm inviting you to rejoice.

I'm calling you to rejoice. And the first thing is you've got to make a decision. Am I just going to stay grumpy? Because let's be honest, sometimes I just don't want to be happy. Right?

[30 : 57] Someone tells me to cheer up. I'm like, get out of my face. Like, I really am just, I don't feel good. I don't like this. So leave me alone for a little while. But the Lord says, Rejoice.

Will you rejoice? Rejoice. And he says, Rejoice in the Lord. In the Lord. I think this is a practice. Right? This is something that doesn't come naturally.

Right? For us to rejoice in the Lord. It comes natural for us to rejoice in good smells. In a steak on the grill. We don't have to rejoice in that. We don't have to be happy about that. But it takes practice and it takes intentionality to say, I'm going to rejoice in the Lord.

What else does he say? Rejoice in the Lord always. Always. Every year. Every season. We can rejoice in the Lord. It ain't easy all the time.

There's weeping and rejoicing and they live together sometimes. I don't know how that works. But hey, rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice. He's pretty emphatic. He's like, listen, I want you to know that all is not lost.

[32 : 01] You can come to me and you can find joy in me. So friend, don't give up hope. Here's what rejoicing looks like. Rejoicing is just not, it's not superficial.

It's not be happy. It's not everything is awesome. It's not selfish. It's not do what makes you happy. It is go deep with the Lord and allow his goodness, his truth, and his presence to flood your heart with gladness.

That's what rejoicing is. And you can get a hold of that this year. Would you bow with me? As we come to this time of invitation and closing, I don't have much more to say, but I do want to encourage you.

There's some in here that you're doing well and you're having a good time and the new year is exciting and you're looking forward to it and it's like, man, this is going to be wonderful. This is going to be great.

I'm excited. Praise God. Learn to rejoice in the Lord. That same excitement, that same joy, that same happiness, that can and should be derived from our relationship with Jesus.

[33 : 06] It might be that you're in here and if you were honest, you'd say, I am not looking forward to another year. If 2024 is going to be like 2023, I don't want anything of it.

All is hopeless. All is dark. I can't see a way out. Friends, I understand that. I have been through some days that are just like that and in those times, I want to challenge you to go to the Lord because in the Lord, there is always hope.

There is always, dare I say, happiness because if you peel everything else away, the thing that is most true if you are a believer is that the Lord is preparing a place for you.

He loves you. He's there. He's with you. He knows you. And He does care. And if nothing else, I think we can rejoice in that.

Please don't give up on hope. There is hope in the goodness of Jesus. You know, friends, what if, you know, there's some places that you can just cut the tension with a knife.

[34 : 25] But what if this place, this church, was always a place where you could just sit down and you could soak up the joy. You could splash about in the happiness that this would be a truly happy place.

It's only going to be that if we learn how to consistently, daily, always rejoice in the Lord. As believers are praying, I want to speak to those that, you know, maybe this thing of rejoicing in the Lord just sounds kind of crazy.

Salvation doesn't hold any happiness for you. This seems like just religious drudgery. But see, the thing is, Jesus is making an offer to you as well.

An offer to rejoice in Him and in His salvation. It might be that you've been ignoring the Lord. He loves you. He's calling you in your sin to turn to Him, to believe in Him, and to call upon Him as your Savior.

And friend, if you'll do that, I cannot promise you, and I will not promise you, that things will just always be wonderful because there will be plenty of hard days.

[35 : 37] But I can promise you that there is enduring, abiding, lasting happiness, joy in the Lord. Father, we come to you this morning, and God, I ask that you would, you would just work in hearts and lives.

That you'd encourage your saints. That you'd lift them up. That you'd fill them with joy. Something that is, it's, it's, we know what it is to rejoice.

We know it is to be happy. Lord, help us to always be happy in you. God, I pray there's someone here that is not saved, that they'd call upon you as their Savior this morning.

Praise things in Jesus' name. Amen.