

Hello everyone, merry Christmas! It is only a week away!!!  
Had a good worship service yesterday, check us out on the web: [www.pricescreekcob.com](http://www.pricescreekcob.com)  
Has some sick folks yesterday, make sure we pray for those who are sick and those who are suffering.  
Don't forget our Christmas Eve program at 7 on Christmas Eve. Hope to see you there!  
God bless us everyone!  
Pastor Don

"Rejoice Always" Philippians 4:4-7 Dec. 16, 2012

The mall Santa was very surprised when a young 20 year old lady walked up and sat on his lap. Santa doesn't usually take requests from adults, but she smiled very nicely and he asked her 'What do you want for Christmas?' 'Something for my mother, please,' she replied sweetly. 'Something for your mother? Well, that's very loving and thoughtful of you,' smiled Santa. 'What do you want me to bring her?' Without pausing, the lady answered quickly, 'A rich, handsome, doctor for a son-in-law.'

Fred and Joe met for lunch. What are you getting your wife for Christmas Fred asked? Joe pulled a box from his pocket, opened it and said I got her a diamond necklace. Isn't it pretty? Yes it is but I thought she wanted a sporty 4-wheel drive vehicle for Christmas? Oh she does replied Joe, but where can I buy a fake jeep? What did you get your wife Fred? I bought her a new belt and bag. That is nice. I hope she likes them. So do I Fred replied, plus I hope the vacuum cleaner will work now.

Christmas gifts given with love bring joy to those who receive them. Christmas is all about joy. We use Christmas to describe joy don't we? We say he is as happy as a kid on Christmas morning. Christmas is not just a date on the calendar; it is a state of mind. W. T. Ellis said "It is Christmas in the heart that puts Christmas in the air." Wilfred Peterson wrote a poem that says "Christmas is not in tinsel and lights and outward show. The secret lies in an inner glow. It's lighting a fire inside the heart; Good will and Joy a vital part. Its higher thought and a greater plan. It's glorious dream in the soul of man. Christmas begins deep down inside, then engulfs the world like a mighty tide."

Christmas began in God's heart and it is only complete when it fills our heart. What is filling our hearts this morning? Is it the joy of Jesus? That is what Christmas is all about. Frank McKibben said Christmas is not the tinsel or the carols or the exchanging of gifts. It is the humble heart that receives anew the wondrous gift, Jesus Christ. Have we received Him? Giving is what Christmas is all about. John 3:16 says "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that who so ever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." If we have everlasting life, we should be happy. We should be joyful. The joy of a Christian is a magnet that draws lost people to Jesus. We have what they are looking for; are we willing to share Jesus with them? A Christian is supposed to be a joyful person. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms. Joy is contagious. Do we share ours? Joy is a byproduct of obedience; are we obedient?

Some people just radiate joy don't they? We all know someone like that. They always see God's presence, even on cloudy days. We focus on the clouds, they focus on the sunshine. It is the sunshine that allows us to see the clouds. Those joyful people who are always talking about the sunshine even on cloudy days are spreading God's joy to everyone they meet. What are we spreading? Does helping others make us joyful? One of God's purposes for us is to spread his joy to others. Do we do that? Are we working for God today? When they asked 120 year old Jeanne Calment of Paris, France the secret to her long life she said laughter. Proverbs 17:22 says "A merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones." Proverbs 15:13 "A

merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, But by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.” In other words, joy makes us smile. Does the Joy of Jesus put a smile on our face? Are we joy filled Christians this morning? Or are we just a bunch of dry bones? (Pray)

Paul tells us to rejoice in the Lord always. Always, that means at all times; not just when times are good and everything is well, but each and every day. Things aren't always good are they? Everything is not always well is it? Christians are to rejoice at all times; good or bad. We are to rejoice in difficulties, calamities and famines, as well as holidays, festivals and times of plenty. Do we?

We are to rejoice in the Lord because He is the source of true joy. A Christian's joy is not based upon good circumstances, but solely upon their relationship with Jesus Christ. How is our relationship with Jesus this morning?

In this world we will have problems, trials and tribulations. Jesus did, His disciples did, Paul did; so will we. As a matter of fact, Paul was having trials and tribulations when he wrote this letter; he was in prison at that time. He is proof that our circumstances are not our source of joy. We need to rejoice in the fact that we don't face our troubles alone, Jesus is with us, right in the middle of them. He promised to never leave us nor forsake us. We should rejoice, not because we are having difficulties, but because the difficulties should make the presence of Jesus in our life stronger.

Several times in this letter Paul urges the Philippians, and us, to be joyful. It is easy to become discouraged & take unimportant things too seriously; to become overwhelmed by our circumstances. Paul is reminding us that keeping our focus on Jesus will bring us joy.

James tells us in James 1:2-4 “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” James is also telling us that trials, tests and tribulations will also come to us. James is telling us that they make us stronger; that they make us perfect. We are to strive towards perfection. In Matthew 5:48 Jesus tells us that God is perfect. We are to strive for this perfection too. Perfection means completeness. Christians are to be an example of Jesus to the world. God does not lower His standards to meet our sinful nature; He gives us the power to live up to His standards. Are we striving towards perfection this morning?

Being perfect requires a joyful outlook upon life. We have to learn to be joyful. Paul says in Philippians 4:11 “I have learned in what ever state I am in to be content.”

Paul knew Jesus was always with him; no matter if he was ship wrecked, imprisoned, snake bit, stoned, cold, beaten, hungry, lonely or sick. Do we know that Jesus is always with us, no matter what circumstances we are facing? Are we content with Jesus?

Being content is not a natural thing. Paul says he learned to be content, have we?

Have we found our contentment in Jesus Christ as Paul did? We won't find it any where else. Nothing else brings true satisfaction. Things won't bring true happiness. They can not. They are

just things. They will please us for a while; then they will either break or wear out, or we will just simply tire of them and need to find something else to make us happy. Christmas is an excellent proof that things don't bring true happiness. Just watch the children. Their new toys will please them for a while, but soon they will want something else. Soon they will be bored. Soon their joy will be gone and they will start thinking about next Christmas. People are made with a spiritual hole in their hearts that only Jesus can fill. Until we let Him fill that hole we will never have true happiness.

Nothing will make us truly happy except Jesus. Have we asked Him into our hearts? Is He filling that spiritual void? Do we have His joy in our hearts today?

Next Paul tells us to let our gentleness be known to every one, because the Lord is at hand. Gentleness is a mark of a Christian. A Christian should have a calmness about them. We should show kindness, gentleness, mercy and understanding to others. Christians should be gracious and humble. People will see these attributes and wonder why we are different than they are. Then they will ask us about them and we will have an opportunity to share Jesus with them. Seeing the joy of Jesus in our lives will also make them ask us questions. We need to be different from the world if we are going to be a witness to it. And we need to be a witness because Jesus can return at any time. We need to use the time God gives us to honor Him with our whole life; both in word and deed. Our actions need to bring Him glory. Ultimately, joy comes to us when we allow Him to work through us. Psalm 37:4 says “**Delight yourself also in the LORD and he shall give you the desires of your heart.**” If we are delighted in the LORD, the desires of our heart will be to do His will. His will is to be a good witness for Him and bring others to Him.

Is this what we are doing? What are the desires of our heart?

Paul tells us not to be anxious for nothing. That is easier said than done isn't it? Christmas is coming, anybody anxious about that? All the little kids are; they can't wait until it gets here. All of us procrastinators are; we still have lots of shopping and wrapping to do. Those hosting big dinner parties are. Don't be anxious about anything, are you kidding us Paul? No, he is serious. Don't be anxious, pray. Pray about all things. Pray, not worry. Why worry when you can pray? Praying about things instead of worrying about them is another mark that distinguishes Christians from the lost world. Supplication is earnest prayer. Earnest means honest and sincere. That means we are to pray with all our hearts. We are to really mean what we pray for. We are to believe it will happen and we are to be thankful when it does. By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. This means that if we are going to pray for rain, we had better carry an umbrella. Do we pray with supplication and thanksgiving? Do we pray about all things? Do we trust God to provide the answers to our problems? Do we trust God, or do we worry?

Paul says if we trust God, He will give us a peace that passes all understanding. Paul says God will guard our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Our hearts and minds are a battle zone; we need them protected. We need to think on God and His will, because first we think it, then we do it. Proverbs 23:7 says “**As he thinks in his heart, so is he.**” What are we thinking? Are we thinking and doing God's will? The peace of God will keep us focused upon Him and His will. True peace is more than the absence of war and violence. It only comes from God. It is knowing

that God is in complete control and that we can trust Him. It is knowing that He has victory for us over sin through Jesus, a home for us in heaven, and a plan for us here in this life. Thinking these things should bring us joy. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 2:9 “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” Why worry? Why be anxious? Trust God. Relax in his peace. Trust Him. Then we will find eternal joy. Then we will have a more abundant life. A life filled with hope, love, peace and joy. Do we have these things today? Do we totally trust God this morning?

We need to trust God because He is at hand. This is a 2 fold statement. He is at hand because He is always near us; He lives in a Christian's heart. He is also at hand because His return can happen at any moment. Are we ready? Are we helping others get ready?

In verse 8, Paul gives us a secret that will help us trust God. [READ] We are to meditate, that is think about, to ponder, to concentrate upon, things that are true and noble and just; as well as pure, lovely, virtuous, praiseworthy and of good report. Jesus is all these things! He is pure, He never sinned. He is true; He said I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me. He is noble which means honorable and worthy of respect; he always did and said things that brought honor to God. Jesus is just. He died for our sins. Forgiveness is available to every person. Each individual has the same opportunity to ask for it and receive it. He does not have favorites. No one is too bad to receive forgiveness and no one is too good to need it. It is equally available to all.

Jesus was love in the flesh. 1 John 4:8 tells us that God is love. Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. He is the definition of love. He is virtuous; we learn virtue by listening to his words and observing his life. He is truly praise worthy; do we praise Him at all times? Is his praise continually in our mouths? And of course, He is of good report. Do we report on him to others? Since Jesus is all these things that we are to meditate upon, how do we do that? One way is simply to read the bible. Jesus is the word of God. Every time we read the bible, we are reading Jesus.

Do we meditate upon him? Do we study him? Do we share him?

Too often Christians loose their joy because they loose their focus. What is our focus today, our problems or our God? Paul Thigpen tells of the time he came home after running some errands his kitchen totally messed up. He had just spent hours cleaning it and now there was flour and various other ingredients every where and dirty bowls and utensils all over the counter, sink and table. He began to get mad. Then he found a note. It was in his little girl's handwriting and smeared with chocolate finger prints. It simply said Daddy, I'm making you something, love your little angel. Joy suddenly replaced his anger. His focus was moved from the mess to the gift of love. It was no longer just a mess, but a creation of her love as she labored to make him something special. The same is true of our joy in the Lord. Too often we focus on the mess and problems in our lives instead of the hand of God at work through them. God loves us and sometimes he dirties our clean kitchen to make us something special too. Our joy in the Lord helps us to focus on the prize and not the problem. Where is our focus this morning? On the dirty kitchen or the chocolate stain note telling us of our prize?

How do we get this Joy? How do we keep it? How can we rejoice always in the Lord? We get the joy of Jesus when we ask him into our heart. Have we done that? Is he living in our hearts today? Joy is spelled j-o-y. The J stands for Jesus. The y stands for you. And the o is zero, nada, nothing. We get joy when there is nothing between us and Jesus. Is there anything between us and Jesus this morning? Christmas is all about giving. Jesus wants us to give him our heart. Have we done that yet? Receiving Jesus into our heart would be the best Christmas present ever. Do you have the joy of Jesus today? It is only a prayer away. Do we always rejoice in the Lord?

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice! Amen, let us pray.