

(Philippians 4:4-7, NIV84)

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Our church doors have been closed for months, our communities have been shut down, businesses are failing, people are losing their jobs, we're all being told to stay away from others (even family members and friends). What is there to rejoice about in that?

We don't necessarily rejoice because of the things that are happening around us. Sometimes the things that happen around us are lamentable. Rather, we rejoice in spite of the lamentable things that are happening around us.

We have a loving God who is ascended to the highest heaven and is ruling over all things for the benefit of His Church. He loves us and has redeemed us with His precious blood. Our sins are forgiven. Our souls are saved. We are adopted members of God's holy family. We have an eternal home in heaven. We will not die, but live forever. What is more, the present circumstances that surround us will somehow (according to God's infinite wisdom) work out for our ultimate good!

Oh yes, we have, always, ample reason to rejoice in the Lord.

Rejoicing in Christ with you,
Pastor Golm

P.S. As our nation celebrates Memorial Day, take a moment to reflect on the sacrifice of those who laid down their lives in defence of our nation and the freedoms we enjoy, and give thanks to God for their service. May the Lord bless the families of all our "gold-star heroes" and comfort them in their loss.

May 25

Joy

The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy. Galatians 5:22

JOY was a dominant note in the lives of Christ's apostles. This does not mean that the lives of his followers were cushioned by beds of roses. No,

there were hardships to be endured. But they found joy in the midst of hardship, gladness in the midst of pain. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" is the way the apostle Paul put it.

No one in all the world has a better right to joy and gladness than has the trusting child of God. The Christian alone knows beyond the shadow of a doubt that all his sins have been forgiven, and that, through Christ, he has a clear title to a mansion in the Father's house above.

He alone has the divine assurance of comfort in sorrow, strength in sickness, solace in bereavement, help in distress, and ultimate triumph in the midst of dire calamity. And this assurance is signed and sealed in the blood of the Son of God himself! He lived and died and rose again that our "joy might be full".

Small wonder that the apostle Peter could write of the Christians who were scattered throughout Asia Minor that they "rejoice[d] with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8). Could he write that of us today?

There is the danger of settling for a sort of "cosmetic joy"-the joy of the forced smile, the perfunctory glad hand, and the professional glad word. All entirely superficial! The joy of which Paul is speaking in the text above goes far deeper. It permeates all of our thinking, speaking, and doing. It brightens both our inner and outer life. It radiates wherever we are or wherever we go. Thank God for this precious "fruit of the Spirit", which is joy, and let us cultivate it more and more.

O Lord, restore unto me the JOY of Your salvation! Amen.