

Laurentian Wesleyan Church
Sunday, February 14, 2016
Series: Take What You Need
Sermon: Peace

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-7, NIV

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

If you could take a picture of peace, what would it look like?

Photo: Puppy sleeping.

Photo: Baby sleeping.

Photo: Puppies and a baby sleeping.

You just needed a good dose of cuteness today.

Often, when talking about a peaceful scene, this is the image that comes to mind.

Photo: Quiet Lake

Who hasn't stood at the edge of a calm lake on a sunny day and breathed in a deep, peaceful breath.

Of course, the kind of peace we're taking about is soul-peace. It's deeper than just the absence of conflict. You can have a family that on the surface looks peaceful, but inside there is conflict. You can have a person who on the outside there is calm, but on the inside a storm is brewing.

I think one of my favourite images of peace was a painting of a busy cityscape. There was lots of noise...cars honking, people rushing about. But there in the middle of the chaos was a peaceful scene of a robin tending to her chicks in her nest.

The peace of God can stop worry and fear no matter the circumstance or situation.

Who doesn't want that kind of peace? A peace that's real, that lasts. Are you lacking in peace today?

How do we get it? Well, let's start at the beginning.

1. Choose Joy.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

"How can I choose to rejoice, you have no idea what I'm going through." Well, let's look at what the Philippians were going through, the recipients of this letter.

Just from this book, we learn in chapter 1 verse 28 that the people of Philippi had some who were opposing them. They were tempted to fear. In chapter 1, verses 9 & 10 it says, "For it has

been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.”

They were suffering, but more than that, they were going through some of the same struggles Paul was going through. Paul has some difficulties. He was plagued by what he called “a thorn in his flesh”, in other words, a daily struggle. He had been persecuted, beaten, thrown in prison. In chapter 2 verse 14 & 15 it says, “Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault *in a warped and crooked generation.*” Could those words not describe our generation? Warped and crooked?

So, if you’re tempted to dismiss this verse because your life isn’t just too bad, you don’t really have grounds to. But it’s hard to rejoice sometimes. How do we rejoice?

Illustration: 1988 saw the debut of the first a-cappella song to reach number one on Billboard’s Hot 100 chart. Let’s see if you recognize it...*sing...*

Here’s a little song I wrote, You might want to sing it note for note, Don’t worry, be happy.

Is that what we’re talking about here? Just choose to be happy, no matter what. Well, no, that’s not what we’re talking about. There are people that deny their situation. Pretending it didn’t exist. Their world is falling apart and they put a fake smile on their face and say, “don’t worry, be happy”.

We need to take the whole phrase if we’re going to gain the peace that is available to us. It says, “rejoice *in the Lord.*” This isn’t saying, “just try to stay encouraged” or “always look on the bright side”. This phrase is an appeal to faith. Choosing to rejoice despite the circumstance means facing the difficulty, not shrinking back. Choosing joy and faith over despair.

To really help us know how to do this on our path to peace, these next verses will help us.

2. Stop Being A Brute.

Verse 5 says, “Let your gentleness be evident to all.” The word brutal is the opposite of gentle. A brute is insensitive, bowls over people, cruel. That does not describe the path to peace. That word gentleness describes a person who is charitable, merciful, full of grace. But notice that that is says, “Let your gentleness be evident *to all.*” Not just those inside the church, or to other Christians, but to everyone.

You must have heard it. Perhaps you’ve said it. One of the reasons some won’t have anything to do with the church is because “you’re just too judgmental”. We think it’s our job to point people’s sin out, don’t we. Billy Graham said,

“It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to convict. God’s job to judge, and my job to love.”

I wonder sometimes if we prevent people from finding God’s peace, and in turn prevent us having it ourselves, by being harsh with people. Let your gentleness be evident to all.

We come to perhaps the biggest block to peace. You and I know it well.

Verse 6 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Worry.

Illustration: Do you ever waste time? Hey, there's nothing wrong with doing something that you enjoy doing that helps you relax. But sometimes we do those things excessively, and it turns into wasted time. Watching TV comes to mind. Have you ever had a thought like this?

"If only I would have used that wasted time to do something productive, like learn a language or an instrument, read, spend time with family imagine what I could have accomplished...but I didn't. I wasted that time on something that didn't matter and doesn't change anything." I think in the worst way, that's what worry is. Jesus not only told us not to worry, but really, it's just a huge waste of time.

"The more anxiety one has, the less efficient he becomes and the greater the reason for his anxiety" (Wesleyan Commentary). Isn't that true? The more we surrender to worry and anxiety, the more we're anxious and worry. I'm not talking about indifference. "Oh, I just don't worry about Chrissy driving on the wintery road to Redbridge everyday. What will happen will happen." That sounds cold, and un-caring. That's not what scripture means. So what do we do instead of worry? We spend time trusting God.

3. Don't Waste Time, Spend It Trusting God.

Don't be anxious. Instead, pray. When we pray, we're saying, "I'm choosing to trust God with this." But it's even more specific. Don't be anxious, but.

- a. Pray. Talk to God about it.
- b. Petition. Give your request to God, and keep doing it.
- c. Thanksgiving. Let me remind you what thanksgiving does.

It reminds us of past blessings.

It helps put our present in perspective.

And it causes us to anticipate answers in the future.

It's pretty hard to wallow in self-pity when you're praying and thanking God for all His blessings. Thanksgiving also helps us remember the needs of others. When we're thankful for our family, perhaps we'll remember someone who recently lost a loved one and we'll pray for them. When we remember what it was like before we had our job, we'll remember to pray for those who are still looking. Instead of wasting your time worrying, spend your time trusting God.

Before we end with the best verse of all, I want you to look back at the verses we've looked at and notice something. Perhaps even circle a few things.

Rejoice in the Lord ***always***.

Do not be anxious about ***anything***.

but in **every situation...pray**.

This is more than just something you do when trouble comes. This is a lifestyle. In the challenges and triumphs of life, big and small, live this life in the Lord.

4. Receive the Peace of God.

"And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

Isn't that awesome. You can have peace, when it doesn't humanly make sense.

"Peace can act like a gyroscope on a battleship, giving poise under pressure." (Tyndale Commentary).

But this isn't just a life of inner solitude or calmness. This is the peace *of God*. A peace that is bigger and deeper and wider than any peace we could accomplish on our own. We can experience it, but don't fully understand it. Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ..."

The beginning of this path towards peace begins at the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We talked at the beginning of the sermon today about pictures of peace.

Photo: River

One of our church's favourite songs is all about peace. We've shared this story before, but it deserves another telling.

Horatio Spafford was a wealthy Chicago lawyer in the 1800s with a thriving legal practice, a beautiful home, a wife, four daughters and a son. He was also a follower of Christ.

At the very height of his financial and professional success, Horatio and his wife Anna suffered the tragic loss of their young son. Shortly thereafter on October 8, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire destroyed almost every real estate investment that Spafford had.

In 1873, Spafford scheduled a boat trip to Europe in order to give his wife and daughters a much needed vacation. Spafford sent his wife and daughters ahead of him while he remained in Chicago to take care of some unexpected last minute business. Several days later he received notice that his family's ship had encountered a collision. All four of his daughters drowned; only his wife had survived.

With a heavy heart, Spafford boarded a boat that would take him to his grieving Anna in England. It was on this trip, they say at the very spot where he lost his daughters, that he penned those now famous words;

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Life isn't always easy. But the peace of God is available to you, no matter the circumstance.

Are you lacking in peace, today?
Come, take what you need.

Prayer