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REJOICE!
Philippians 4:1-9

"**rejoicing**" - what it means, what it doesn't mean, and how it relates to two big parts of our lives: Relationships, and Discernment.

Philippians 4:1-9

We're going to start today by focusing on verses 4 to 7.

Rejoicing is NOT an "overwhelming positive emotional response to an event."

-**joy**, something that runs deep something that doesn't just happen to us but constitutes who we are,

-**happiness**, that positive emotional response in a moment to something that's happening to us.

First, there is a shape to what Paul is describing as “rejoicing” – and this “rejoicing” shape has two basic dimensions one is *outward*, and one is *inward*.

the *outward* shape is directed toward people

-gentleness vs. reasonableness. gentleness is better here -the Greek word means something like “gentle forbearance” - like someone who has authority yet uses it wisely and patiently and gently.

- The word “reasonableness” might lead us in the wrong direction making us think that Paul is talking here about our state of mind – and internal values, when actually, Paul’s command here has everything to do with our actions, and how we treat people.

- Old Testament: God is the one who practices “gentle forbearance”

-the Philippian’s contexts this even means that they show this gentle forbearance to the ones who are presently making their lives miserable, people who restrict or persecute or insult them because they are Christians, living in a Roman/pagan colony.

- choose the way of the cross, keeping the way of Jesus from chapter 2 verses 5 to 11 – the Christ hymn –

inward dimension

- it means *longing for God for his presence to know him more to be in communion with him through prayer expressing your heart in Thanksgiving constantly every day.*

-These twin dimensions of **outward living** and **inward longing**, are the actions associated with **rejoicing** constantly. NOT *Laughing* and *Leaping*, but **living** like Jesus and **longing** for more of Him.

- these outward and inward dimensions are happening **simultaneously**

-therefore, rejoicing is not merely a response to circumstances --it is a complete way of life “in the Lord.” As Paul says in verse 4.

This might not sound like the emotional type of rejoicing that we're used to hearing about. *But think about the way that this type of living would affect your heart - to have the protection of the peace of God wrapped around you, to have your every anxiety cast upon God in prayer as a regular habit, and to be able to serve others with the same sort of patient gentle forbearance that you have received from God himself*

There is a second detail in vv. 4-7 that I wouldn't want us to miss: the entire thing is actually written in the plural.

-Paul is commanding the entire community of believers to rejoice to let their collective gentleness be known to each other and to everyone around them in Philippi.

-Of course, what is true of the community, must also be true of the individual.

It's within this rich meaning of that we can begin to understand the other two topics that Paul is addressing in our passage today.

-The **first** section (vv. 1-3), which comes right before the command to rejoice, is a discussion about a very particular **conflict** happening within this beloved church family

-It's good for us to notice that this conflict is very likely rooted in a disagreement about important gospel work.

- Here, Paul knows that sometimes conflict can't be worked out when both people have hotheads, and its going to require others in the community to help.

In this wonderful church in Philippi Paul will not tolerate conflict being left to simmer. **Do you have conflict in your life right now that is simmering?**

If you handle your relationships with the inward and outward shape of rejoicing always - then you can rejoice in God's goodness and the good work even if you are in temporary conflict with the people around you.

Vv. 8-9 summary:

“Find what is good and hold onto it.”

Paul is not afraid to use terms that were hot topics at the time, such as “lovely,” “admirable,” and “contentment.” While of course these words don't strike us as contentious, in Paul's day these were keywords of Greek stoicism.

-Paul takes some of the key tenants of stoicism and turns the whole system on its head by saying it's not about relying on yourself it's about relying on the God of Peace - their goal was wrong but some of the things they had discovered along the way were in fact correct.

-Paul is encouraging the Philippians to take note of the things in their culture that resemble the shape of a Jesus centred / cross shaped way of living. If they are really good and true – pay attention, log it away so that it can be a tool in your toolbelt of life.

Paul is teaching the Philippians to regard the culture with a discerning eye, not merely to reject it. This is just like what we talked about last week with citizenship – earthly citizenship is not to be thrown in the garbage because its associated with the world. It is a useful thing.

- what Scripture means here is that we must learn to recognize hints of the way of Jesus in places we wouldn't expect to find them.

I cannot think of a more joyful way of living the Christian life then being delighted to find hints and signs of Jesus where we least expect them. I can't think of a better way to begin leading people back to their creator then by showing them that they've discovered a valuable gem, but they haven't correctly identified it.

Think of 1 Cor 2:10 – we need the Spirit – the presence of God we long for – to help us LIVE wisely, and to open up people's hearts to the truth, beauty, and goodness of God that is waiting to be discovered all around us. **How might he do that in and through you this week?**

PRAY