

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD RESULTS IN REJOICING
PHLP 4:4-7 THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT DEC. 13, '15

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Are you ready for Christmas yet? Whether answer is yes or no,
Whatever "being ready" means for you,

Just thinking of that question can cause some stress.

Christmastime can lead to both anxiety and excitement,
which have more similarities than both spelled with x.

Study by Thomas Holmes & Richard Rahe rated
different kinds of stress, both positive and negative.

for both adults and children.

At top of list is death of spouse: 100 points, death of parent: 100
down list is divorce: 73, divorce of parents: 90

marital separation: 65, separation of parents: 69

On other side, Getting married: 50, marriage of a parent: 63

Getting fired: 47, parent losing job: 46

On other hand, getting new job: 36

Pregnancy & birth of child: 79, birth of brother or sister: 50

other hand, child leaving home: 29, sibling leaving home: 37

These stressors add up. When they go over 300 points

in short period of time, most people fall apart or get sick.

Christmas can involve several kinds of stress.

Celebrating major holiday: 15, financial difficulties: 40

When Paul wrote text, he was in prison. That is stress.

Philippians he wrote to were under stress.

Yet, instead of being burdened by anxiety,

which also stresses our relationships with others,

we can rejoice & have peace, coming from thanksgiving

for what comes through our relationship with God.

WE CAN REJOICE, THANKS TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE
ANXIETY CAN BE REFLECTED IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS
A PEACEFUL RELATION TO GOD GUARDS US WITHIN

WE CAN REJOICE, THANKS TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

...The Lord is at hand; ...in everything by prayer and supplication
with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Rejoice means more than just be happy
about what is happening right now.
it is not just about how things look but how we look at things,
being positive in outlook.
When is why Paul writes to Romans we can even rejoice
in sufferings, that is, have positive attitude about them.
Word for rejoice was common greeting in Paul's day
like "salutations", which is Latin for "be well"
It was something you said when you saw someone
Paul says reason to rejoice is that we see someone:
The Lord is near. He is near in both time and space.
We can rejoice not just because Christmas is coming
but Jesus is coming again soon to take us to heaven.
We can rejoice because he is near us now.
He is right here with his body and blood
to give us his blessings in Holy Communion.
He is near when we pray and he hears and answers us.
So when we make our requests we can already thank him.
Thanksgiving is a key reason for our rejoicing.
Thanksgiving is remembering good things.
Verses after text go on to say think about what is
true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable,
excellent, worthy of praise.
We rejoice when we remember to thank God for these
and so expect from God more of them.
Rejoicing always comes from God.
It is only because of God's love and faithfulness
that we can have continued expectation of good.
When this is true, we can have peace.
not just absence of conflict around us,
but peace in our hearts even in midst of difficulties.
Anxiety, on the other hand, remembers and expects
and focuses on negative things.

ANXIETY CAN BE REFLECTED IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not
be anxious about anything,

Lacking peace results in anxiety, uncertainty, despair.
When we are under stress we easily become
wound up tight, short with others, unreasonable.
There were two women, Dee and Cynthia,
They were Christians with saving faith in Jesus.
They had worked together in church, but had falling out.

Who knows what it was about,
maybe they don't even remember.
Now it is to the point that they disagree
maybe even just because the other one is for it.
Others can see it and it makes them uncomfortable.
Paul addresses words of our text to them and their friends.
He writes in verses just before text:
"I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women."
When we are anxious about things, expecting the worst,
we get touchy, it doesn't take much to set us off.
But Paul suggests when we can rejoice in the Lord,
we can show reasonableness to everyone.
Word for reasonableness has also been translated,
gentleness, forbearance. Is compassion, understanding.
When we can understand others point of view,
we can be calm and reasonable
and are able to put up with things that are not ideal,
more importantly, can put up with people with problems.
It is not easy to have peaceful relationships
in unpleasant situations. What makes it possible?

A PEACEFUL RELATION TO GOD GUARDS US WITHIN

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

As I studied text, I learned something about word for guard.
I had always pictured our hearts and minds being guarded
against threats of fear, temptation, discouragement
that come at us from devil & world outside.
But this one is not guard outside door to control what gets in
but kind that stands inside to control what goes out.
We have learned in our country we need to guard against attack
not just from enemies outside & those who try to sneak in
but also from those who are within, part of us,
domestic terrorists, radicalized citizens.
This can happen as a reaction to hurt, fear, disappointment,
resulting in anger that is turned out toward others.
The same things can happen to us.
Our hearts need guarding not just from outside threats
but dangers from within: jealousy, coveting, resentment,
that result in things coming out of our hearts, minds, mouths,
aimed like weapons at others.
What brings peace to this kind of situation? The peace of God,

which allows us to take all these volatile things in our hearts
and surrender them to God in prayer with thanksgiving,
trusting that he is sure to take care of them.

This term "peace of God" is not used anywhere else in Bible.

Is it the peace which God has within himself,
the perfect harmony of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit,
or the peace which comes from God
or peace between us and God? All of the above!

And this peace is all a result of Jesus death on cross for us.
which he and Father and Spirit all condescendingly will
as the way to restore God's broken children.

Jesus suffering for us pays the penalty for sin
that must be satisfied in the perfect justice of God.

It removes the cause of the war which pits us
in rebellion against God and his kingdom.

It takes away our fear and desperate defense
that strikes out at everyone within reach.

It is a peace that passes understanding because
it is not based on conditions we can verify
or apparent changes in our environment
but on faith in the promises of God.

That is what stands guard and brings peace
to what happens inside our hearts and minds.
which in turn effects our relationship with others.

As we move toward the celebration of Christmas,
The Sundays of Advent this year lead us along
the steps commonly followed in Christian prayer:
Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication.

Text mentions supplication but our focus today
is on thanksgiving for what God has already done.

WE CAN REJOICE, THANKS TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE

Rejoicing is a way of looking at things, even difficult things,
with a positive outlook because we have looked to see
that the Lord is near
and we look with thanksgiving at what he does for us.

ANXIETY CAN BE REFLECTED IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Anxiety is a response to stress which looks back
at what is negative and so looks forward to the same,
Which also effects how we look at other people
and the attitude we display toward both them and God.

A PEACEFUL RELATION TO GOD GUARDS US WITHIN

God has made peace with rebellious sinners
by the death of Jesus in our place.

Instead of attacking us, he has attacked our sin
and taken away the threat of death by his grace.
Now the grace of God is a peacekeeper in our hearts & minds
because we are joyfully confident in Jesus
to take care of us both now and forever.