ST. PETER LUTHERAN CHURCH

# Rejoice in Hard Times

*By Pastor Raymond Van Buskirk*

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### AS WE GATHER

Saint Paul tells us how to face hard times (Philip. 4 ESV), *"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly... I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."* Amen.

## Old Testament

*Isaiah 25:6–9*

> *On the Last Day, God will hold a great feast for the faithful and reveal Himself to them. They will rejoice in His salvation.*

6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of
rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. 7 And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that
is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord
GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for
the LORD has spoken. 9 It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he
might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

## The Epistle

*Philippians 4:4–13*

> *Rejoice in the Lord always, in plenty and in scarcity. Do not be anxious or fearful. He enables you to do all good things in Christ Jesus who strengthens you.*

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. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true,
whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there
is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and
received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed
concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in
whatever situation I am, to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and
every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all
things through him who strengthens me.

## The Gospel

*Matthew 22:1–14*

> *God invites all people to Christ's wedding feast in Heaven. But, those who refuse the invitation or refuse to wear His righteousness in faith will be excluded.*

1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who
gave a wedding feast for his son, 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but
they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared
my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding
feast."' 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest
seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and
destroyed those murderers and burned their city. 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding feast is ready,
but those invited were not worthy. 9 Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as
you find.' 10 And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good.
So the wedding hall was filled with guests. 11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a
man who had no wedding garment. 12 And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding
garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast
him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' 14 For many are called,
but few are chosen."

## Sermon Summary

*Rejoice in Hard Times*

Paul had a right to be depressed and discouraged. He was in prison in Rome. None of the churches was financially supporting his evangelical ministry, except the church at Philippi. Who knew, he could be executed at any time.

But, Saint Paul was joyful: *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."* [Philippians 4:4 ESV] Paul was seeing that his ministry was having an impact through the direction of Christ's Holy Spirit. Even members of the Roman guard and household of Caesar were coming to faith. God works good in tough situations for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes (Romans 8:28).

The church at Philippi had factions and other sins, but Paul saw their faith and willingness to be "partners in the Gospel." Paul valued the time that God had given to him to spread the Gospel far and wide. The Gospel was the joy of his life. It was his life. By grace, he had gone from being an enemy of God and persecutor of the church to being a preacher and devoted servant of Christ. His riches were the joy of knowing Christ and realizing what He had accomplished through the cross, the forgiveness of our sins and the hope of heaven through faith.

Paul exhorted the church to cast away all anxiety over the conditions of the world, all fears, and focus on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. If we focus on the state of our society, economy, politics and wars of the world; we could become afraid, cynical and spiritually and physically depressed. Saint Paul advises us to focus on *"whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, anything worthy of praise."* Doing so will give us joy because these are the things that God has done for us in Christ Jesus who has won peace for us with holy God in spite of the world.

Therefore, trust in Christ and give Him all of your cares, fears, and sins. He will give you peace and joy and hope and confidence in return. What a deal!

Rejoice in hard times as well as in good times, because your righteousness is through faith in Christ and *"God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."* (Philip. 4:19 ESV) Amen.

***— Pastor Raymond Van Buskirk***

## Bible Study Questions

*Philippians 4:4–13*

1. **What had Paul discovered about the way to live life?** (vs. 4–6)
2. **If we seek God, what will he give to us?** (v. 7)
3. **Reflection:** What good things do you focus on in life? (v. 8)
4. **What will God replace our worry about scarcity with?** (vs. 9–12)
5. **Who is our first, best and ultimate resource for help?** (v. 13)

### CLOSING PRAYER

*"Lord Jesus, you give us the riches of your glory, and the hope of an eternal life spent with You. Help me to give to You all of my sins, worries and earthly problems. Fill my heart with peace and contentment so that I may always rejoice in You. Amen."*