

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
[www.lutheranlccf.org](http://www.lutheranlccf.org)  
**Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity, September 13, 2015**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

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Hymns: 457, 532, 528:1-6, 535:1-6, 528:15.

Lessons: Psalm 5, Romans 8:1-28, Mark 13:5-13.

Sermon Text: Philippians 4:4-7.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

There is a great contrast between Christians and the people of this world, that is, between believers in Christ and unbelievers. Christians are exhorted to rejoice in the Lord, while unbelievers rejoice over worldly matters, and often, immoral matters. Our text speaks of the gentleness of Christians, while the unbeliever, ruled by the sinful flesh, often is harsh and rough. The Christian is exhorted to be care-free, while tension and anxiety characterizes the life of an unbeliever. In our text the Christian is comforted by the blessing of the peace of God ruling his heart, while the people of this world know nothing of that wonderful peace of heart which passes all human understanding.

So, it is evident that the Christian is very different from the unbeliever. The Christian should remember that there is that difference between him and the world, but that difference should never cause the Christian to feel that he is being left out because he is not compatible with the "in crowd." Rather, our text reminds the Christian of the blessings he has which the world cannot share, and which should be of great comfort to the Christian. The psalmist says: *"Surely, O Lord, you bless the righteous; you surround them with your favor as with a shield."* Ps. 5:12 These blessings and favors we want to consider this morning under this theme:

**THE CARE-FREE JOY OF BELIEVERS**

- 1. In the midst of tribulations they can rejoice in the Lord;**
- 2. Their gentleness should be evident to all men as they await Jesus' second coming;**
- 3. They are to be free from worry and anxiety, making known all their needs to God in thankful Prayer; and,**
- 4. They have the true peace of God to comfort and sustain them.**

*"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"* The people of the world often picture the life of a Christian as being the opposite of joyful. They think of the Christian's life as being gloomy rather than glad. They think of the Christian's life as being too restrictive. They can't do this; they can't do that. Then they also mock when the Christians do not join them in the pursuit of sinful pleasures.

Satan often tempts the Christian also to have a very gloomy outlook upon life. He is pleased when the Christian feels downcast or dissatisfied with his lot in life, and forgets his blessings. It is true that the Bible speaks of this world as a "vale of tears" for the believer in Christ, and that we must endure much tribulation. Paul and Barnabas told the people where they had preached: *"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God."* Acts 14:22 But we are told that the apostles also *"with prayer, and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."* v. 23

So it is that in our text the Christian is told to rejoice despite all the tribulations he has to bear. But mark well what kind of rejoicing our text speaks of: *"Rejoice in the Lord..."* This is not a worldly kind of rejoicing, but a spiritual joy in the Lord. It is a joy that believers in Christ have because their sins are forgiven. It is joy of heart by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul exhorts the believers to ***“rejoice in the Lord always.”*** That means we are to rejoice no matter what the circumstances. Also then when things don't go right, when we are sick, when we have problems, then we are to rejoice in the Lord. Paul the Apostle gives us a fine example. The Book of Acts tells us that when Paul and Silas were in prison at Philippi, and had been ***“severely flogged,”*** they still sang hymns and prayed to the Lord. The theme of this letter to the Philippians is stated in this word, ***“rejoice,”*** and this letter was written when Paul was in prison in Rome. He was not sad and downcast because he had to suffer for Christ. So all the Christian's life is not to be gloomy and sad. He above all people has reason to be happy and joyful. The more we seriously think about the blessings of our salvation in Christ, the greater our joy will become. May God help us to let that joy we have in Christ shine forth in our lives in all we say and do.

Our Christian life, in great contrast to the life of worldly unbelievers, should also be evident in the gentleness we show before all men as we await the second coming of our Lord.

2.

Paul says: ***“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”*** Our text speaks of gentleness, forbearance, patience, mildness. It presents a picture of the Christian giving in to others whenever he can do so without compromising his faith. If he is wronged, a human's first thought is to pay back the one who wronged him. If his rights are violated, he will insist to the last on his legal rights. If the unbeliever is wronged in any way, he will lash out with hard words and even curse the one who wronged him.

In contrast to this, the Christian is to show before all men an example of gentle mildness, patience, long-suffering. Here again the believer in Christ has his Savior to guide him. When Jesus was crucified, He was mistreated in the most shameful manner. But Peter says of Him: ***“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.”*** I Pet. 2:23 In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught: ***“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets, who were before you.”*** Matt. 5:11

When Jesus speaks of heaven, we are reminded that the unbelievers live for this life only, but the believer in Christ is awaiting with joyful hope the second coming of Christ. Then the believer will be taken to his real home in heaven. For that very reason we are to stand firm in the faith and be patient, as James exhorts: ***“You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.”*** James 5:8

A third contrast between the Christian life and that of the unbeliever is that the Christian can be worry-free, not filled with anxiety as the unbeliever, as the Christian makes known all his needs in thankful prayer.

3.

Paul writes: ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*** Do not be filled with cares and worries and anxiety. But, you ask: What about all our troubles in our daily life? Are they not painful to experience? Do not they cause us to be depressed? Certainly, any truthful person will say that the Christian is not immune from troubles and is not lacking in problems. But the fact remains that he need not worry about a single thing. Paul says: ***“Do not be anxious about anything.”*** How can this be? Our text gives the solution: ***“...in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”*** Take all your troubles to the Lord in thankful prayer. Go to your heavenly Father who loves you, who has sent His Son to save you. Go to him with thankful heart, mindful of all His blessings in the past and all the help He has given, and then tell Him all your troubles.

The Psalmist writes: ***“Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you.”*** 55:22 In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: ***“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear.”*** Matthew 6:25 It makes no difference what other troubles we have. Peter says: ***“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”*** I Pet. 5:7 In what better hands can any trouble of ours rest than in God's hands? Pray for what you need and pray concerning what troubles you. Pray and ask God again and again. Come often with your petitions. He will either give you what you ask or something better. And, remember, God always knows what is best for you.

Finally, in our text Paul states the blessed result of leaving everything to God in prayer - peace of heart.

Paul writes. ***“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*** The peace of God is that condition between God and the believer which exists because of Jesus' work of reconciliation. Our sins stood as a wall of enmity between us and God. Jesus took away our sins by His blood atonement on the cross, and so also the enmity that separated us from God was removed. When we believe in Christ as our Savior, we have this peace. Paul says ***“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.”*** Rom. 5:1-2 Now God is our Friend, our dear heavenly Father, and we are at peace.

What this peace of God can do for us is stated. It ***“will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*** Like a guard or sentry it will stand over our hearts and thoughts lest anything disturb them. This fact comforts and sustains the believer in Christ.

This peace of God our text says, ***“transcends all understanding.”*** It exceeds all the abilities of our understanding in doing away with worries and anxieties. We do not have to depend on our own powers of reason or thinking ability to solve our problems. We have the peace of God to comfort and sustain us.

That does not mean that Christians have no distresses or perplexing questions that trouble them. We wonder sometimes: Why does God allow me to suffer so? Has He forsaken me? Does He not know how troubled I am? Why does He allow the ungodly to, prosper so? Of ourselves, we can't answer those questions or cope with our problems. But we can say with the psalmist: ***“You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”*** v. 24-26, Psalm 73

It is on this basis that we speak of the care-free joy of the believer in Christ. This is why we can be free from worry and rejoice in evil days. So we say, with, the poet:

"My heart for joy is springing And can no more be sad,  
 'Tis full of mirth and singing, Sees naught but sunshine glad.  
 The Sun that cheers my spirit Is Jesus Christ, my King;  
 The heaven I shall inherit Makes me rejoice and sing." Amen.  
 (The Lutheran Hymnal 528: 15)

Preached August 21, 1983  
 Edited by Robert Mehlretter