

Rejoice Always?

Scripture Reading — Philippians 4:4-7

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

Here the apostle Paul, who endured many hardships for the sake of Christ, tells us to rejoice in the Lord *always*. And with enthusiasm he exclaims, “I will say it again: Rejoice!”

In the coming week many of us will hear Christmas carols that encourage us to rejoice, and at Christmas celebrations we will hear about “good tidings of great joy” (see Luke 2:10).

But for some people the Christmas season is not filled with joy. Some dread the Christmas holidays because of circumstances in their lives. Someone wrote to tell me that for her the month of December was the most difficult month of the year because of many sad things that had happened to her family. Someone else wrote that she would give anything if someone would cancel Christmas because she would be all by herself. For some there seems to be no joy at all.

Of course, the joy that Paul talks about goes much deeper than trying to look on the bright side of things. And we are not being told to rejoice in tragic things that may happen to us. We are urged to rejoice *in the Lord*, because Jesus came to save us from sin and death. In him we are forgiven. Because of Christ, we can rejoice even with tears in our eyes. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you rejoice in the Lord, regardless of your circumstances.

Prayer

Lord in heaven, help us to find your joy even through our tears, and help us to remember that you have come to turn our mourning into joy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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