

Gathering

Can we speak of joy in a season of sorrows?
Can we say rejoice
And in anything and in everything
Bring it all to God?
Can we say these things today and tomorrow and everyday?
There was a night of sorrows
when Jesus spoke of joy
When he broke bread with friends
And proclaimed peace
for today and tomorrow and everyday
be confident beloved in your hearts and minds
Speak words of joy, the God of peace is with us.

Prayer

Dearest God,
At any time and every time
May we know the joy
Of feeling your presence with us
In the long distance conversations
In the caring for each other
In the breaking of bread
And the outpouring of loving kindness
May our hunger be fed
And joy fill our homes

At any time and every time
May your joy live with us
Even as we do things differently
Let it encourage within us
renewed ways to be thankful
Renewed ways to honour you
Renewed ways to be the people we were meant to be.

May we bring who we are to your table
And lay our questions, our struggles, our weaknesses
To be broken open for your words of life, of promise, of hope, of joy
To enfold us
And call us
And make us whole. Amen

Welcome

Hymn 712 All people that on earth do dwell.

All people that on earth do dwell,

sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
him serve with mirth his praise forth tell;
come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
without our aid he did us make;
we are his folk, he doth us feed;
and for his sheep he doth us take

O enter then his courts with praise,
approach with joy his courts unto;
praise, laud and bless his name always,
for it is seemly so to do.

For why: the Lord our God is good,
his mercy is for ever sure;
his truth at all times firmly stood,
and shall from age to age endure.

William Kethe

Intro to the reading

At a time when Paul was locked up in prison he wrote these letters to the church at Philippi. There was conflict in the church he loved and Paul wrote urging them to

Scripture reading:

Philippians 4:1-9 NRSV

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1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. 5 Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. 6 Do not worry 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.

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8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Reflection

Can we speak of joy at a time of coronavirus?

It may feel as though joy is the very last thing we want to speak about when we see all that's occurring in our world today, along with political turmoil and **social unrest**, racial injustice, climate turmoil and more. Many are hurting, worried for their lives and the lives of loved ones. Worried about their livelihood, some of us mourning a loss, some are anxious, some fed up. Can we speak of joy at this time?

It was from his prison cell, to a church in conflict, that Paul calls for joy. And tells them to rejoice. It just didn't seem like a time for rejoicing, so I wondered what is this joy Paul is talking about here? Surely it's not a superficial escape from the realities of life, it must be much more profound than that.

I know that when Paul calls them to joy, he was not talking about being happy. Because happiness is very different to joy, we are happy when things are going well for us or those we care about. And I do wish us many moments of happiness. Happiness can stay with us for a long time, but it doesn't last. Happiness is here and then it is gone.

But joy is different.

Joy is something we can feel in our bones. Joy envelopes us and lives with us, so that even in the worst of conditions, we can still feel joy. Joy is what we feel when we are connected to something of meaning, something that is truly good, and what that is, may be different for each of us.

We can experience joy at the birth of a child. We experience joy in our relationships with loved ones, we experience joy when a precious relationship that was broken is repaired. We can experience joy when we see that a great injustice will be overturned. We can experience joy when something we thought was gone, receives renewed life. Mary Magdalene experience joy when she encountered the risen Christ.

These joys are things, experiences, loved ones, and the memories of them, that can comeback to us and cause the joy to rise up in us anew even in times of trauma and sorrow.

So from his prison cell to a church in conflict, Paul calls for joy and tells them to rejoice. Remember who and what you are connected to.

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"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." He says. Why? Because the one who is connected to you, "The Lord, is near."

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." And we know that anything and everything can be sources of real worry and suffering. So bring them to the Lord, and "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

So Paul points us to the key to fostering joy ... it can be found in whatever is true, it can be found in whatever is honourable, it can be found in whatever is just, and whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable. We can unlock all of these in the ways we live, carry ourselves and treat people in the world.

So Paul advised that "If there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." It is based on these things that we are called to the table of Christ.

Let justice and truth and honour call us to the table.
Let us come with joy and thanksgiving
Because it is right for us to give thanks and praise to The Lord.

May the peace of The Lord be with you.
And also with you

Hymn 452 Let us break bread together
Let us break bread together in the Lord;
let us break bread together in the Lord:

*when I fall on my knees,
with my face to the rising sun,
O Lord, have mercy on me.*

Let us drink wine together in the Lord;
let us drink wine together in the Lord:

Let us praise God together in the Lord;
let us praise God together in the Lord:

African American Spiritual

Prayer

Dear God we thank you for Jesus Christ who came to love us fully
Who gave all for our salvation

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And left your Holy Spirit to guide us, comfort us and remind us of your love.

Holy holy holy Lord
God of power and might
We bless your holy name.

Send your spirit upon the bread and wine and upon each of us and our households.
That this bread and wine may be for us the body and blood of Christ
And that your spirit may guide and keep our hearts

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Invitation

Here is an invitation to us all
To share what is true
To share what is honourable
To share what is just
To repair our brokenness
So that we maybe one in Christ.

Let us take the bread that is before us and break it
As a sign of the body of Christ that was given for us

Let us take the cup
As a sign of new life in Christ

Let us eat and let us drink

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The gifts of God for the people of God

The breaking

The pouring

The sharing

I bring joy

I bring joy when I am true,

I bring joy when I am honourable,

I bring joy when I am just,

I bring joy when I am pure in heart,

I bring joy when I follow Christ's example.

Hymn 489 Be Thou my vision

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,

naught be all else to me, save that thou art—
thou my best thought in the day and the night,
waking and sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word,
thou ever with me and I with thee, Lord;
thou my great Father, thy child let me be,
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

High King of heaven, thou heaven's bright sun,
grant me its joys after vict'ry is won;
heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Ancient Irish poem

tr. Mary E. Byrne and Eleanor H. Hull

Blessing

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

The Love of God

And the communion of The Holy Spirit

Be with us all.

Amen