

BELPRES CHURCH

Sermon Title: You Are My Joy

Daniel Bates

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Scripture:

Philippians 4:4-23

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable

sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. ²² All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.^[a]

Transcript:

What's up, y'all? Good morning. Good morning. Hey, let's go. Where are we going? Let's see. All right, all right, all right. Well, hello. My name is Daniel Bates. It's good to see you all. So I guess I've got to introduce myself because they always make me do that, and it's hard for me because I'm not too into titles, but here's the first one that I'm most proud of, and is the highest title that you can reach.

Child of God.

I am a child of God, a child of the Most High, a child of the King. But not just that, here's some other things about me. I'm a son. Oh, yeah. Look at mommy and dad right there. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Shout out to my parents right there. I think we've got one more recent photo. Yeah, that's a year or two ago. They're still together. That is a miracle on the screen. Can I get an amen? That is a miracle right now.

I'm a son. I'm a brother. Look at that. Don't laugh too hard. Don't ask which one is me, just use your discernment. Shout out to my heroes, man. Can we get the other picture up? Yeah, these are my heroes man Nicole, Michael, and Crystal. They've just showed me so much about life and the most recent one that I've acquired an identity.

I'm a husband. I'm a husband. I'm a husband in two years now. She is, she do look good, but I'm not going to be one of them pastors today. So shout out to my wife Mayara and then we got one more and I just wanted to shout them out. That's Mayara's family right there. Mayara's from Sao Paulo, Brazil and they have just loved me and accepted me and graciously taken me in. And so I just wanted to shout them out.

But also I work here. I forgot to tell you guys that I've been working here for about four years now. I came on as a pastoral resident with the likes of Isabelle Neza, who's here. Lori Jensen, she might be in the room. Anthony Ballard, and we came in and we were being trained by your staff here and your pastor's here, your leaders here and preparation for the things of ministry. And as that launched me into this next step for the last two years, I've been on the student ministries team, which is very well represented here right now. And we work with the junior high and the high school students. And it's a joy and a pleasure to be able to watch them serve. A lot

of them serve on Sunday mornings in the kids' ministry. And the things that we know and cherish like Elementary Day Camp and Vacation Bible Adventure.

I get to watch them be the church, I get to watch them right, be an example of who the church can be because everybody at every age has a job. But I just want to shout all my students because I got to watch them right, when the kid was panicking or when a kid may have... Didn't have friends around or they were losing in a game a lot. I got to watch our students corral them and bring them back and they did it through joy. And that's what this message is about. This message is about joy. It's all about joy. Rejoice in the Lord, always. I'll say it again. Rejoice in the Lord, always. I'll say it again.

Rejoice.

You guys get it, I said it again. Yo, my goodness who let me in here. So I want to teach a little bit about this passage in Philippians 4. Did they read it already or no? Oh! Should we read it?

Yeah.

Yeah. All right. Let me put my phone down real quick. All right. All right. All right. It's kind of a little lengthy chapter, so I'll try to summarize to the best of my ability.

It's up on the screen.

Oh, that is helpful. Oh yeah, you know what, this is great. "Be full of joy in the Lord, always. I will say it again, be full of joy. Let everyone see that you are gentle and kind. The Lord is coming soon. Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need. And when you pray, always give thanks and God's peace will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. The peace that God gives is so great that we cannot understand it."

Thank you for whoever got that slide up. Hey, yes. I can read. I can read. So for this today, I want to use the example. Does anybody remember the game, Red Rover? Red Rover, Red Rover, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, Red Rover. So that if you don't know, it was a game that we used to play as kids and it was really fun. I mean, there's a few very valid reasons why we don't play it anymore. But for the sake of this example, I just want to explain it to you guys, right? So it's a game where two teams and they lock arms and they stand on opposite sides of each other. Oh yeah. We got the photo. Look at that, that's great. I didn't take that. I stole that off the internet.

And so the objective of the game is to hold your hands or arms, so tightly that you can't break the link in a chain. And so they would say, "Red Rover, Red Rover, send John Kim over." And John Kim would high knee and high step and run as fast and as hard as he could to try to break through the opposite team's chains, right. And if he broke through, if he was successful, he would take a player off their team and add him to his team. So that team would get just a little bit stronger.

But if John Kim couldn't, if he didn't high knee, if his back was hurting that day, if he twisted his ankle or something, he would have to join, and he couldn't break through, he would have to join the other team, right. So keep that in mind today. So back to the passage, Paul is writing to this church in a place called Philippi and he's writing to encourage this church family because like all families, they were fighting. Yeah, that's why I started with my family on the board. You know what I'm saying? Does that BelPres remind you of anyone? Where could I possibly find a church where that fits?

Let's see, a family that disagrees with one another. Let's see, a family that says mean things to one another. Let's see, a family that doesn't always treat one another kindly. Where could I find a church like... Oh, I'm in one. This is us too y'all. This is us. This is BelPres, this is you and me. We do a lot of things well, but guess what? We also fight and bicker all the time right, we disagree, right. We don't treat each other kindly. And the beautiful thing about this is that Paul is writing this almost 2000 years ago, but God uses the scripture. God uses the Bible to encourage us and our church family today. And so again, this is what Paul is saying in this message. He tells us to have "Joy in the Lord, be full of joy." So I'm going to start with the why, and then I'm going to end the sermon with the how, okay? So y'all ready to rock with me?

Yeah.

Yeah. I appreciate the enthusiasm. I appreciate it. All right, so here's the first reason why, we represent God. See God through the scriptures, came and presented God's self. And now we are the re-representation of who God is. Is that clear? All right, all right. So here's the why, it's in the verse. Says, "Let your gentleness be known to all because the Lord is near." That's Philippians 4:5, right. "Let your gentleness be known. Let it be evident to all because the testimony, the witness, the description of who God comes directly from us and how we treat one another."

So we don't let other people y'all know, talk about our friends. You know what I'm saying? We go, we got to correct them. You ever been hearing a story about someone that you know, and you're sitting there like, "They would never do that." Right. Or if you're in class, this happened to me a lot so...

If you're in class and a teacher says, "Daniel, stop making all that noise in the back." And it wasn't me that one time, right, that one time. It wasn't me, I would be so mad because it's a misrepresentation of what I am, for what I was doing at the time. And see, we don't like that when that happens to us or our friends. But we do that to God all the time. So here's a few questions to help you think through that. Have you been saying mean things to your sister or brother? Have you, adults, have you treated your coworkers with kindness and respect? Here's one for everyone. Are you a bully to people that you disagree with? Maybe at school or our new favorite may be online.

When we do these things, we misrepresent God and God's character. And that has consequences beyond what you and I are able to see, or maybe even recognize, right. And many times the enemy uses this to lie to people about who God is. And when someone sees a bad example of church families right, it can make a person become hardhearted towards God and God's people. And this was my personal struggle with faith and Christianity. I would hear about this loving kind God on Sunday morning, but by Sunday afternoon, you know what I'm saying? I was experiencing the reality of people that were power hungry and inconsiderate and not kind to one another, right. Or simply just lacked even a real faith in God that God could change situations.

I experienced that and it made me feel a little icky, right. About who God is and about the church. Thankfully God gives us the opportunity to get it right each morning. Somebody say, "Amen."

Amen.

When we have joy in the Lord, we become better representations of who God is. So another reason we need to rejoice in to the Lord is because when we are full of joy, we are just simply more inviting, more appealing. Using that same verse we can hear, right, "Let your gentleness be known to all because the Lord is near." Right. In that same verse, we hear that God wants us to be known for our gentleness, right. He doesn't want it to be undercover. No, he wants it to be evident to all that we are gentle. So what does that look like? Well, when I don't know what something looks like or what something means when they describe something in the Bible, I look for it and the person of Jesus and the Bible is filled with stories about Jesus and where to look at them and follow them because he's the perfect example of how we are to live.

But before I show you a good example of Jesus being gentle, here's one of Jesus not being gentle. Ooh, look at... Ooh, he is not gentle with Satan's ankles at all, right? Yes, Satan ain't got no hope right there. Jesus is not gentle, I always say it, look at that. All right. But here's a real representation of our God, right. What I think, let me see. Oh, look at that. So some of you might know what that is already just by the picture. But when I think of gentleness, I think of a story about a woman who was caught doing something really, really bad. I mean it was so bad in the fact that the common punishment for her crime was death. And so even though that's what the law said, even though that's what the rule said, Jesus interjected and showed this woman gentleness. He reminded everyone to remain humble and reminded everyone that we've made mistakes before too.

And by the time Jesus was finished, everyone had put their weapons down and left that woman alone. So I want to be clear, Jesus showed an incredible amount of grace in this story. But when you think about the way that Jesus had to handle this situation, when you walk in and tensions are high and people are ready to fight, I mean, they're ready to kill this woman, right. He had to come with a gentle, calming, right. Peace-filled presence. And that comes when we are filled with joy. Right. "So let your gentleness be known to all. The Lord is near when we are..."

Discussion Questions:

Read this week's scripture(s) & answer the below questions with your friends, family, or All In small group.

Opening Question: Looking back to last week's sermon and scripture... How did you live differently or practice what we talked about in your life this week? What did you do and how did it go?

Scripture Reflection Questions: Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

Sermon Reflection Questions: Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What's something that's bringing you joy right now?
- What stands out to you about the passage?/What do you notice?
- Do you find this passage encouraging or challenging? Share why?
- The passage tells us to meditate on certain types of things. Where have you found your mind wondering this past week?
- Name a way that you could change your thinking about a current problem in your life/the world.

Closing Question and Application: Given what we've discussed together today, how might God want you to apply these learnings to your life or in the life of your community this next week? Who might you share this with?

Closing group prayer: Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement in the week ahead.