

## Rejoice in the Lord!

This is the third week in Advent. You may have noticed that there's a pink candle in the Advent wreath. Have you wondered why three candles are blue, but one is of a different color (pink or rose)? Well, the reason is that the season of Advent initially was a time of repentance, and since the approaching of the celebration of Jesus' birth should be a time of joy, there was a need to transition from repentance to joy and, historically the pink color was associated with such a theme. Hence the pink candle. We're approaching the big celebration and it's time to start rejoicing in the wonderful news of our Savior's birth.

Philippians, the letter Paul wrote to the church in the Roman city of Philippi, even though it has only four chapters and 104 verses, uses the word 'joy' or the verb 'rejoice' fifteen times. And keep in mind that at the time of writing, its author was in a dingy Roman prison, probably chained to a Roman soldier for long hours, circumstances we would typically associate with misery and trial, which most people assume are the opposites of joy. He's surrounded by every conceivable obstacle to joy. But even in those adverse circumstances, Paul finds motives to rejoice and reasons to encourage his audience, including us, to also rejoice, in spite of the circumstances. So, why does he seem so happy?

In Philippians 3:1 and 4:4, Paul commands us to rejoice in the Lord. What does this familiar command mean?

Jesus humbled himself even unto death on a cross, the Father highly exalted him, and all will one day pay homage to his universal reign (2:6-11). Rejoicing in the Lord means that these truths about Jesus — who he is, what he has done, and what he will do — personally and profoundly affect us. In fact, because of Jesus' death on the cross, today we receive forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. His work is sufficient to provide for our salvation, and the faith that he planted in our hearts at baptism, allows us to make those benefits ours. This is the foundation of our joy and as we approach the celebration of his birth, the true joy we should focus on is not the gift exchange, or the special meals or the family reunions, all of which is great and should be part of our celebrations, but the greatest joy must come in knowing and remembering that he came to give us forgiveness of our sins and eternal life.

So, this third week in advent is a time to transition from repentance to joy. A time to start rejoicing in the revelation of Jesus as the son of God and our savior. Take to heart Paul's words when he says in 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Amen!

*~ Pastor Borges, Associate Pastor*