

Philippians 4:4-7

Have you noticed **unusual** behavior from people recently? Maybe it's your **employer**, who's usually quite **stingy** about handing out **compliments**. All of a sudden he's **gushing** with appreciation. Or maybe it's a **co-worker** who usually comes into work wearing a **frown**, but the last few days she's been wearing a glowing **smile**. Perhaps it's a **family** member who hasn't been in touch with the rest of the family for **months**, and the other day they just called you up to **chat** for a while. Or maybe you've noticed that your **neighbors** are being more **polite**, and **friendlier** than usual. What's the **reason**? Why the change of **attitude**? It's probably because we're getting close to **Christmas**, and Christmas has a huge **effect** on the attitudes of people.

Sadly, we know that many of these positive attitudes won't **last**. Almost as quickly as the **stores** pull all the **Christmas** items off from their shelves, their **attitudes** will change too, and they'll return to the same old patterns that we **normally** see from them. That **happens** when people don't **understand** what Christmas is really all **about** - when they think that it's just about the pretty **lights** and **decorations**, and the gift **giving** and **receiving**. But we see a completely **different** attitude coming from people who look forward to Christmas with hearts of **faith** - who see the everlasting **love** which the LORD has showered on us through the Gift of His **Son**. The **birth** of Jesus, and the sure **hope** of His coming **again**, create an attitude in us that lasts all-year long. So this morning, let's take a look at the attitude which people **have** who have been **Touched By The Savior**. It **starts** with exceptional **happiness**. It **continues** with exceptional **gentleness**. And it results in a life which is **free** from **worry**, and **filled** with **prayer**.

Our text begins, "*Rejoice in the **Lord** always. I will say it again, Rejoice.*" With these words, the Apostle Paul is clearly talking about a **joy** that **lasts** far **beyond** the holiday season. He's talking about a joy that is **always** present - a joy that lasts **forever**. Many people look for joy in things like **money** and **possessions**. Others think they'll find joy in personal **experiences** with their family and friends. But what happens when the money is in **short supply**, or when the family and friends have to **leave**, or they don't **show up** at all? That kind of **joy** quickly **disappears**. Paul tells us to find **our** joy in the **Lord**. But unfortunately, many people **overlook** the **Lord** in their lives, and in doing so, they **miss out** on all **kinds** of wonderful blessings - **including** that

bundle of joy which God gave us at **Christmas**, when He sent the Baby Jesus to us.

But you and I are **different**. We **treasure** those gifts from God. And at this time of year, we **especially** treasure the Gift which God gave to us at Christmas - a Gift which fills our hearts with **joy**. The way this special Gift from God is **wrapped** is particularly **interesting**. God **originally** wrapped this Gift in **swaddling** cloths. Then later on, when His Gift had paid for our **sins** on the **cross**, He wrapped Him in a **burial** cloth. Three days **later**, when His Gift **rose** from the dead, God wrapped Him in robes of **honor**, **glory**, and **majesty**. But the very **best** part - the part that brings us the **most joy** - is the way God has **wrapped us** in the Gift of His Son, so that **His birth** is **ours** - **His death** is **ours** - **His resurrection** is **ours** - and we are going to **heaven**.

This is the **exceptional happiness** we have because we have been **Touched By The Savior**. Even when we can't **laugh** because we're suffering through physical pain, or sickness, or heartbreak - we can **always rejoice** in the Lord. Our daily lives are **unaffected** by the changing circumstances all around us in the world, because in **Jesus** we have a **joy** that lasts **forever**.

But as our text **continues**, we also see an exceptional **gentleness** which comes to those who have been **Touched By The Savior**. We read, "*Let your **gentleness** be known to everyone. The Lord is **near**.*" Gentleness isn't really a **part** of us by nature. Human beings come into this world with **small**, **self-centered** hearts. Our **focus** is **inward** - zeroing in on the things which will bring **us** the most benefit. But Jesus **changes** that focus for us. Just think about the **example** Jesus set for us. He came here to the earth in great **humility**, and He remained **kind** and **gentle** throughout His life. He **helped** those who were **sick** or in **need**. He didn't **strike back** against those who put Him on **trial** and sentenced Him to **death**. He didn't even **complain** about His **intense suffering**, or about the **crucifixion** that loomed before Him. Instead, our Lord **willingly** carried all our sins to the cross, where His **blood** washed us **clean**.

Since we have been **Touched By The Savior**, and we know that He will be returning again **soon** to **judge** the world and to take His **believers** to our heavenly home, Jesus wants us to show that same kind of **patience** and **gentleness** toward **others**. We can return **rudeness** with **courtesy** - we can turn the other cheek to those who fight **against** us - we can take opposition and strife in **stride** - and we can be **patient** and **forgiving** with the people around

us, because our heavenly Father has been **patient** and **forgiving** with us. As John said in his first letter, "*We love because he **first** loved us.*"

The **final result** is that we will be blessed with a life which is **free** from **worry**, and **filled** with **prayer**. We know all about **worry**, because we have to **deal** with it pretty much **every day**. We worry because of **health** issues - we worry because of **financial** issues - we worry because of **job** issues - we worry because of **relationship** issues. And **because** we worry about **these** things and so many **more**, we lose **sleep**, we develop **ulcers**, and we become **depressed** - perhaps even to the point of a nervous **breakdown**.

Wouldn't it be **great** if we could just **get rid** of worry? If we follow the advice found in today's text, we **can**. Again, Paul tells us, "*Do **not** worry about **anything**, but in everything, by **prayer** and **petition**, with **thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to **God**. And the **peace** of God, which **surpasses** all understanding, will **guard** your hearts and your minds **in Christ Jesus**.*"

The simple **solution** to **worry** is to take all of our troubles to **God** in **prayer**. He knows where we **are**, and He **sees** all of our circumstances. **Nothing** is too **great** or too **small** for Him to handle. He always **hears** our prayers, so we can present our prayers to God **boldly** and **confidently**. We can even **thank Him** in **advance**, because we know that the **help** which He will provide will always be **exactly** what we **need**. God has **proven** that to us by giving us His **Son** to be our **Savior** from sin.

Jesus has given us **peace** with God - peace which **surpasses** all understanding. The **world** just doesn't **understand** this peace, because it's only found in **Jesus**, God's eternal **Son**. Nevertheless, God's peace is **precious** to us, because it **assures** us of God's **love**. All the **changes** of life and unsettling **events** in the world can't snatch God's love **away** from us. So, with His **peace** dwelling in our hearts, **each** and **every** day we can bring all of our **needs** and **cares** to the **Lord** in **prayer**. And we can **thank** Him in those prayers too. We can **thank** Him that we have been **Touched By The Savior**, and for the **happiness** we enjoy, the **gentleness** we can share, and the **worry-free lives** that we are privileged to live.

These gifts of **happiness**, **gentleness**, and lives free from **worry** are **not just** for the seasons of Advent and Christmas. And they're not just for **us** either. **All** of those things applied to the Apostle **Paul**, even as he was

imprisoned in Rome. Yet, not only did Paul **rejoice**, but he urged the **Philippians** to rejoice right along **with** him. That's what **we** need to do. We need to take all of our **cares** and **worries** which continue to **torment** us, and drop them at the foot of the cross of our Savior. Our lives are far too short to even **consider** shortening them further by **worrying**. Those sins have been **paid** for, so we can take our cares and worries to the LORD in **prayer** - it's our Christian **privilege**. And then we can **rejoice** with Paul and the Philippians, and we can encourage **others** to rejoice along **with us**. We have been **Touched By The Savior** with His **forgiveness** and **love**, and that enables us to have exceptional **happiness** every day, exceptional **gentleness** toward everyone, and to live lives which are **free** from worry and filled with **prayer**, as we eagerly wait for our Lord to **return**. Amen.