

28th July, 2024

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's

Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

See, from his head, his hands, his
feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled
down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me
most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.

Were the whole realm of nature
mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

The Sermon by Timothy James

Read Philippians 4:4-9 and John 16:19-24

Joyfully

Paul tells his Philippian friends to rejoice, not once but twice. How can you tell somebody to be happy? Isn't that like somebody saying "don't worry" when you are worrying?

We need to understand what rejoicing is. The first thing is that it is not the same as being happy, even if they do sometimes go together.

The Bible tells us more about rejoicing:

- Joy is a fruit of living in the Spirit, along with love, peace, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal.5:22). Most of these are actions, behaviours and character traits, not feelings. Rejoicing is a pattern of behaviour we should follow.
- Rejoicing does not come out of our circumstances. Jesus told his followers to rejoice when they are persecuted (Lk 6:23) and to rejoice that their names were written in heaven, not that they had power over evil spirits (Lk 10:20).
- Rejoicing is something we often do together, in community, which is why we come together to worship, as is shown in so many Psalms. When we were studying Nehemiah a little while ago, we heard how God's people were told not to be distressed but to rejoice when God's word was read to them, and to share food with each other as part of their rejoicing (Neh. 8:9-12).
- Therefore, we can be told to rejoice always and give thanks in all circumstance (I Thess. 5:16-18), because rejoicing is a planned, deliberate and consistently carried out behaviour.

I have seen practical examples of planned rejoicing myself recently, when I attended graduation ceremonies for some of my students. They wore special clothes, met with their families and friends, had a public ceremony, and ate together. They had something to celebrate, because they had

successfully completed their studies, and they chose to rejoice regardless of any other circumstances which might be affecting them.

So, what is the relationship of rejoicing with worrying? Paul says his friends should not worry about anything (v.6).

In Matthew 6, Jesus spends 10 verses (25-34) analysing the addiction of anxiety and urging his followers to not act like the pagans who do not believe in God. Worry is choosing not to trust God and rely upon him. That is why R.H. Mounce described worry as “practical atheism and an affront to God”. So Peter writes to believers saying “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7) – worry is always a failure to realise that God is caring for us. It’s like the story of the weary Christian, awake all night trying to hold the world together by his worrying hearing the Lord gently say to him, “You go to sleep now, Jim; I’ll sit up.”

One further thing Paul connects with rejoicing and worrying is asking, and this is completely consistent with Jesus’ teaching in John 16: 23-24. Jesus follows his words about indestructible rejoicing following after pain, by saying that our joy is complete when we ask the Father for what we need, and he gives it to us. Similarly, Paul contrasts worrying with thankfully making our requests to God (v.6b). The consequence, he says (v.7) is incomprehensible peace.

So how can we “stop worrying and be happy”? Is it just a matter of “cheer up, it may never happen”? No, that is not what God’s word says.

Rather, we should consciously and deliberately turn away from our circumstances, good or bad, and focus on our relationship with God in his son, Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Rejoicing is relationship, not circumstances; it is action, not feeling; and it should be communal, not just personal. And we should constantly take our needs, temptations, anxieties to the Lord on prayer, trusting that he will complete our joy.

9th Sunday after Trinity: Almighty God, who sent your Holy Spirit to be the life and light of your Church: open our hearts to the riches of your grace, that we may bring forth the fruit of the Spirit in love and joy and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.*

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, St Andrews and The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

At the Church of the Good Shepherd

- Tea and Chat: August 21st at 2pm in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Bowls: August 21st at 2pm in the Church.
- Coffee and Questions: August 28th at 10.30am in the Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: 3pm Sunday, TBA
- The Community Cupboard, 2:45pm every Thursday in Church.

For Further information:

This paper and all parish details are on the website at <https://www.pariahofmedsteadandfourmarks.co.uk>